

2019-2020

Annual Report

Jackson Soil & Water
Conservation District

*To conserve, protect, and enhance natural resources for the economic, environmental,
and quality of life benefits to the residents of Jackson County.*

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Manager's Message

Another year has come and gone. By most accounts it was a very different and challenging time for all of us. However, it was also a year of promise for the District, our partners, and our clients, as we all worked through the tough times to get some great natural resource stewardship projects completed or initiated.

The District was able to complete our staffing by hiring Meghan Montgomery to be our Agricultural Resource Conservationist. Meghan's hiring rounded out our current staff which includes Markie Germer, Administrative Specialist; Clint Nichols, Forest and Riparian Resource Conservationist; Kora Mousseaux, Community Water Resource Conservationist; Paul DeMaggio, Soil and Water Conservation Engineer; Karelia Ver Eecke, Education and Outreach Coordinator; Jenna Sanford, Stewardship Monitoring Coordinator, Trevor Morris, Office Assistant and Natural Resource Technician; and Randy White, District Manager.

This staff has been instrumental in initiating over \$200,000 in natural stewardship projects and activities this past year. This funding covers projects in all five of our categories, including: Small Acts of Conservation, Education and Community Conservation Program, Oregon Department of Agriculture Focus Area, Cooperative Conservation Projects, and our Incentive Program.

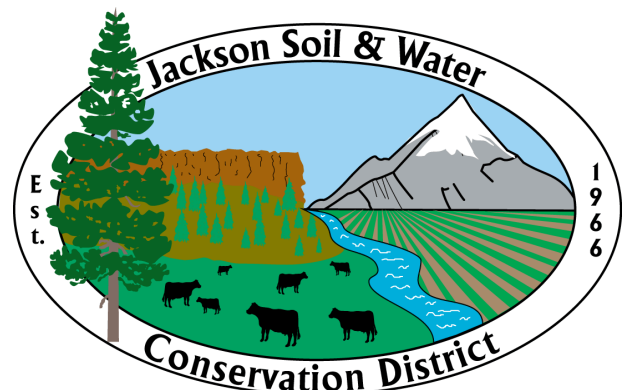
We also partnered with Two Rivers Soil and Water Conservation District and the Applegate Partnership and Watershed Council to do a regional Strategic Implementation Area (SIA) that crosses the Jackson and Josephine County line. This marks the start of our third SIA since 2014.

I welcome you to review the following pages to capture some of the many projects and activities that were completed this past year.

Sincerely,

Randy White

District Manager



Financial Report

2019-2020 Fiscal Year, For the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2020

Receipts

Property Taxes	\$1,036,821
Oregon Department of Agriculture	\$83,315
Tours, Workshops, & Classes Tuition	\$2,028
Interest	\$27,081
Grant Revenue	\$47,344
Lease Revenue	\$29,255
Miscellaneous	\$8,412

Total Receipts **\$1,234,258**

Disbursements

Personnel Services	\$632,073
Materials & Services	\$435,436
Capital Outlay	\$42,262

Total Disbursements **\$1,109,771**

Excess of Receipts Over Disbursements \$124,485

Net Changes in Fund Balances (Cash Basis) \$124,485

Fund Balances (Cash Basis)

Net Position (Cash Basis)

