



**Columbia
Soil & Water**
Conservation District

2019—2020

ANNUAL REPORT



503.433.3205



35285 Millard Road
St. Helens, Oregon 97051



columbiaswcd.com

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OUR MISSION

*Offering People of our Community Assistance to Sustain
Local Natural Resources*

WHO WE ARE

The Columbia SWCD was created in 1946 and has been serving the citizens of Columbia County ever since. The SWCDs of Oregon were created gradually starting in 1939. To date, there are 45 districts serving Oregon. They are considered subdivisions of state government, but function as local units led by a locally elected board of directors. District directors are elected on Oregon’s general election ballot and serve terms of four years without pay. Directors are members of business, professional and agricultural communities who understand the ecological relationships of soil, water, plant, and animals.

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A LETTER FROM THE MANAGER

I realized today, as I was preparing to write this letter, that I have been in the manager position for just over a year now, and it still feels like I just started! I have come to hate any statement that includes the words “face masks”, “pandemic”, and, the worst of all, “unprecedented times,” and yet here I am saying, “whew, we are in some unprecedented times right now with this pandemic and face masks that don’t seem to be going away anytime soon.” And, while I say that mostly lightheartedly, there is no doubt that most of 2020 has been a dumpster fire. While no one is immune to the nightmare that has been 2020, the District experienced an added personal pain with the death of our Zone 1 Director, Randy Bergman.

We at the District have always regarded Randy as our old sage. Someone who has wisdom and isn’t afraid to use it, and someone who has been around the block a few times. I knew going into this letter why that was the case, but I didn’t realize how long Randy had “been around the block.” The earliest minutes I can find with his name on them are from 1974.... meaning Randy had been on our board for at least 46 years. I don’t want give away my age, but that’s so much longer than I have been alive that the excess years are still in the teens. Randy had an uncanny knack for spurring quality conversations. We could start by talking about the need for cavity nesting bird monitoring and move directly into discussing how to recruit young board members. Conversationists like that are rare, but it came to Randy like a moth to a flame. It was an innate personality trait and there is no doubt I will sorely miss having those conversations with him (even when those talks were at the most inconvenient time).

I could leave you with platitudes that he will be sorely missed or he is in a better place, but that’s not my way. I want to leave you with this: We need to remember the past to prepare for the future. We should take our history, including those who have left us, and incorporate them into our daily lives to further the mission of the District. Randy is no exception. We should mourn the loss, console his family, commiserate with friends, but we shouldn’t miss what Randy stood for: Conservation even when it meant having the hard conversations. Being able to stand as an “old time farmer” but still standing up loudly for natural resources and conservation. I know our staff won’t forget Randy or what he brought to the District.

Nathan Herr

COLUMBIA SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
DISTRICT MANAGER

(503) 433-3205 • nathan.herr@columbiaswcd.com

www.columbiaswcd.com





Celebrating
Randy Bergman



CURRENT BOARD OF DIRECTORS

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEET THE 3RD WEDNESDAY OF EVERY MONTH AT 4:00 PM IN THE COLUMBIA SWCD MEETING ROOM:
35285 MILLARD ROAD, ST. HELENS, OR 97051



Vacant
DIRECTOR ZONE 1



Vacant
DIRECTOR ZONE 5



Jason Busch
CHAIR ZONE 2



Bill Eagle
SECRETARY AT LARGE 1



Jeff VanNatta
TREASURER ZONE 3



Debi Brimacombe
DIRECTOR AT LARGE 2



Dave Freytag
DIRECTOR ZONE 4

For your years of dedicated service
to the Board of Directors

*thank
you!*



Craig Ellis

ABOUT OUR BOARD

The Columbia SWCD Board of Directors is made up of citizens and landowners of Columbia County. The county is broken up into five zones, of which there are representatives for each. The director must own at least 10 acres of land to qualify.

In addition, the Board has two “at large” positions. These can come from anywhere in the county and there is NO land requirement. Directors serve four year terms and are elected just like any other governmental official.

