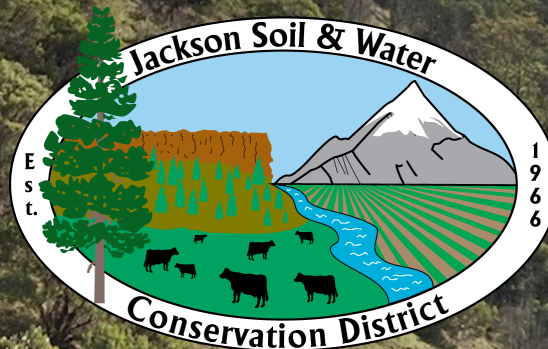


Jackson Soil & Water Conservation District

Annual Report

Fiscal Year

2021-2022



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

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Manager's Message

Fiscal year 2021-2022 saw Jackson County still reeling from the devastation of the South Obenchain and Almeda fires while continuing to feel the social impacts and health concerns of the pandemic. And, as in the past, the District and its staff, along with our many partners, rose to the occasion. We were able to initiate, continue, and complete many natural resource stewardship projects and education and outreach events for the benefit of Jackson County residents. Some of these projects and events will be highlighted in this report, but I would like to take this opportunity to list a few of our many accomplishments (district-led and partnership projects):

Education and Outreach

OSU Land Stewards; classes through the Rogue Valley Realtors Association, North Mountain Park, SOREC and others; Natural Resources Day Camp; Southern Oregon Regional Envirothon

District Conservation Assistance Program and Incentive Programs

Riparian Restoration Rebate; Storm Water Management Rebate; City of Talent Arbor Day; Wetland Interpretive Trail Educational Signs; Salmon Watch; Almeda Fire Educational Signs; Aquatic Species Interpretive Cards; Regenerative Bee Pasture

Monitoring Programs

Antelope Creek Water Quality; Middle Rogue Pesticide Stewardship Partnership; Joint System Canal Water Quality; On-farm Water Quality; Irrigation Conveyance Water Quality, National Water Quality Initiative

Fire Recovery and Prevention

South Obenchain Forest Restoration and Wildfire Resilience (ODF); Almeda Drive Fire Recovery; South Obenchain Fire Restoration (OWEB); Wagner Creek Fuels Reduction

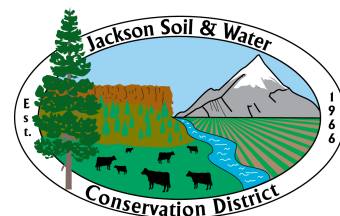
Water Quantity and Quality Improvement Projects and Partnerships

Galls Creek Irrigation Improvement; Yale Creek; Phillips Ditch Pipeline; Joint System Canal Pipeline; Little Butte Creek Water Quality; Antelope Creek Water Quality; OACD Working Lands; OCEAN; Southwest Basin; National Water Quality Initiative

I welcome you to read this report for more in-depth stories of a few of the many projects and activities we worked on this past year.

