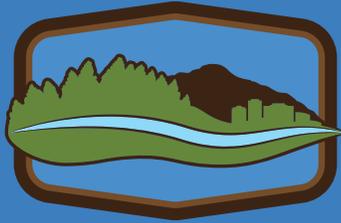
A photograph of a forest stream with water flowing over mossy rocks. The water is blurred, creating a sense of motion. The rocks are covered in green moss and are scattered throughout the stream. The background is a dense forest with green foliage.

# UPPER WILLAMETTE SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

2020-2025  
**Strategic Plan**



**UPPER WILLAMETTE**  
SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Upper Willamette Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) is a local subdivision of state government with an elected board of directors that addresses natural resource issues in eastern Lane County. The SWCD is an Equal Opportunity Employer, providing employment and services to the public without regard

to race, color, national origin, religious preference, gender, age, or disability. This strategic plan for the Upper Willamette SWCD provides a summary of the organization's structure, programs, and assistance that the District provides to the residents within its boundaries. The plan was developed with the input of key

conservation partners, members of the public, staff, and board members. This strategic plan will provide direction to the staff and board members to establish priorities and annual work plans, and ensure that progress is being made to advance the District's mission, vision, and goals.

# MISSION, VISION, AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

## MISSION

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To encourage and promote the responsible stewardship of our natural resources through conservation, restoration, and protection, to enhance the health, economic benefits, and quality of life for the citizens within the District.

## VISION

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Our lands and waters are healthy and sustain farms, forests, wildlife and communities.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

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We value the partnerships and working relationships we have with local conservation nonprofits and local, state, and federal agencies as we join together to protect and enhance the natural beauty, livability, and ecosystems of Lane County.

We uphold a locally-led, watershed-based, and voluntary approach to natural resource management to ensure the health and sustainable use of our water and other natural resources.

We respect private property owners' rights and honor their wise and responsible stewardship of natural resources.

We seek participation of the residents of Lane County to establish local conservation priorities.

We will enhance our efforts on underserved populations and geographic areas and strive to provide equitable access for all to our services. We will work to incorporate diversity, equity, and inclusion awareness and practices into our work process and programs.

We will act with integrity and operate with transparency.



# SCOPE AND CURRENT CAPACITY

Oregon Soil and Water Conservation Districts are legal subdivisions of state government with oversight by the Oregon Department of Agriculture. Soil and Water Conservation Districts have broad authority under their enabling legislation to address natural resource concerns. This authority allows districts to fully engage in resource management programs related to soil, water, flood control, forestry, wildlife, land protection, education, and other natural resource areas.

Soil and Water Conservation Districts are governed by five locally

elected directors, and work to protect natural resources in their geographic areas. Districts have a strong history of working closely with a variety of federal, state, and local conservation agencies and organizations including the USDA's Natural Resource Conservation Service, local watershed councils, land trusts, and non-profits.

The Upper Willamette SWCD (formerly East Lane Soil and Water Conservation District) was formed on May 3, 1988, by the consolidation of the North Lane (formed 1956), Upper Willamette (formed 1971), and Mid-Lane

(formed 1953) Soil and Water Conservation Districts and roughly covers the eastern two-thirds of Lane County (see map in Appendix 1).

The Upper Willamette SWCD is currently co-located with the Natural Resource Conservation Service and Farm Service Agency in the USDA's Resource Center in Eugene, Oregon. The District is staffed by a District Manager, Conservation Specialist, and part-time Administrative Specialist. Its annual budget is approximately \$150,000 and is funded almost entirely by grants.



# OUR VISION FOR LANE COUNTY



**1** We envision clean, healthy, and abundant water resources for all people and wildlife in Lane County.

**2** We envision bountiful, healthy soils thriving with organic matter to provide nourishing foods, flourishing forests, and vital wildlife habitats on all lands.

**3** We envision thriving, abundant wildlife habitats along rivers, lakes, streams, and on mountains, in oak savannas, and forests.

**4** We envision the long-term protection of rural lands to ensure Lane County is a place that supports the vitality



of farms and ranches for economic and social benefits.

**5** We envision urban and rural citizens protecting/stewarding natural resources for the benefits of all citizens and future generations.

**6** We envision abundant natural green spaces available to all citizens of Lane County.

**7** We envision creating vibrant urban natural habitats for the benefit of our children, pollinators, and wildlife.

**8** We envision equitable access to nourishing local foods, outdoor natural spaces, pure drinking water, and services to benefit all citizens.