CURRENT STAFF

THE COLUMBIA SWCD STAFF CAN ALL BE REACHED AT (503) 433-3205, OR BY EMAILING INFORMATION@COLUMBIASWCD.COM.



Nathan Herr

DISTRICT MANAGER
nathan.herr@columbiaswcd.com



Malysa Legg

FINANCIAL MANAGER
malysa.legg@columbiaswcd.com



Selene Keeney

SENIOR RESOURCE CONSERVATIONIST
selene.keeney@columbiaswcd.com



Jennifer Chavez

OUTREACH COORDINATOR
jennifer.chavez@columbiaswcd.com



Crystalyn Bush

RESOURCE CONSERVATIONIST
crystalyn.bush@columbiaswcd.com



Amber Kester

RIPARIAN SPECIALIST
amber.kester@columbiaswcd.com

OUR SERVICES

- Community Outreach & Presentations
- Conservation Planning
- Erosion issues
- Fish & Wildlife habitat assistance
- Mud & Manure Management
- Native Plantings
- Noxious Weeds
- Pasture Management
- Permitting assistance
- Project Implementation
- Rain gardens
- Rainwater Harvesting
- Site Visits
- Small Market Gardens
- Soil information
- Stormwater Management
- Water Quality

NRCS STAFF:

The Columbia SWCD shares an office with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), an agency of the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) that provides technical assistance to farmers and other private landowners and managers.



Don Mehlhoff

DISTRICT CONSERVATIONIST
(503) 438-3146
don.mehlhoff@or.usda.gov



Dee Robinson

PROGRAM SUPPORT TECH
(503) 438-3147
dee.robinson@or.usda.gov

SBWC ANNUAL REPORT

This has certainly been a challenging year for everyone and the Watershed Council is no exception!

We started out the year by saying good-bye to Pat Welle, our Coordinator for the last 5 years, as she moved into a new phase of “active retirement.” We welcomed a new Coordinator, Dana Pricher, in November of 2019. She had previously been a volunteer at the Native Plant Nursery and has eagerly stepped into her new role with much needed energy and enthusiasm.

The Council had many projects in various stages of completion when the Covid-19 Pandemic hit. Like everyone else, we scrambled to adjust to this uncertain future and are continuing to adapt to the current working conditions. Luckily, our grant funders were very understanding and worked with us to extend project deadlines and reconfigure budgets. Unfortunately, we did have to cancel our Spring Plant Sale, our biggest fundraiser of the year. We have been working hard to reconfigure our Plant Sale strategy for the future, adding online resources, pre-order and curbside pick-up options.



North Scappoose Stream Restoration project.
Photo by SBWC, January 2020

Much of our work on the ground was delayed until next year, but we were able to complete planting of 1,500 native plants at our North Scappoose Stream Enhancement project site, with another 900 willows scheduled to be planted before the end of the year. In addition, removal of .36 acres of Yellow Archangel, Periwinkle, and Holly was completed at one of our

Small Grant project sites. It will be replanted this fall with 2,200 native woodland understory plants from the Nursery.

We have several projects in the works for 2021 and beyond: The designs for 1,000 ft of stream restoration including 5 large wood structures and 1.6 acres of riparian vegetation enhancement at “Reach F”, now part of Veteran’s Park in Scappoose, were

completed and will be submitted for construction funding in the spring. We also submitted an application for funding on Milton Creek resulting from a previous Technical Assistance grant to complete construction of a 600 ft oxbow-reconnection and improve the stream vegetation on 1.5 acres to improve stream conditions.