Sincerely,

Randy White
District Manager

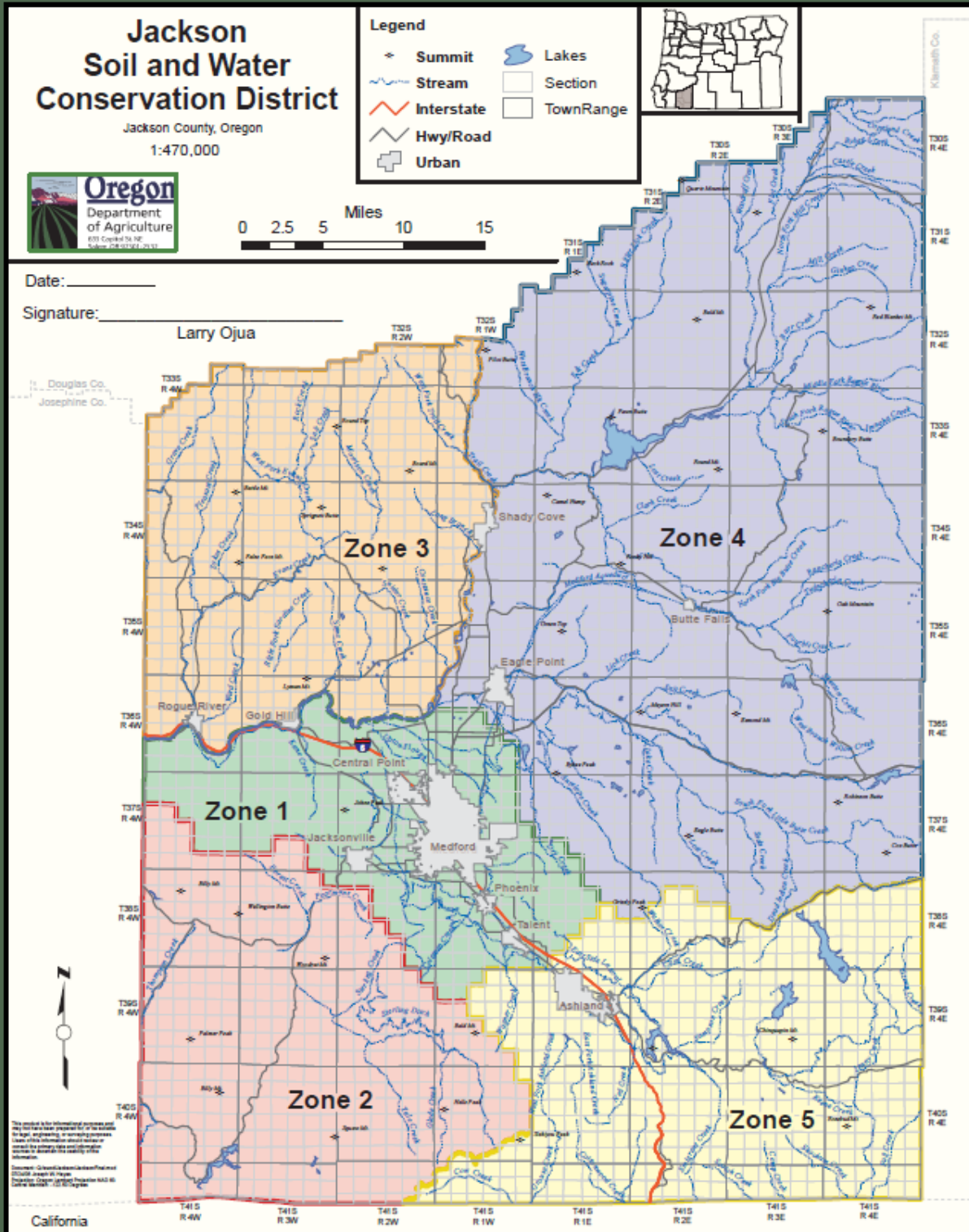


Financial Report

2021-2022 Fiscal Year ending June 30th, 2022

Receipts	Amounts
Property Taxes	\$1,177,173
Oregon Department of Agriculture	\$102,484
Tours, Workshops, & Classes Tuition	\$0
Interest	\$8,474
Grant Revenue	\$266,429
Lease Revenue	\$33,655
Miscellaneous	\$780
Total Receipts	\$1,588,995
Disbursements	
Personnel Services	\$749,213
Materials & Services	\$702,788
Capital Outlay	\$3,998
Total Distributions	\$1,455,999
Excess if Receipts over Disbursements	\$132,996
Net Changes in Fund Balance	\$132,996
Fund Balance (Cash Basis)	
Net Position (Cash Basis)	
Beginning of Year	\$1,378,196
End of Year	\$1,511,192

District Map



About the District

The Jackson Soil and Water Conservation District maintains an actively involved elected Board of Directors, employs a professional staff, and works with volunteers, natural resource experts, and partner organizations including nonprofits and federal, state, and local agencies to improve natural resource stewardship. Our work is achieved through technical & financial assistance; education and outreach efforts; and monitoring. This fiscal year Jackson Soil and Water Conservation District employed a District Manager, an administrative specialist, a business manager, a soil and water conservation engineer, a forest and riparian resource conservationist, a community water resource conservationist, an agricultural resource conservationist, a stewardship monitoring coordinator, and an education and outreach coordinator. Our varied backgrounds and perspectives allow for well-rounded and diverse approaches to natural resources conservation.