**PROGRAMS,  
PROBLEMS,  
STRATEGIES,  
CAPABILI-  
TIES, AND  
NEEDS**

# PROGRAM OVERVIEWS

**Water Quality:** The District assists landowners in protecting the surface and ground waters of Lane County through education, technical assistance, project development, coordination with local partners, and implementation. The Water Quality Program addresses water quality, limited water bodies, and drinking water source protection needs in Lane County.

**Farm/Food/Soil:** The District promotes soil health and sustainable agriculture by providing technical and financial assistance to local farms. The District works to connect farmers with Lane County residents and increase local food security. The Farm/Food/Soil Program addresses poor soil conditions, changing agricultural practices, and local food security.

**Forest Health and Resilience:** The District helps communities prepare for wildfires in the rural and urban interfaces by providing technical and financial resources for fuel load reduction and fire-resistant landscaping. The District also provides small woodland owners with technical assistance and incentives to improve forest stands for sustainable timber harvest, water quality, and wildlife

habitat. The Forest Health and Resilience Program addresses wildfire hazards, underserved small woodlot owners, and poor forest health.

**Neighborhood Sustainability:** The District's urban program strives to protect drinking water, enhance green spaces and pollinator habitat, and improve neighborhood livability through education, technical and financial assistance, and community development projects. The Neighborhood Sustainability Program addresses threats to clean drinking water, native pollinators, and urban livability.

**Watershed Restoration and Conservation:** The District provides support to local conservation organizations engaged in watershed restoration and conservation through collaboration, technical, and financial support. The Watershed Restoration and Conservation Program addresses degraded watershed functions and processes.

**Natural Resource and Environmental Education:** The District promotes outdoor and natural resource education of our youth by developing community partnerships for education networks

and resources for a wide variety of educational opportunities. The District also works directly with Lane County residents to increase knowledge of our natural resources. The Natural Resource and Environmental Education Program addresses the decline of available resources for natural resource and environmental education for our community.

**Collaboration:** The District promotes a strong collaborative approach to conservation through shared resources and coordination with local conservation organizations and local, state, and federal agencies. Increased collaboration addresses the limited resources available to local conservation organizations.

**Internal Services:** The District will operate in a manner which maintains fiscal and administrative transparency and long-term sustainability.

# STRATEGIES

The chart below expands on the District's programs by providing broad strategies to reach the District's vision and goals. The District's annual work plan will be developed matching its available resources

with tasks to implement these strategies. Available funding limits the District's current programs, but this chart shows the areas the District has prioritized if additional resources are made available.

With the assistance and input from a range of conservation partners, members of the public, the District board, and staff, the District has not only identified strategies, but determined if they are

Program	Strategy	Vision #
<b>Water Quality</b>		
	Protect drinking water sources.	1, 5, 8
	Implement agricultural water quality program	1, 2, 4, 5, 8
	Conduct water quality monitoring	1, 5, 8
	Improve urban water quality	1, 5, 7, 8
<b>Farm/Food/Soil</b>		
	Soil testing	2, 4
	Soil Health Initiative	2, 4, 5
	Connect farmers to local markets	2, 4, 8
	Develop Farm Incubation Center	2, 4, 8
	Promote school gardens	7, 8
	Hold agricultural easements	2, 4, 5, 8
	Promote regenerative agricultural practices	2, 4, 5, 8
<b>Forest Health and Resilience</b>		
	Reduce fire risk in the wildland urban interface	3, 5
	Increase forest health for sustainable harvest and wildlife	3, 5
	Advance innovation in forest management	3, 5
<b>Neighborhood Sustainability</b>		
	Develop and implement neighborhood sustainability program	5, 6, 7, 8
	Enhance urban greenspaces and pollinator habitat	5, 6, 7, 8
<b>Watershed Restoration and Conservation</b>		
	Protect and improve fish and wildlife habitat	2, 3, 5, 7
	Invasive species management	2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8

part of the District's core function, an area in which they could provide financial or other support to community organizations already involved in implementing these strategies, or if there is currently a