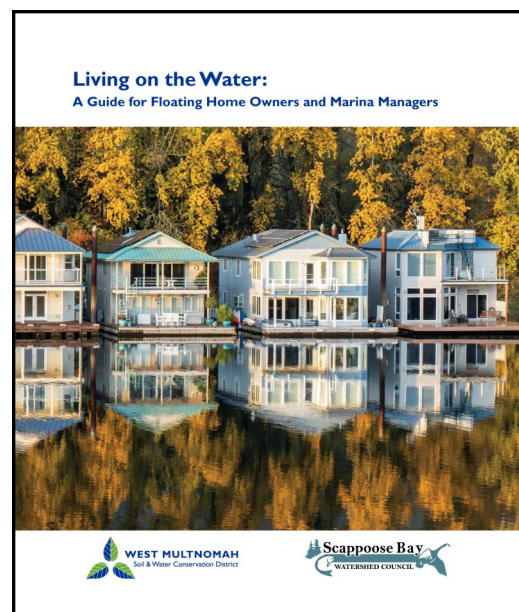
We received two grants from Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board in June 2020. One is to complete the installation of 30 large wood structures over 1.5 miles of stream and replace a culvert with a bridge on Brush Creek, a tributary of Scappoose Creek. This project will open up new habitat as well as improving stream condition, adding spawning pools, and increasing gravel retention on the stream bed essential for salmon spawning. Construction is expected to start in late summer 2021. The second is a Technical Assistance grant to



assist landowners along Raymond Creek with designs and resources to improve stream function and condition. There are several potential improvements such as removal of crossings, addition of large wood and shade-providing stream vegetation that could result from this process. We are partnering with Columbia County, Columbia Soil and Water Conservation District, and OR Fish and Wildlife to help the landowners along the creek develop the best possible plan to improve stream conditions. The program is available through December 2021 so if you live along Raymond Creek and would like more information on how to participate, please contact us! Finally, we worked with the City of St Helens and Friends of Nob Hill Nature Park to secure funding through the OWEB Small Grant program to improve and restore 1.8 acres of the Park's wetland and Oak Woodland habitat by removing invasive blackberry, Ivy and others and replanting with native plants. Project work is expected to start in spring 2021.

Many of our outreach efforts were cancelled this year but we did release the updated version of the Living on the Water Guide in partnership with West Multnomah Conservation District. This publication helps guide those who rent or own floating homes, or own and manage moorages in our area. The guide covers a host of issues unique to folks who live on the water and care about protecting and enhancing the natural resources around them. We are working on a series of short videos to compliment the Guide, so check our website for updates.

If you are interested in the work we do and would like to help, please check out our website www.scappoosebay-wc.org for more information and ways to be involved.



Dana Pricher

SCAPPOOSE BAY WATERSHED
COUNCIL COORDINATOR

(503) 397-7904 • dana@scappoosebay-wc.org
www.scappoosebay-wc.org



NRCS ANNUAL REPORT

We are all tired of hearing this, but it doesn't make it untrue. This has been a challenging year for most Americans and for that matter, most of the world. We have had the COVID epidemic, devastating fires throughout the west, and more. These and other factors have changed the way we do our business and offer our customers services in 2020. Our office is open, by appointment only, with personal protection such as face masks and social distancing during visits. So far, this has not deterred NRCS from getting our work done.

NRCS received 22 applications for our Environmental Quality Incentives Program in 2020. We were able to fund 17 of those totaling about \$261,181 for conservation improvements in Columbia County. Some of these were for forest diversity programs, some were for soil health and water quality improvements, 2 were for high tunnels, and one was for the development of a comprehensive nutrient management plan.

Some of the local programs we continue to offer in targeted watersheds include forest diversity, soil health and water quality improvements on cropland and pasture on private agricultural lands, and animal feeding operation practices. There are also national initiatives that are available locally such as the high tunnel initiative and an organic initiative. You can read more about these programs at this link: <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/or/programs/financial/eqip/>. There is also more information on what we offer in Columbia County specifically at: https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detailfull/or/programs/?cid=nrcs142p2_044022



New roof run-off system with storage tanks that will provide water for livestock troughs



New high tunnel in Warren



During fiscal year 2020, NRCS in Columbia County assisted with the following practices:

1-Forest Management Plan, 15.7 acres of brush management, 5 acres of weed treatment, 2-High Tunnels, cover crops, 24.5 acres of slash treatment, 160 feet of hedgerow, 1340 feet of irrigation pipeline, 2-pumps, 23 acres of pasture and hayland plantings, 3-Roof Run-off Structures, 7.2 acres of tree planting, 343 acres of Upland Wildlife Habitat Management, 43.4 acres of Early Successional Habitat Management and 124 acres of Forest Stand Improvement on 10 farms.