Our Relationships

Collaborative working relationships are what makes our work possible. We work with partners on the local level including nonprofits, schools, cities, the county, irrigation districts, businesses, and residents, as well as 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 For-

estry.

Measure No. 15-67

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

Highlight

Check out some recent District work gaining local attention at www.jswcd.org/jswcd-in-the-news

Board of Directors



Stan Dean
Chairman, At Large



Gordon Jones
Zone 1



Barbara Niedermeyer
Vice-Chairwoman, Zone 2



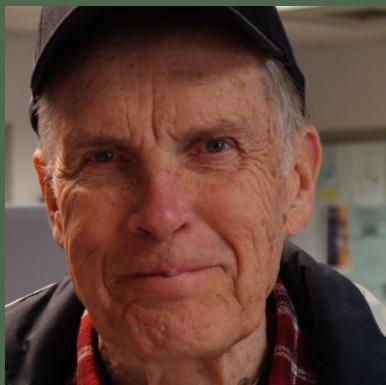
Nicky Webb-Smith
Zone 3



Don Hamann
Zone 4



Ron Hillers
Zone 5



Allan Campbell
At Large



Juanita Wright
Director Emeritus



Pam Hillers
Associate Director

Staff



Randy White
District Manager



Markie Germer
Administrative Specialist



Trevor Morris
Business Manager



Paul DeMaggio
Soil & Water Conservation
Engineer



Clint Nichols
Forest & Riparian Resource
Conservationist



Kora Mousseaux
Community Water Resource
Conservationist



Meghan Montgomery
Agricultural Resource
Conservationist



Jenna Sanford
Stewardship Monitoring
Coordinator



Hannah Satein
Education & Outreach
Coordinator

Conservation Assistance Program

Jackson Soil & Water Conservation District provides technical assistance and education to private landowners and residents interested in natural resources conservation. In order to better facilitate this goal we also offer a grant program, the Conservation Assistance Program (CAP). This program allows us to help further local conservation work and education via financial assistance; staff also apply for external funds in addition to using district funds to further on-the-ground conservation.

CAP is divided into a variety of funding pools:

Priority Area Projects

The Little Butte Creek watershed is a JSWCD priority area for water quality improvements. Primary foci of grant projects in this area are irrigation efficiency improvements, riparian restoration, and pasture management.

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 priority areas. For a project to qualify for funding from this program, the project must either 1) involve more than one property, preferably contiguous properties, or 2) receive funding from other granting organizations and agencies.

Funding amount: Up to \$50,000

Snapshot

- JSWCD provided a total of \$76,916.70 in CAP funds in FY 21-22
- Four small acts of conservation projects were funded for a total of \$23,650
- Three stormwater rebate projects were funded for a total of \$5,680
- Three education and community conservation grants were awarded for a total of \$9,653
- One cooperative conservation project was funded at \$38,023.70

Education & Community Conservation Program

Education & Community Conservation grants are awarded to individuals and entities for the implementation, creation, or continuation of community natural resource conservation education programs, demonstrations, or features. Any project with the 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

Conservation Assistance Program

District Incentive Programs

District incentive programs streamline the planning and granting processes to put good stewardship on the ground with greater efficiency for residents and staff. These programs are developed for topical areas where there is an identified need that is also an appropriate fit for a simplified process. These programs also offer support for smaller-scale projects that are often not eligible for other funding programs. There are currently four district incentive programs: riparian restoration, stormwater management, flow measurement, and community education. JSWCD develops new incentive programs as the need arises.

Funding amount: Varies by program

Small Acts of Conservation

Conservation projects not eligible for funding from other JSWCD funding pools may apply for funding from the Small Acts of Conservation program. Typically, this program funds smaller projects with only one property involved.