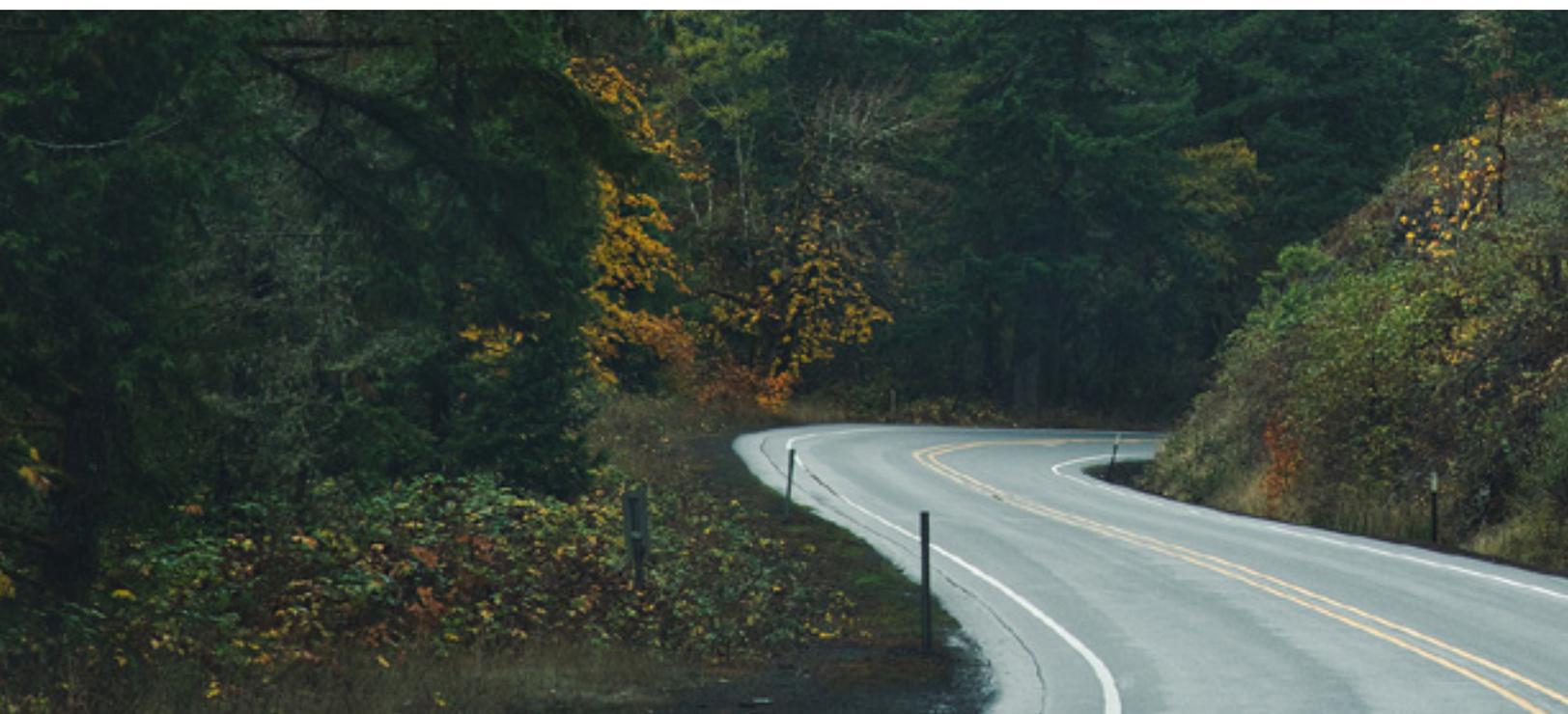
community wide gap in providing these needed strategies. Each strategy was also evaluated to determine if implementation was through technical assistance (TA), financial assistance (FA),

education and outreach (E/O), or a combination of these methods.