Beginning of Year	\$1,159,511
End of Year	\$1,283,996

Jackson Soil and Water Conservation District

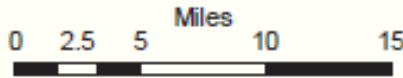
Jackson County, Oregon

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Legend

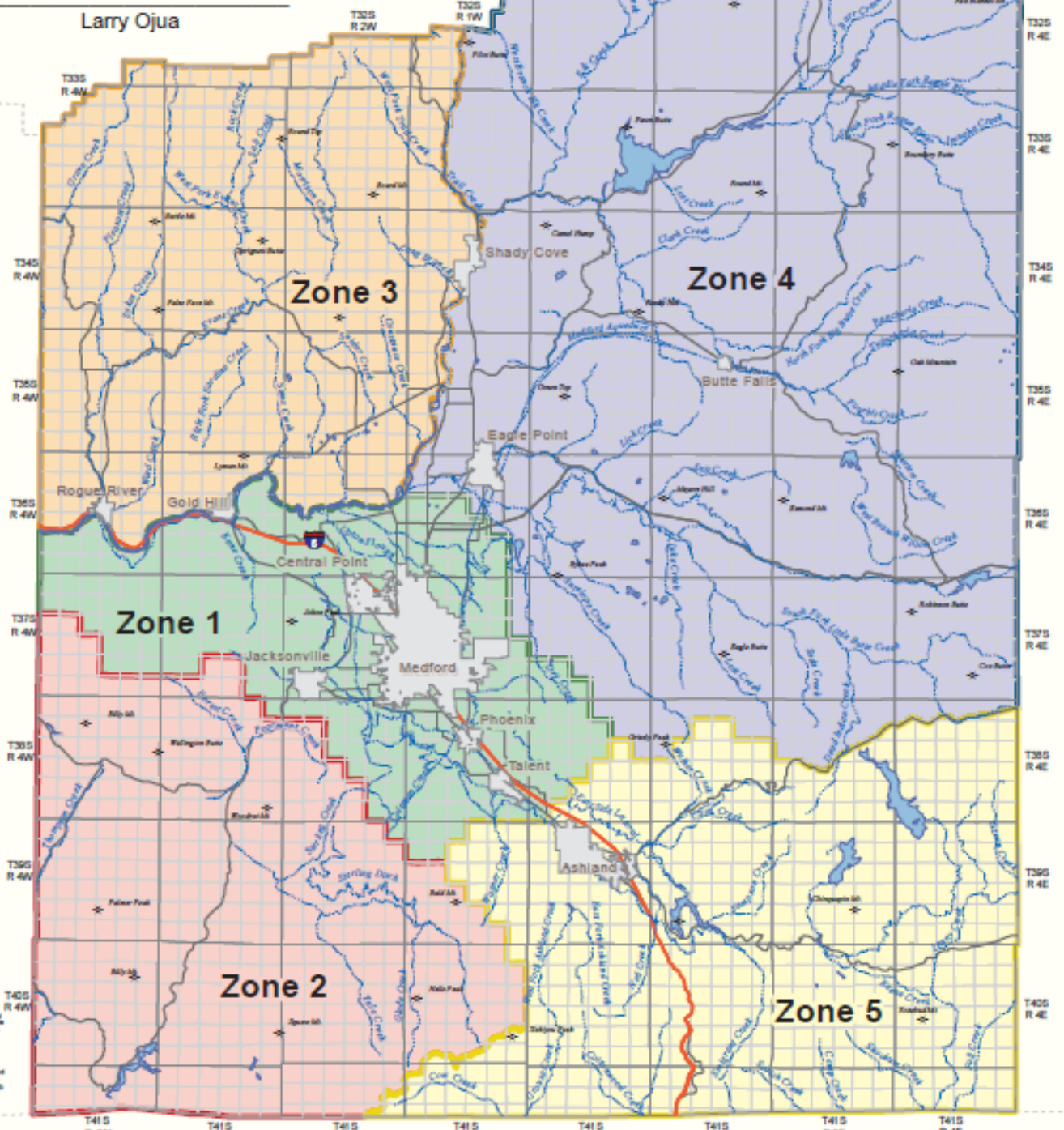
- Summit
- Stream
- Interstate
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- Section
- TownRange



Date: _____

Signature: _____

Larry Ojua



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California

About Our District

Who we are & what we do.

Our Relationships

Collaborative working relationships are what makes our work possible. We work with partners on the local level including non-profits, schools, cities, the county, irrigation districts, businesses, and landowners; and partners on the state and federal levels including the Bureau of Land Management, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Oregon State University Extension Services, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, Oregon Department of Agriculture, and Oregon Department of Forestry.