Funding amounts: Up to \$10,000



Youth collecting macroinvertebrates as part of the 21-22 Salmon Watch program supported in part by a JSWCD education grant

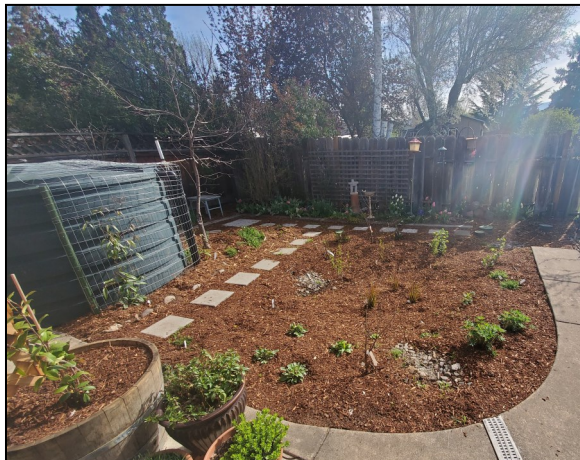
Highlights from the Year



JSWCD staff member Kora Mousseaux educating local youth about stormwater management during JSWCD's 2022 Natural Resources Day Camp

Stormwater Management Rebate Program

The Stormwater Management Rebate Program (SMRP) was released in October 2021 as a new district incentive program. The purpose of the SMRP is to streamline the planning and application process for stormwater management projects. Effective stormwater management can reduce erosion, improve water quality, and increase infiltration.



Rain garden and rain barrel from a FY 21-22 stormwater rebate project

This program includes the following stormwater features: bioswales, planter boxes, rain gardens, and rainwater harvest systems. The maximum amount of funds this grant provides is \$5,000. Total funds provided are based on average cost per unit, which is set for each of the four feature types. The SMRP may be applied for at any time, as funds are available. A site visit with a JSWCD staff member is required to determine eligibility. Final approval for use of these funds is made by the District Manager.

Since October 2021, the SMRP has been a popular program. As of June 30, 2022, two SMRP projects were successfully installed; key elements of these two projects were the installation of a 330 square foot rain garden, a 150 square foot bioswale, and 1,485 gallons of rainwater harvest. Another six projects were applied for and approved in FY 22-23, and over 13 additional projects are waitlisted for FY 23-24. Most interest has been for rainwater harvest to provide supplemental irrigation, drainage mitigation, increased water availability, fire protection, and/or greater upland storage.

Snapshot

- Started October 2021
- Funds bioswales, planter boxes, rain gardens, and rainwater harvest systems
- Two projects installed in FY 21-22
- Significant interest in the program particularly for rainwater harvest

S. Obenchain Wildfire Recovery and Resiliency

Since the Labor Day Fires of September 2020, JSWCD has become regionally recognized as the lead agency for post-fire recovery work within the South Obenchain Fire scar. Following the fire, JSWCD has worked with 51 of the 194 impacted landowners within the footprint of the South Obenchain Fire to stabilize slopes, prevent erosion, and slow recolonization of invasive species.

Building on previous work, in November of 2021 we assisted 3 landowners within the South Obenchain Fire with herbicide treatments to prevent blackberry regrowth, totaling 25 acres.



Post-fire willow regrowth along south fork Reese Creek facilitated by successful blackberry control

Overall, the 2021-2022 fiscal year saw more office work than field work from JSWCD staff related to the Labor Day Fires, with extensive time spent writing new grants and reporting on existing grants. This work has led to several projects in various stages of implementation within the South Obenchain Fire scar.

Areas that burned even at high severity have experienced a strong resurgence of Pacific madrone stump sprouting, while stands of trees only partially consumed have significant risk of re-burning in future fire events. Therefore, JSWCD applied for and was awarded a \$173k grant from the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) to treat 220 acres of fire-impacted land to reduce the risk of future fire, particularly around homes, infrastructure, and driveways. JSWCD secured this funding with a \$50k matching grant from our Conservation Assistance Program, as well as leverage from JSWCD staff time and previous investments of grant funds.