Shrub plantings and healthy forage stand for Columbian white-tailed deer habitat

In closing, I would like to express a small tribute to my good friend and customer, Pat Schenk. Pat passed away unexpectedly this past July. Pat was a conservationist. We had worked with him on practices such as a high tunnel, roof run-off storage for irrigation, pollinator habitat such as



High tunnel with various greens and vegetables

conservation cover and hedgerows and soil health practices such as mulching and cover crops. Pat and his wife, Jeannie, raised vegetables for local markets and he was proud of his orchards from which he made homemade apple cider. With his permission I referred several new operators to Pat, who as a veteran operator, could provide advice about all aspects for operating a small vegetable farm from a farmer's standpoint. Pat told me years ago that his mentor who taught him how to farm, said "Pat, you don't owe me anything. All I want you to do is pass on what you have learned to others", which he honored. We will miss Pat.

Don Mehlhoff

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION
SERVICES DISTRICT CONSERVATIONIST
(503) 438-3146 • don.mehlhoff@usda.gov
nrcs.usda.gov



UNWC ANNUAL REPORT

As years come and go, this one will not be remembered as another exciting year with all the normal pride of accomplishment we have enjoyed the past 24 years. Yet, even in the face of the Covid-19 restrictions, and as funding became more difficult to find, we have used the isolation caused by the Stay at Home orders as a chance to identify future restoration projects. With the help of volunteers we have been able to continue our efforts to protect, preserve, conserve, enhance, and restore the Upper Nehalem Watershed.

Luckily, only one of our popular volunteer tree planting events at Vernonia Lake had to be cancelled in March. The community continued to enjoy these volunteer efforts, bringing their own masks as well as boots and gloves. These efforts to improve the wetlands in the watershed were well attended and attract the children in the community, though the number of volunteers were less than past events. Ironically, just when some of the trees planted several years ago reached a healthy twenty feet tall, the beaver also decided they were perfect, and began to knock them down, so our efforts to support fish habitat by providing more shade seems to be never ending.

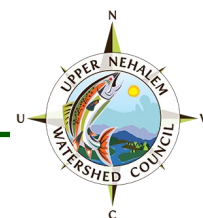
In January, the Upper Nehalem Watershed Council hosted Christina Wang of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at the Vernonia Public Library to speak about Pacific Lamprey. We continue to support watershed education with articles in the *Vernonia Voice*, our Facebook page and website *A Word from the Watershed* blogs with help from volunteers.



Weaving materials utilized for the fake beaver dams in the BDA were Vine Maple and Douglas Fir limbs

This year we missed working with the Vernonia Forestry Class at the Nehalem Native Nursery greenhouse where we have worked together growing native tree seedlings and plants for riparian restoration projects. We look forward to their return in the future when it is safe again. Volunteers and staff continued potting and maintaining bareroot seedlings provided by the Bureau of Land Management for restoration projects and we added vegetable starts in an effort inspired by the Victory Gardens grown during World War I and II to support the community.