Current projects include:

- Implementing and managing the Oregon Agricultural Water Quality Management Act
- Little Butte Creek Watershed Agricultural Focus Area—soil and water quality improvements
- The Middle Rogue Pesticide Stewardship Partnership with Oregon Department of Environmental Quality—1 of 10 locations throughout the state monitoring in-stream pesticide levels.
- And many more small-scale community-level projects, from backyard rain gardens to supporting farm-to-school garden programs.

How We Work

The Jackson Soil and Water Conservation District maintains an actively involved elected board, employs a professional staff, and uses volunteers, natural resource experts, partner organizations including nonprofits and federal, state, and local agencies to improve natural resource stewardship. Our work is achieved through technical & financial assistance programs; partnerships; workshops and outreach efforts; and opportunities as they present themselves. The Jackson Soil and Water Conservation District employs a District Manager, an Administrative Specialist, an Office Assistant & Natural Resource Technician, a Soil & Water Conservation Engineer, a Forest & Riparian Resource Conservationist, a Community Water Resource Conservationist, an

Agricultural Resource Conservationist, a Stewardship Monitoring Coordinator, and an Education & Outreach Coordinator. Our varied backgrounds and individual program visions allow for well-rounded and diverse approaches to natural resources conservation.

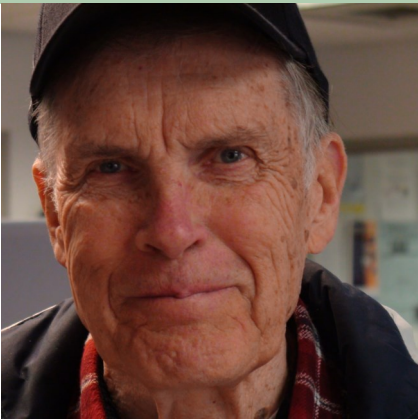
Measure No. 15-67

In 2006, the voters of Jackson County approved a permanent tax rate limit of \$0.05 per every \$1,000 assessed value of Jackson County property. The rate limit began fiscal year 2007-2008 and provides the District the financial capacity to meet the needs of the growing population of Jackson County. Our District customers include rural and urban private landowners, educational institutions and non-profits, and municipalities. With the financial support of Measure No. 15-67, we have been able to expand staffing, create more effective partnerships, and better meet the needs of Jackson County to conserve natural resources for cultural, economic, and ecological needs.

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Board of Directors

2019-2020 Fiscal Year



Allan Campbell
Chairman, At Large



Dave Picanso
Zone 1



Barbara Niedermeyer
Vice-Chairman, Zone 2



Juanita Wright
Zone 3



Don Hamann
Zone 4



Ron Hillers
Zone 5



Stan Dean
At Large

Staff

2019-2020 Fiscal Year



Randy White
District Manager



Markie Germer
Administrative Specialist



Paul DeMaggio
Soil & Water Conservation Engineer



Clint Nichols
Forest & Riparian Resource
Conservationist



Kora Mousseaux
Community Water Resource
Conservationist



Jenna Sanford
Stewardship Monitoring Coordinator



Karelia Ver Eecke
Education & Outreach Coordinator



Trevor Morris
Office Assistant
Natural Resource Technician



Meghan Montgomery
Agricultural Resource Conservationist

Conservation Assistance Program

Grants for Conservation & Education

Jackson Soil & Water Conservation District is primarily a source of technical assistance for landowners interested in conserving natural resources. In order to better facilitate this goal we offer a small grant program, called the Conservation Assistance Program (CAP). This program allows us to leverage our technical assistance with local financial support for projects related to natural resource conservation and education.

Our Conservation Assistance Program is divided into four distinct funding pools:

Focus Area Projects

In 2013, JSWCD selected the Little Butte Creek watershed as our Focus Area, and will continue to work in this watershed through 2022. Within the Little Butte Creek watershed Focus Area, JSWCD funds irrigation projects that improve the efficiency of flood irrigation practices and the conversion of flood irrigation practices to pressurized systems. JSWCD also funds riparian restoration projects within the Lower Antelope Creek sub-watershed.