JSWCD recently submitted an Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) grant application to OWEB's 2020 Post-Fire Recovery Upland and Riparian Replanting program. If awarded, this project will include 71.5 acres of invasive species treatment and herbaceous seeding, selective replanting of 51.2 acres of riparian forests using the Rogue River Watershed Council's (RRWC) "Release and Recruit" method, and installation of 3.2 miles of livestock exclusion fencing along Reese Creek and

S. Obenchain Wildfire Recovery and Resiliency

important tributaries. Some properties that have livestock exclusion fencing will also receive alternative livestock watering solutions to keep livestock from drinking directly from streams. Using JSWCD staff time as match, we have asked for \$1 million in grant funds for this work and expect to receive notification of the status of this application in mid-September 2022.

JSWCD has also partnered with Sustainable Northwest in a Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCP) application, in which Sustainable Northwest received \$5 million in funding from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to address forest health, fuel accumulation, erosion, and wildlife habitat resource concerns. Of this, Sustainable Northwest budgeted approximately \$1.3 million to work in and around the South Obenchain Fire, primarily focused on reforestation and fuels reduction in fire-impacted landscapes.

Finally, JSWCD has applied to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Hazard Mitigation Grant Program to treat approximately 90 homes within and adjacent to the South Obenchain Fire to prevent catastrophic loss from future fire. This project represents a partnership between JSWCD, Jackson County Fire District 3, ODF, and the Rogue Basin Partnership to address all levels of risk to homeowners living within the Wildland-Urban Interface.

In addition to securing outside grant funding, JSWCD's staff investment in landowner relationships and restoration projects

within the South Obenchain fire area has led to stronger relationships with our partners, notably Medford Water Commission, the Town of Butte Falls, Oregon State University Extension, and Oregon Department of Forestry. Our efforts are also garnering interest from other established forestry and wildfire stakeholders in the Rogue Basin.

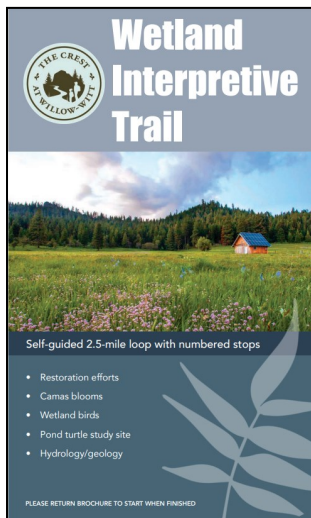
All these investments indicate a committed investment of staff time and grant funding to private lands impacted by the South Obenchain Fire.

Snapshot

- JSWCD is regionally recognized as lead agency for post-fire recovery in the S. Obenchain fire footprint
- The primary focus this year was on securing external grant funding
- JSWCD continued development of relationships with residents in the area and partners

The Crest at Willow-Witt Wetland Interpretive Trail

The Crest at Willow-Witt is an educational nonprofit in the Cascade-Siskiyou mountains that focuses on land stewardship, conservation, and education. The Crest receives hundreds of local students and visitors each year. In 2018 The Crest applied for a grant through the Education and Community Conservation Program to help establish an interpretive trail through a restored wetland on the property.



Trail brochure cover

Trail brochure cover

due to rising costs these were taken out of the first project. Following completion of this first grant, The Crest came to JSWCD to request funds to help support the creation of these signs and complete their vision. In 2021, The Crest was awarded another education grant for Phase II of this project.

The signs focus on: 1) The Crest's western pond turtle population and monitoring efforts 2) the geology and use of the natural

This grant was awarded and with JSWCD's support, The Crest was able to complete their interpretive trail and develop an educational brochure to enable visitors to take an informative self-guided walk.

Three large interpretive signs were also envisioned as part of this original project. However,

Snapshot

- Two-phase project funded by two education grants
- Completion of trail, three interpretive signs, and educational trail brochure
- Serves hundreds of students and visitors each year

springs on-site, and 3) the history of the land and its human use and management. These signs were informed by local scientists and designed and illustrated by a local team who also completed the trail brochure.



The History of the Land interpretive sign at the start of the trail with the educational brochures

In June of 2022, this second phase of the project was complete and now these gorgeous signs further enhance visitors' experience and learning along the trail.

Bradshaw Drop CIS

2019-2021

The Bradshaw Drop Conservation Implementation Strategy (CIS) aimed to improve water quality in the Antelope Creek sub-basin of the Little Butte Creek Watershed through the implementation of irrigation water management plans and new efficient irrigation systems. NRCS provided the majority of the funding through their EQIP program with additional funds from DEQ and JSWCD. JSWCD provided most of the technical assistance, planning, and implementation of the irrigation practices with support from NRCS.