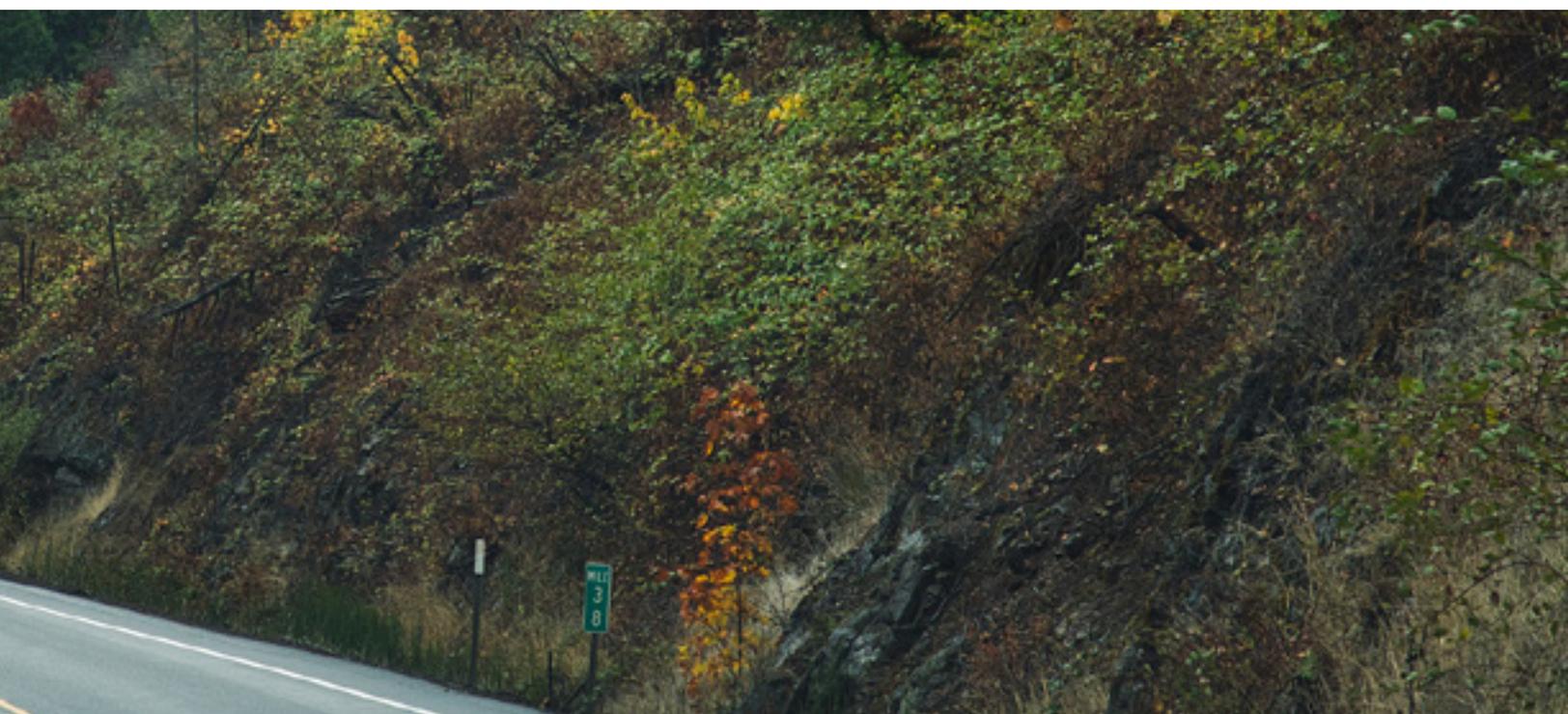
Current District Program	Needed District Program	Core Function	Support Function	Needed in Community	TA	FA	E/O
●		●	●		●	●	●
●		●			●	●	●
●		●		●	●		
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# STRATEGIES (cont.)

Program	Strategy	Vision #
<b>Natural Resource and Environmental Education</b>		
	Support youth and student natural resource education	5, 7, 8
	Develop community partnerships for education networks	5, 7, 8
	Advocate for indigenous and traditional knowledge and education	3, 5, 7, 8
	Create opportunities for the advancement of conservation technical education	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8
<b>Collaboration</b>		
	Coordinate the sharing of information and resources among regional conservation organizations	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8
	Establish a conservation campus	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8
	Engage in and support collaborative processes and planning	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8
<b>Internal Services</b>		
	Retain highly skilled technical workforce	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8
	Guarantee proper and transparent fiscal management	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8
	Adhere to the laws relating to soil and water conservation districts	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8



Current District Program	Needed District Program	Core Function	Support Function	Needed in Community	TA	FA	E/O
	●		●	●	●	●	●
	●		●	●	●	●	●
	●	●	●	●		●	●
	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
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●		●					●





# COLLABORATION

Having a collaborative approach to managing our land and water resources is essential in today's world. The Upper Willamette SWCD seeks to engage our partners and landowners to create innovative, collaborative initiatives that build off our collective strengths to solve complex problems.