Funding amount: Up to \$50,000

Strategic Implementation Areas (SIAs)

The Oregon Department of Agriculture chooses SIAs after discussions with regional partners and review of local information including water quality data. The development and management of SIAs ensures that landowners and communities comply with agricultural water quality regulations, a state mandated bill passed in 1993. Our current SIA is located in the Applegate Watershed and is the first of its kind in Oregon to work across county boundaries, in both Jackson and Josephine Counties.

Funding amount: Up to \$50,000

Cooperative Conservation Projects

Cooperative Conservation Projects improve natural resource conservation on a landscape -

scale—across multiple properties or within a single larger property. This program allows our District to fund large-scale natural resource conservation projects on land outside JSWCD priority areas (Focus Area or SIA). For a project to qualify for funding from this program, the project must either 1) involve more than one landowner, preferably contiguous landowners, or 2) be eligible for funding from other granting organizations and agencies, such as OWEB, Oregon Water Resources Dept. (OWRD), or others.

Funding amount: Up to \$50,000

Snapshot

- **\$275,000** in District Funds were budgeted to support Jackson County residents in their stewardship goals.
- Twenty applications were approved for funding through our grant programs.
- **\$200,251.58** in District Funds were allocated toward local conservation projects.
- At the close of the 2019-2020 Fiscal Year, **\$20,322.31** of the total allocated funds had been paid out.

Conservation Assistance Program

Grants for Conservation & Education

Education & Community Conservation Program

Education & Community Conservation grants are awarded to partners, organizations, cities, and private landowners for the implementation, creation, or continuation of community natural resource conservation education programs, demonstrations, or features. Any project with the ultimate goal of providing educational materials or opportunities to members of the public may apply for funds from this pool.

Funding amount: Up to \$10,000

District Incentive Programs

This program funds specific types of projects with incentives to the landowner. These incentives have set amounts; i.e. per acre, per square foot, or a flat rate per project. JSWCD develops new incentive programs as need and interest arises, either from a resource concern JSWCD identifies or from landowner interest in particular types of projects. This program streamlines the granting process to put good stewardship on the ground without the typical delays caused by the more laborious grant writing and grant approval processes. These programs also speed up the planning process and decrease the paperwork burden to save time for both JSWCD staff and the

landowner. Other agencies can use these programs to assist landowners they otherwise could not serve by referring them to JSWCD and these programs (the Riparian Restoration Rebate Program, for example, has allowed the Freshwater Trust and Rogue River Watershed Council to find assistance for landowners they otherwise could not help).

Funding amount: Varies by program

Small Acts of Conservation

Projects not eligible for funding from other JSWCD programs may apply for funding from the Small Acts of Conservation program. Typically, this program funds smaller projects with only one landowner and limited benefit to natural resource conservation. Projects funded in this program do not fall within our priority areas such as our Focus Area and SIA, do not fit in an incentive program, and do not qualify for, or would not rank highly in, other organization's grant programs.

Funding amounts: Up to \$10,000



District Funded Stewardship Projects & Programs

Highlight: Rogue Valley Farm to School

Rogue Valley Farm to School (RVF2S) is a local non-profit dedicated to bringing healthy, local food to our community's schools, children, and families. With their Digging Deeper program at Walker Elementary School (WES) in Ashland, OR, RVF2S has further developed the growth of local-food culture. JSWCD is a proud supporter of this program two years running.

The program provided forty hours of garden education to 4th grade students at WES. During farm field trips, students are given the opportunity to work together to prepare a meal with food they have harvested. The program also includes monthly tasting tables of fresh fruits and vegetables and teacher professional development. Program outcomes include providing 60+ children with an in-depth knowledge of water and soil, nutrition and health, and teachers and school administrators with a commitment to continue teaching children about the importance of caring for the water and soils of our agricultural lands in order to grow healthy food.