New gravity pressurized, efficient, center pivot sprinkler system

Two large flood irrigators participated in the program resulting in 153.1 acres switched from wild contour flood irrigation to center pivots and linear move gravity pressurized sprinkler systems. An additional 150 acres of flood irrigation were improved privately by other landowners, bringing the total to 333.1 acres of improved irrigation systems out of the possible 538 flood irrigated acres in the project area (62% of the project area).

According to the preliminary results of our Antelope Creek Water Quality monitoring,

E. coli bacteria and total phosphorus concentrations have been significantly reduced in the location just downstream of the project area (see the next page for more information on the Antelope Creek Water Quality Monitoring project).

The Bradshaw Drop CIS is considered a success given the amount of work that occurred in its limited time frame, water quality improvements to Antelope Creek, and landowner appreciation.

JSWCD is continuing to work with the irrigators in this area. Future funding for agricultural water quality improvement projects may be obtained through the Department of Environmental Quality, Oregon Water Resources Department, Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board and/or JSWCD.

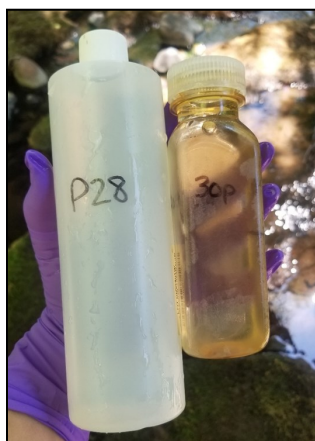
Snapshot

- Partnership with NRCS from 2019-2021
- 153.1 acres improved as part of the program, with another 150 acres improved independently
- Significant reduction in *E. coli* and total phosphorus in Antelope Creek
- 30% hay yield increase when switching from wild contour flood to center pivot sprinklers

Antelope Creek Water Quality Monitoring

The Antelope Creek Water Quality Monitoring project has been underway since 2017. The project was developed to capture changes in water quality from the Hopkins Canal piping project and Bradshaw Drop CIS focused on irrigation conversions away from flood irrigation. Water quality samples have been collected regularly throughout the irrigation seasons before, during, and after the completion of these projects; construction of the canal pipeline, which enclosed over 3 miles of open canal, was completed in 2019 and on-farm improvements were completed in 2021.

In this time, water quality in Antelope Creek and its tributary Yankee Creek have been monitored for multiple stream health indicators. There are four monitoring locations for this project: one in Yankee Creek and three in Antelope Creek (sites upstream and downstream of Yankee Creek and at the mouth of Antelope Creek). In-



E. coli and total phosphorus samples

stream monitoring activities in Antelope Creek and Yankee Creek include instantaneous grab samples of *E. coli* and total phosphorus, continuous temperature monitoring, and stream flow measurements.

Sampling is conducted on a bi-

weekly basis throughout the summer irrigation season.

Reduced concentrations of *E. coli* and total phosphorus have been observed at all four monitoring locations when comparing pre-project (2017-18) versus post-project (2019-2021) data averages.

The Antelope Creek monitoring site at the Highway 140 crossing (downstream of Yankee Creek) is immediately downstream from our project area. Data collected at this site show the greatest changes in water quality from pre-project to post-project and are most likely to be directly related to the activities and improvements within the



Antelope Creek monitoring site at Highway 140 project area.

Most notable is the significant reduction of *E. coli* bacteria present instream. A 71% reduction in median *E. coli* concentrations was observed in Antelope Creek at Highway 140 from the pre-project average median of 1707.0 MPN/100mL to the post-

Antelope Creek Water Quality Monitoring

project average median of 493.4 MPN/100mL. Although the average and median concentrations of *E. coli* are still above the benchmark level of 406 MPN/100mL, the quantity of *E. coli* instream has been significantly reduced.