The highlight of the past year has been the monitoring data coming back from the work by the UNWC to encourage beaver to resume building dams and create habitat that supports Coho salmon survival. Steve Trask of Trask Consulting, Inc. began the Beaver Dam Analogue (BDA) Pilot Project in 2018



and the Post Implementation Monitoring report this year shows promising results. The fake beaver dams formed by a line of posts driven into the stream bed with branches woven between and newly planted willow stakes for beaver grazing are intended to lure and encourage them to build dams. Since August 2018 fifty-seven BDA sites have been built at legacy beaver sites on tributaries of the Nehalem. This year fifteen of the BDA sites were colonized by beaver with an additional thirty dams constructed between the BDAs. This has added over 30,000 square feet of pool surface area and greatly increased the Coho salmon rearing potential. We are thrilled with the success we are seeing. Monitoring will continue through 2021 to assess longer term impacts. The UNWC has plans to strategically encourage the expansion of beaver colonies throughout the watershed in cooperation with interested landowners and managers.



Some constructed BDA's utilized a double back to back design to reduce lift heights

Though many projects had to be put on the back burner for the year, the Upper Nehalem Watershed Council is excited about the plans we are making for the future of the watershed that will include building more wetlands to retain water, cool it down, and release it more slowly into the streams.

Though many projects had to be put on the back burner for the year, the Upper Nehalem Watershed Council is excited about the plans we are making for the future of the watershed that will include building more wetlands to retain water, cool it down, and release it more slowly into the streams.

Maggie Peyton

UPPER NEHALEM WATERSHED COUNCIL
COUNCIL COORDINATOR
(503) 429-0869 • maggie@nehalem.org
unwc.nehalem.org



LCRWC ANNUAL REPORT



LCRWC is building a strong portfolio of aquatic habitat restoration projects following the findings of a completed Strategic Action Plan(SAP). The SAP provides direction to stream sections with high ecological value for multiple aquatic species. In the last year, we have brought in additional information from completed assessments to include lesser-known species such as Columbia River Chum Salmon and Pacific Lamprey. Historically these

species were widely distributed across areas such as Clatskanie, Conyers, and Stewart Creek.



The Lower Columbia River Watershed encompasses 298 square miles along the Columbia River in Columbia County, Oregon.

In light of funding uncertainty from Covid-19, projects have been developed targeting a range of different funders that will provide a stronger foundation for the Council’s future. Paired with increased funding diversity are new partnerships with the City of Clatskanie, Clatskanie PUD, Friends of Fox Creek timber companies, local high schools, and stronger ties to our neighboring watershed councils. We are also making connections with funding partners that look beyond our local ecosystem to bolster Orca populations in the ocean. Simply put, more salmon = more Orcas. (<https://www.promisethepod.org/>)

We are constantly interested in engaging new people to issues of watershed health, habitat restoration, and long-term resiliency planning with our Lower Columbia communities. Please check out regular updates to our website for watershed council events, as well as our Facebook page, and Instagram posts. We are always open to new ideas and projects, please don’t hesitate to contact us. It is important now more than ever to build healthy watershed landscapes through strong connections and relationships with our community.

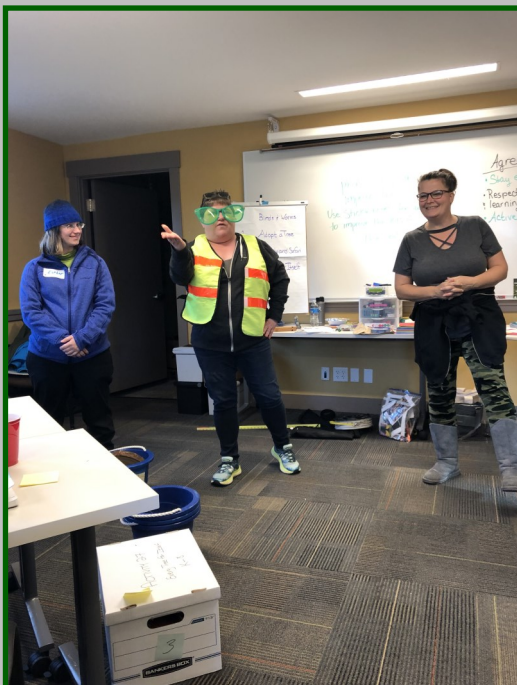


Allan Whiting
LOWER COLUMBIA RIVER WATERSHED
COUNCIL COORDINATOR
(503) 789-9240 • allan@whitingenv.com
www.lowercolumbiariver.org