By involving students in the process of learning about growing and harvesting food, children are able to develop knowledge of sustainable farming practices, sources of local food, and a greater appreciation for local farmers and food service

Snapshot

- **40 hours** of garden education programs
- **2 Harvest Meal field trips**, during which students and teachers visit the Farm at SOU, harvest veggies, and make a meal from those veggies
- **6 tasting tables** at the school for all students, teachers, and interested parents
- **45 hours** of volunteer management for program implementation
- **25 hours** of community outreach
- **2 professional development trainings** provided to local educators
- **\$9,200** funded through our Conservation Assistance Grant Program

providers working around the clock to bring our community healthy food.



District Funded Stewardship Projects & Programs

Highlight: Medford A & N

Medford A & N was awarded a CAP grant to improve water quality and irrigation efficiency on their 56.4 irrigated acres of horse pasture and hay fields. Historically, the property was painstakingly flood irrigated by their dedicated ranch manager. However, even done well, the flood irrigation system caused unwanted erosion and troublesome mud. With the completion of the Hopkins Canal Piping Project, this property was eligible for pressurized irrigation system upgrades. With guidance from our Soil & Water Conservation Engineer, Paul DeMaggio, the ranch had successfully upgraded all irrigation systems on their property by mid-2020.

The project is a prime example of the leveraging capacity our CAP grant program provides to local producers working to improve their land management practices. This project provides economic benefits and aesthetics to the landowners and ecological benefits by reducing water pollution through run-off and reducing unintended water waste—a common by-product of flood irrigation systems.

Snapshot

- **50.4 acres converted from contour flood irrigation to a mix of center pivots, linear move, pods and big gun sprinklers**

- **64% of project costs funded by grants**

- **Majority of grant funds provided by Oregon Natural Resources Conservation Service & Oregon Department of Environmental Quality**



Monitoring

Antelope Creek Water Quality Monitoring

Throughout the irrigation season we monitor the water quality and quantity of Antelope Creek for ten indicators, including *E. coli*, total phosphorous, dissolved oxygen, temperature, and stream flow.

These data are used to evaluate stream health and track changes related to the RRVID Hopkins Canal Piping Project and associated irrigation conversion projects.

The piping project was completed in 2019, piping over three miles of open irrigation canal. The ultimate goals of the project include: saving water in-stream for fish habitat, improvement of irrigation practices through replacement or conversion of out of date or inefficient irrigation systems, and finally, improved conveyance of irrigation water to Agate Lake, ultimately improving service for all RRVID patrons, all while providing pressurized irrigation systems to over 700 acres east of White City, OR.

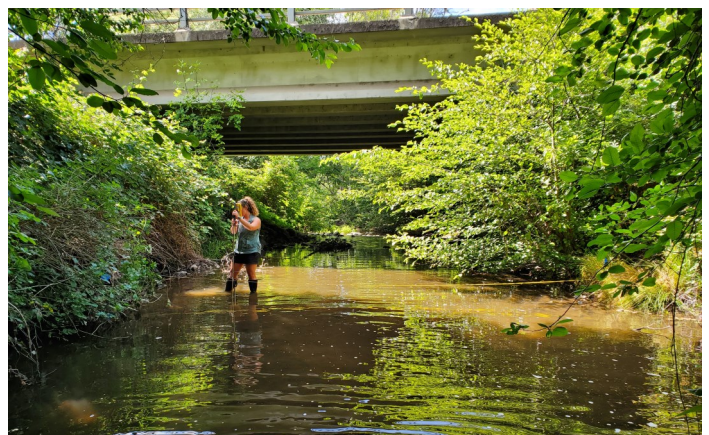
Our water quality monitoring since 2017 has tracked parameters before, during, and now one year after project implementation. We are excited to see that even just one year out, *E. coli* levels in the water have dropped significantly, with nearly half of samples falling below the benchmark of 406 MPN/100mL. For the other parameters, it is too early and there are too many other variables to see evident trends at this time. However, there is a noticeable decrease in flow at one sampling location between 2017-2018 years and 2019-2020 years. This can likely be attributed to the large number of acres that switched from flood irrigation to drip irrigation as well as the installation of the new Hopkins Canal Pipeline which occurred early 2019. This conversion led

[Snapshot]

- **Significant decrease in overall *E. coli* concentrations in 2020** compared to previous years, with 47% of samples falling below the benchmark
- **Decreased post-irrigation run-off** due to improved irrigation efficiency
- Overall, **decreased inputs of total phosphorous and *E. coli*** due to modernized irrigation practices and a piped main canal.

to more efficient water use, which means less post-irrigation run-off back into Antelope Creek, and therefore less nutrient run-off, including phosphorous and *E. coli*.