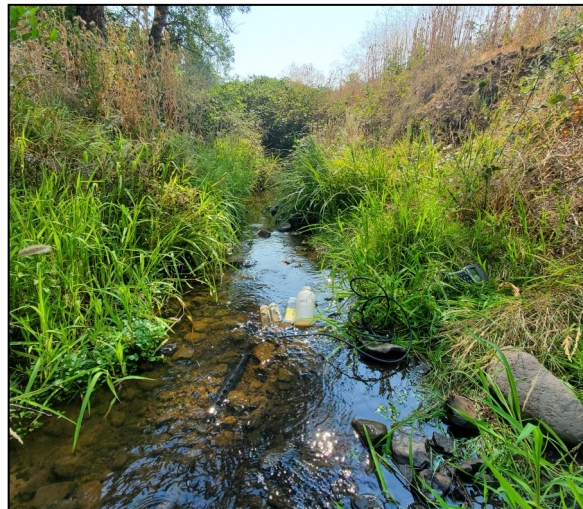
A 27% reduction in median total phosphorus concentrations was observed in Antelope Creek at Highway 140 from the pre-project average median of 0.164 mg/L to the post-project average median of 0.119 mg/L. Although total phosphorus concentrations remain above the benchmark level of 0.08 mg/L, there is a measurable reduction of total phosphorus instream.

Water quantity is also captured in our monitoring efforts as it is an important factor for water quality and overall stream health. Prior to canal piping and irrigation conversions, flow rates measured approximately 8-10 cfs in Antelope Creek at Highway 140. Flow rates post-irrigation conversion dropped to approximately 2-4 cfs. This reduction in instream water quantity is attributed to changes in irrigation practices that result in less overland flow (runoff). While there is now less flow instream in Antelope Creek during the irrigation season, there is also less pollutant inputs to stream waters, including *E. coli* and phosphorous.

We have yet to detect noticeable trends or changes in the other water quality parameters we monitor for.

We are currently in our sixth season of field data collection in 2022 and plan to

continue monitoring the water quality and quantity of Antelope Creek and Yankee Creek for several more years to further increase our understanding of how canal piping and irrigation conversion projects such as these impact water quality.



Water sampling at Yankee Creek

Snapshot

- Monitoring began in 2017
- Captures changes in water quality and quantity from Hopkins Canal piping and Bradshaw Drop CIS
- Decreases in *E. coli* and total phosphorus found in Antelope and Yankee Creeks

Joint System Canal Pipeline Project

The Joint System Canal (JSC) is a 13.6 mile canal at the beginning of both the Rogue River Valley and Medford Irrigation Districts; the JSC serves 2,200 farms and over 21,000 irrigated acres.

The existing canal poses many challenges for the irrigation districts including significant maintenance costs and evaporation and seepage losses. The open water transportation and flood irrigation return flows contribute to water quality issues in Little Butte Creek and the Rogue Basin.



Joint System Canal

Little Butte Creek is a very important waterbody for local drinking water quality, as well as salmon and steelhead habitat; up to 50% of the creek is diverted for agricultural production in the summer and is water quality limited for a variety of factors including sedimentation, bacteria, and temperature, issues that are magnified at low flows.

The irrigation districts and partners are planning to pipe the entire JSC in a series of phases. Piping the canal will help the irrigation districts provide more and cleaner, pressurized water to their patrons. Water quality in the Rogue Basin and Little Butte Creek may be improved by reducing water quality impairment in water trans-

portation and on-farm irrigation improvements that occur as a result of the project. The project will also result in in-stream conserved water for Little Butte Creek.

JSWCD has provided feasibility level designs for Phase 1, participated in multiple tours with state and federal elected officials, and conducted other outreach to help generate support for the project. JSWCD will continue support the pipeline project and be the primary agency for helping with on-farm improvements for the surrounding properties.

Monitoring

The Joint System Canal Water Quality Monitoring project aims to measure how piping the proposed Phase I, 4.3 miles of open canal, affects water quality.

Current monitoring efforts are focused on collecting baseline data on select water quality parameters in the open canal before pipeline installation. In-canal monitoring activities for the Joint System Canal project include continuous temperature monitoring and instantaneous grab samples of *E. coli*, total phosphorus, nitrate, and turbidity.