Ian Bledsoe
LOWER COLUMBIA RIVER WATERSHED
COUNCIL BOARD PRESIDENT
ibledsoe@clatskaniepud.com
www.lowercolumbiariver.org

EDUCATION PROGRAM GETS OFF THE GROUND



Above photos were taken during the PLT Workshop in October 2019

In 2019 the Columbia SWCD implemented a new environmental education program utilizing award winning Project Learning Tree (PLT) curriculum. We delivered PLT lessons along with premade activity kits, designed by the SWCD, to participating elementary schools at the beginning of the 2019 school year. In October the SWCD hosted a workshop for educators taught by PLT facilitators at our office. Participants included local elementary school teachers and non-formal educators from Columbia County, as well as some educators from further away. To date we have developed and delivered activity kits for 7 different PLT lessons to 8 elementary schools and 1 preschool. These kits are reusable and stay at the schools to be used again each year. We are excited to continue building on this foundation to bring more quality and engaging environmental education opportunities to our county!

If you have questions regarding our Education program, please call our office or send us an email at information@columbiaswcd.com



WILARK 146 (W146)

In 2019 the Columbia Soil and Water Conservation District partnered with John Hancock Forest Management to replace a perched 60-inch corrugated metal pipe (CMP) culvert with a 55-foot bridge on an unnamed tributary of the Clatskanie River. The culvert was listed on the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife’s Statewide Fish Passage Priority List as a priority for removal. Project funding was provided by the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board and John Hancock Forest Management.

The project location is in the vicinity of Wilark Road, approximately 2,000 feet upstream from the unnamed tributary’s confluence with the Clatskanie River.



The Clatskanie River and its tributaries provide habitat for Endangered Species Act listed Coho salmon as well as winter steelhead and other important species. It is worth noting that this project builds on years of previous work removing and replacing culverts on the Clatskanie River and its tributaries. This project marks the seventh culvert replacement out of eight total to-date fish passage projects completed within the upper Clatskanie watershed.



Aquatic Contracting was hired to remove the culvert and build the bridge. Once the culvert was removed, and before the bridge was installed, a stream channel that matched the surrounding topography was recreated where the culvert was previously located. Streambed substrate from nearby sources, that matched the natural substrate sizes of the stream, was placed throughout the re-created channel. Trees salvaged from the project areas that had to be cleared were also placed at the edge of the re-created channel to provide structure and complexity to stabilize the newly re-created channel as it adjusts. Over time the stream will move and adjust its course naturally as these materials were placed in a manner that will not lock the channel into a specific alignment.



To facilitate long term erosion protection and soil stabilization, and to jump start the revegetation process, riparian plants were installed throughout the project area upon completion of the re-created channel and bridge construction.

To date this project is a great success! Replacing the perched culvert with a bridge opened up 1.7 miles of Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) for Coho salmon and other important aquatic species. It's now been a year since the project was implemented, the native plants are becoming well established and the stream has adjusted nicely. Over the next couple years, the Columbia SWCD will continue to watch how the creek re-works the restored channel and anticipates that the increased habitat connectivity resulting from the project will continue to provide benefits to the species that depend on the stream and the overall natural resources that occur within Columbia County.



BEFORE RESTORATION



AFTER RESTORATION

Selene Keeney

COLUMBIA SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
SENIOR RESOURCE CONSERVATIONIST
selene.keeney@columbiaswcd.com



A WALK IN THE WEEDS

The Columbia SWCD completed work on a two year outreach grant funded through the Oregon State Weed Board (OSWB) in April 2020. The final project activities included installation of informational signs and boot brushes at trailheads along CZ Trail and the design and installation of a large native plant sign at the Ruley trailhead. Columbia County provided the backboard for the sign and donated labor for installation. Other grant funded activities included the development and printing of a new noxious weeds field guide, workshops for County maintenance crews, and the rejuvenation of a local weeds workgroup that now meets regularly.