Monitoring will continue here until at least 2022. After five years of monitoring and three years post-piping, we hope to have more discernible trends become evident in the data. Until then, we are at the very least happy to have less *E. coli* bacteria in the water system and more efficient irrigation for producers.



Monitoring

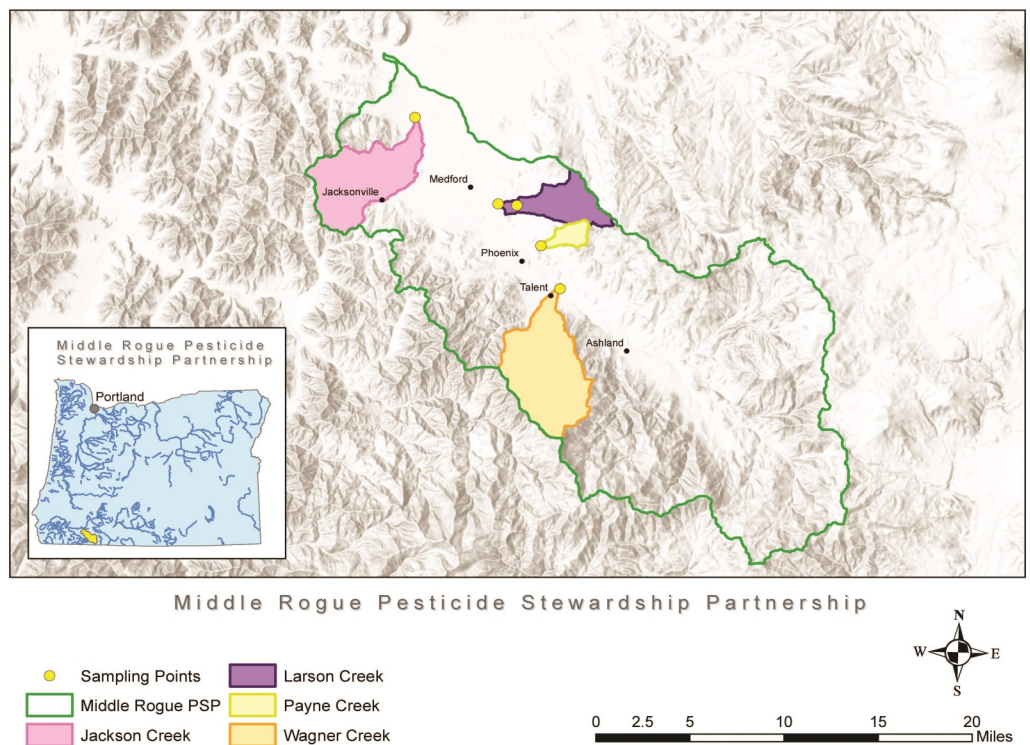
Middle Rogue Pesticide Stewardship Program

The Middle Rogue Pesticide Stewardship Partnership (MRPSP) was established in 2014 as part of the Oregon Department of Agriculture's statewide effort to monitor water quality, particularly in connection to agricultural practices. Each year the MRPSP team collects water samples, which are analyzed by the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (ODEQ). The results are used to inform outreach and education efforts as they relate to water quality and pesticide use; assess the use of chemicals of greater concern; and to develop communication tools and strategies to reach MRPSP's constituents. MRPSP's stakeholders include agricultural applicators; state and county agencies; irrigation districts; landscape contractors; public and private forestry managers; urban residents; and municipalities. The overarching goal of the MRPSP is to reduce the frequency of pesticides detected at concentrations greater than 50% of the aquatic life benchmark within the monitored watersheds.