Monitoring began in the 2021 irrigation season. Sampling is conducted once monthly throughout the summer irrigation season when water is present in the canals.

Water quality monitoring for this project is anticipated to continue until several years after the completion of the entire pipeline.

Reflections from Partners

“Medford Water Commission is grateful for our effective partnership with JSWCD. JSWCD provides an essential role in the Rogue River Basin by protecting and restoring watersheds that are the sources of drinking water for over 140,000 people in Jackson County.”

Craig Harper, Medford Water Commission

“I like the way JSWCD has engaged streamside forest stewardship by taking on leadership where others aren't able to lead and in creating programs to help individual landowners address "small" reaches. ”

Brian Barr, Rogue River Watershed Council

“I view your District as a great example of an engaging partner in natural resource protections...[JSWCD]'s additional capacity to assist with forestry, fuels, and water quality objectives for the communities we serve is welcome in my opinion.”

Lee Winslow, Oregon Department of Forestry

“The South Obenchain fire recovery project seems like a great example of where JSWCD stepped in, provided some high level coordination, and assisted landowners that might not otherwise be reached. ”

Max Bennett, OSU Extension Service

“JSWCD has been a great partner helping move irrigation efficiency in a new direction in the Applegate. We hope to continue the work we have begun and expand with outreach to water users on the mainstem Applegate in the near future.”

Janelle Dunlevy, Applegate Partnership Watershed Council

Looking Forward

On March 31, 2023, I will be retiring after 34 years in a natural resources career that saw me provide stewardship assistance to many Jackson County residents. I started my career as the extension livestock agent with the Oregon State University Extension Service in 1989. My position grew to take on pasture and rangeland stewardship. After 15 years, I moved over to Jackson Soil and Water Conservation District as their natural resource specialist before taking on my current role as the district manager. Over the last 19 years, I have seen and supported the District in its growth from a staff of 1.5 to the current, knowledgeable, and very dedicated staff of nine. I feel very fortunate to have helped many Jackson County residents turn natural resource concerns into opportunities.

Throughout my career, as I traveled around southern Oregon talking with residents and partnering agencies and completing my master's degree on foothill restoration it was apparent that we have very diverse ecosystems with specific concerns. However, we also have many of the same natural resources concerns within in those ecosystems e.g., invasive species, wildfire, soil health, carbon sequestration, water quality and quantity, riparian and upland habitat, and climate change, to name a few. It is also apparent that these concerns do not know our social boundaries!

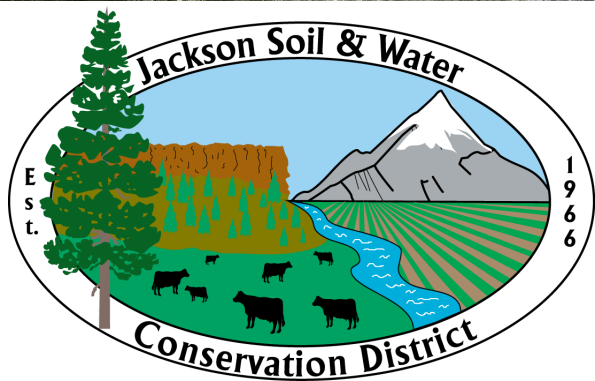
Thus, over the last few years I have come to the realization that with this dedicated staff and our many wonderful partners, we can work towards achieving large-scale stewardship projects and events. At the District, we can build upon past work in our Focus Areas and Strategic Implementation Areas, while continuing to develop and further strong working partnerships with other soil and water conservation districts, watershed councils, and other agencies.

Moving towards this could open the door to resident engagement and education not only in Jackson County but throughout the Rogue Basin. It could ultimately lead to implementing basin-wide stewardship projects. These projects could provide the foundation for efficient and effective natural resources stewardship monitoring that allows for adaptive management, while also showcasing the ecologic and economic uplift for all residents in the basin. If successful, this could lead to a restructuring of how funding entities provide support for planning and on-the-ground natural resources stewardship projects. Might be worth a try!

It has been a great ride!

Sincerely,

Randy White



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Turning natural resource concerns into opportunities

Follow us on Facebook & Instagram