A second round of treatment was conducted at Fishhawk Lake for Garlic mustard and Yellow archangel in the spring of 2020. This work was paid for by a grant obtained in early 2019 from the OSWB. The grant also paid for the installation of informational signs and boot brushes at key areas, updated educational signage



LARGE CUSTOM DESIGNED NATIVE PLANT SIGN
INSTALLED AT RULEY TRAILHEAD ON
CROWN ZELLERBACH TRAIL

at a lake kiosk, native plants for affected landowners, and outreach events. The Columbia SWCD partnered with both Clatsop and Tillamook SWCDs to make this project a cross jurisdictional collaboration.

Treatment of Garlic mustard continued along North and mainstem Scappoose Creek in the spring of 2020. The SWCD applied for and received its largest grant award through OSWB to date to fund treatments of Garlic mustard in the spring of 2020 and 2021. This grant also included a small amount of funding to treat



"DO NOT COMPOST NOXIOUS WEEDS" SIGN
INSTALLED AT FISHHAWK LAKE GARDEN AREA



SIGN INSTALLED ALONG TRAIL AT
FISHHAWK LAKE



Knotweed at County owned Fisher’s Park and some adjacent properties along Scappoose Creek later in the year.

The SWCD also received funding for another project through OSWB in 2020. This project is focused on early detection and rapid response to new invasive plants in the county. A partial survey of Milton Creek for Giant hogweed and other priority species was completed in June 2020 with no observations of hogweed. This grant also funded spot treatments of other priority species like Spotted knapweed, Knotweed, and Spurge laurel at specified locations later in the year.

In addition to these grant funded projects, SWCD staff worked on manual removal of Spotted knapweed in the summer of 2019 at a site along Walker Road in Scappoose, and monitoring of Policeman’s helmet at a previously infested site along historic Highway 30 in Goble. Only one plant was found and removed during monitoring for Policeman’s helmet.



“DO NOT DUMP YARD DEBRIS” SIGN INSTALLED ON OREGON DEPT. OF FORESTRY LAND CLOSE TO FISHHAWK LAKE

For questions or information about noxious weeds please call our office at 503-433-3205 or email weeds@columbiaswcd.com.

Crystalyn Bush

COLUMBIA SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
RESOURCE CONSERVATIONST
crystalyn.bush@columbiaswcd.com





THANK YOU

TO THE CITIZENS OF COLUMBIA COUNTY, OUR PARTNERS, AND MANY LOCAL CONTRACTORS

Aquatic Contracting LLC	Hart Crowser	Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
Archaeological Investigations Northwest, Inc.	Institute for Applied Ecology	Oregon Department of Forestry
Army Corps. of Engineers	Local Cities and Municipalities	Oregon State University Extension Service
Ash Creek Forest Management	Local School Districts	Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board
Bureau of Land Management	Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership	Port of Columbia County
Clatskanie PUD	Lower Columbia River Watershed Council	Scappoose Bay Watershed Council
Columbia County	National Fish and Wildlife Foundation	Sound Native Plants
Columbia County Fairgrounds	National Marine Fisheries Service	Special Districts Association of Oregon
Columbia County Small Woodlands Association	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration	Upper Nehalem Watershed Council
Columbia River Estuary Study Taskforce	Native Plantscapes NW	United States Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
Columbia River Youth Corps.	Natural Resources Conservation Service	United States Fish and Wildlife Service
Deer Island Nursery	North Coast Cooperative Weed Management Area	Waterways Consulting, Inc.
Department of Environmental Quality	Northwest Oregon Restoration Partnership	Weyerhaeuser
Department of State Lands	Northwest Watershed Restoration, LLC	Wild Salmon Center
Hancock Forest Management	Oregon Department of Agriculture	Wolf Water Resources, Inc.

www.columbiaswcd.com

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