In 2019 the MRPSP collected water samples from four tributary watersheds of Bear Creek: Jackson Creek, Larson Creek, Payne Creek, and Wagner Creek (see map below). Water samples were taken on regular intervals March through October. Based on the 2019 monitoring data, the MRPSP has identified three priority pesticides that

warrant further attention due to observed concentrations, detection frequency, and their toxicity to aquatic life: diuron, imidacloprid, and oxyfluorfen.

As our dataset continues to grow, MRPSP partners have been able to identify the pesticides most common and of greatest concern in the Bear Creek Watershed, and in doing so are working to develop communication materials and strategies for the most likely users of those chemicals. The intention of pesticide monitoring is that applicators, the general public, and research scientists will better understand how and why certain pesticides accumulate and move through our local watersheds. Over time, the MRPSP will continue to offer education, technical assistance, and incentives for the adoption of scientifically-based, best management practices to ensure appropriate pest control while reducing or eliminating pesticide contamination of surface waters.



2019 MRPSP Sampling locations within the watershed of Bear Creek, a tributary of the Rogue River.

Community Resource

Low-Cost Equipment Rental Program

Our District is proud to be able to offer a low-cost farm and conservation equipment rental program to residents of Jackson County. Our equipment aids land managers in Jackson County in maintaining productive, healthy lands. To use our equipment, one must be a resident of Jackson County and use the equipment only on property within Jackson County. A small deposit is required and rental fees vary depending on equipment type and length of use.

Landowners currently under a Planning Agreement with the District have priority over those without a plan, on a first-come first-served basis. Contact Trevor Morris, our Office Assistant & Natural Resources Technician for more information.

Available Equipment

- Spike Tooth Harrow
- Flail Mower
- Ring Roller
- Pasture Harrow
- No-Till Drill Seeder (2)
 - "*Dew Drop*" and standard size
- Soil Auger
- Soil Moisture Step Probe

Snapshot

- **26 landowners** rented equipment
- **All rentals** combined, our rental program helped to treat or manage **180 total acres**
- **147 acres drill-seeded**
 - 43 acres the largest contiguous area
 - 0.5 acres the smallest contiguous area
- **Emergency fire recovery assistance** to five landowners for erosion-prevention seeding



Community Resource

Partnering to Complete an Eagle Scout Project

On July 17, 2018, a fast moving brush and grass fire swallowed up 123 acres in downtown Central Point, OR. Hundreds of people were evacuated and thousands of dollars were lost due to mandatory business closures and evacuations. Yet a silver lining showed through the smoke and ash: acres of the invasive Armenian blackberry were removed in the near-stream habitat along Bear Creek.

Beginning in October 2018, JSWCD and our partners began work to slow erosion, further reduce the number of invasive species on the site, and educate local students and community members. Flash forward to 16 months post-fire, and we have completed a major planting effort with the tremendous help of Troop 7 Eagle Scout Candidate, Noah Stillwell, a 17 year old student at St. Mary's High School in Medford, OR.

Noah's project was the fourth Eagle Scout Conservation Project our Education & Outreach Coordinator, Karelia Ver Eecke, oversaw. These projects are a collaboration between the District, the Eagle Scout candidate's family, community partners, and would not be possible without the help from community members who show up to do the hard work!

Snapshot

- **November 3, 2019**
- **410** native riparian trees & shrubs planted
- **60+** community volunteers
- **Collaboration** between six community organizations
 - Rogue Valley Council of Governments
 - Lomakatsi Restoration Project
 - Middle Rogue Steelheaders
 - Boy Scout Troop 7
 - Oregon Department of Transportation
 - Jackson Soil & Water Conservation District



Community Resource

Realtor Classes

Since 2018, we have partnered with the Rogue Valley Association of Realtors to bring natural resource management education to our local realtors through *Earth Track*.

Upon completion of each year's annual offering of *Earth Track* classes, realtors are much more confident in speaking with their buying and selling clients about natural resource management and decision-making processes.

Each year's class offerings are developed around local, current issues; questions from realtors; and resource concerns as seen through the District's lens.



- **Provided classes covering:**

Defensible Space

Livestock & Stormwater

Irrigation Issues

Forestry Practices & Home Defense

Residential Water Conservation & Stormwater Management

Community Resource

Lunch with a Conservationist: Focus Area Outreach During COVID-19

The Little Butte Creek Focus Area was established in 2013 to allow for targeted project implementation and financial assistance programs to improve agricultural water quality in the Little Butte Creek Watershed. Focus Areas (FA) are selected by local conservation districts and allow for targeted, high density project efforts in a specific area. Focus Areas allow for a coordinated effort between multiple partners, which in turn can serve a greater number of landowners with more financial and technical assistance resources available.

In an effort to facilitate information sharing we developed our *Brown Bag Lunch with a Conservationist* series to address some common areas of interest, concern, and technical assistance needs in the FA. From May 2020 to

August 2020 our staff, private contractors, and guest speakers met with landowners via Zoom meetings to discuss the following areas to improve best management practices areas in the Focus Area:

May 12, *Understory Management & Soil Protection*

May 19, *Grazing & Pasture Management*

June 2, *Fencing*

June 16, *Off-stream Watering*

June 30, *Riparian Management*

July 28, *Ponds*

August 11, *Irrigation*

August 18, *Water Rights & Protecting Yours*

August 25, *Pasture Renovation*

September 8, *Equipment Rental Program*

Looking Forward

Wildfire Recovery

The Almeda and South Obenchain fires that ignited on September 8, 2020 were fed by high winds, excessively dry conditions, and high seasonal temperatures. Thousands of acres were burned and thousands of structures were lost.

Our District immediately went to work assessing property damage, and helping landowners begin the process of post-wildfire restoration. Through experience our partners and communities are seeing the value of better understanding the role of fire on the landscape. Future projects are already unfolding which will encompass whole forest management, landscape-scale studies—some including prescribed burns, and better preparedness for fire throughout our communities. These projects will bring together large landowners, state agencies, and local non-profits to do great, important work.

Snapshot

- **Almeda Damages**
3,000+ structures lost
3,200 acres burned
- **South Obenchain Damages**
Almost 90 structures lost
32,671 acres burned
- **\$79,601.64** in District Funds earmarked for Wildfire Recovery efforts
- As of December 7, 2020, **43 properties assessed**, equivalent to **3,165 acres**
- **516 straw bales & 7,500 pounds of seed** purchased to provide for **FREE** to landowners with property damage.



Looking Forward

Hemp Program

The agricultural landscape and community in Jackson County has changed drastically in recent years, reflecting changes in the legalization of production, processing, and consumption of marijuana and hemp. This has caused particular concerns about growth in acreage under cultivation of cannabis and the impact that it is having, or may have, on natural resources. Cannabis cultivation has the potential to contribute to topsoil loss, increase invasive species impacts to nearby fields and natural areas, and degrade agricultural water quality through pesticide and sediment runoff.

Recognizing the possible threats to conservation goals that cannabis production presents, JSWCD is working towards a pilot program to support hemp and marijuana producers in responsible natural resource stewardship. As we begin this process, we have completed workshops for producers throughout the growing season to guide them in best management practices for soil

health, water quality, integrate weed and pest management, and waste management.

Our workshops encouraged practices like cover cropping for winter soil protection and fertility, knowledge of water rights, and strategies for field preparation that will minimize impact throughout the growing season. Approximately 60 hemp producers tuned into our workshops, which also helped to strengthen our partnerships with OSU Extension and the hemp industry as a whole. We supported a few producers in actually implementing winter cover cropping, which is critical to promote soil health and has been demonstrated to increase yields in other crops. Over the next year, this program will grow into a full financial rebate and technical assistance program with increased outreach to producers throughout the valley.



Notes



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Turning natural resource concerns into opportunities.

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