## **COLLABORATION STRATEGIES:**

- Create opportunities for collaboration in planning, monitoring, and evaluating our programs.
- Develop a platform for collecting and sharing relevant information between partners and communities of the Upper Willamette ('information hub').
- Invest in resources that can be shared to best serve our communities and partners (creating efficiencies).
- Build a Conservation Campus that will serve as a hub for conservation in the Upper Willamette.

# JUSTICE, DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

We know that SWCDs have not historically been attentive to matters of Justice, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (JEDI). The District recognizes that conservation and social justice are interconnected, yet we have much to learn about the history and implications of this relationship. Looking forward we intend to make JEDI central to our mission and to plan and evaluate our programs, approaches, and services to ensure that we are doing the best we can for all people of the Upper Willamette.

## **JEDI STRATEGIES:**

- Invest time and resources to provide effective training for our staff, our elected officials, and our partners in conservation.
- Ensure that organizations, associations, and representatives of communities of color and other socially, politically, and economically marginalized populations have opportunities to participate in the SWCD's planning and programs.
- Establish an evaluation process that ensures all SWCD programs are planned and evaluated against their ability to deliver outcomes for marginalized communities.
- Develop a JEDI oversight committee to ensure that the SWCD is making strides towards our JEDI goals.





# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Natural Resources have always been the backbone of Lane County's economy. The Upper Willamette SWCD recognizes the importance of contributing towards the economic development of our families and communities while also providing for the sustainable management of our land and water resources.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES:**

- Create local sustainable jobs through increased investment in sourcing local foods and leveraging state and federal resources for education, conservation, agriculture, and forest practices.
- Develop programs that help small-scale farmers and foresters add value to their products and access local markets.
- Support farmers, foresters, and other resource managers to obtain investments for the implementation of sustainable practices that improve soil and water management as well as their bottom lines.
- Ensure that investments made in local conservation and education efforts are leveraged to bring additional dollars from the state and federal levels.
- Plan and invest in soil and water conservation in a way that is economically, socially, and ecologically sustainable for today's and tomorrow's communities.



# LIMITATIONS OF CURRENT FUNDING LEVEL

The District has identified limitations and consequences of functioning

at current staff levels and offering current programs and services.

- The District cannot serve all assistance requests in a timely manner. The public may be vulnerable to regulatory actions because the District cannot assist them quickly enough to help them achieve compliance.
- Technical assistance is provided selectively, limiting the District's ability to use a watershed approach.
- The District is limited to serving customers in English when providing services. Specifically, the District lacks funding to contract for translation services in Spanish as well as various Asian-Pacific languages, or to hire additional employees fluent in multiple languages.
- The District cannot fully implement programs and strategies identified in this strategic plan.
- The District has limited resources to educate the public about natural resource issues, possible solutions, and the availability of District services.
- Increased population density in Lane County will create an increase in the demand for services.
- The District is limited by grant funding. Grant funding is uncertain, short-term, limited purpose, and requires employee time for application, reporting, and administration.
- The District's current funds are restricted or delegated to specific projects or purposes.
- The District is dependent on outside sources of funding to operate programs and employee staff; fluctuating or withdrawn sources of funding threaten termination of District programs and services in an unpredictable manner.



# STRATEGIES TO INCREASE CAPABILITIES AND MEET NEEDS

**1** Seek a permanent tax rate limit (i.e. tax base) to increase capacity in order to implement needed programs and strategies.

**2** Partner with non-profits, community organizations, private landowners, and other governmental agencies to leverage available funds, collaborate on projects, and avoid duplication of efforts.

**3** Train staff to increase skills and efficiency.

**4** Recruit and train volunteers.

**5** Seek additional funding from public, private, and grant sources.





# FINANCIAL IMPACT TO COMMUNITY

The Upper Willamette SWCD is funded almost entirely with grant funds. Annually, the District receives approximately \$75,000 in capacity grant funding from the Oregon Lottery via the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board. Research by The Ecosystem Workforce Program at the Institute for a Sustainable Environment and the Institute for Policy

Research and Innovation has shown that Oregon SWCDs and Watershed Councils are able to leverage base capacity funding by an average of 500% from sources outside the county with 80% of total SWCD expenditures being spent locally. Further research shows that public expenditures have a “multiplier” effect that doubles the economic impact locally.

During the last fiscal year, the Upper Willamette SWCD was able to leverage its base funding by 250%, generating over \$300,000 in direct local economic impact. Over the last ten years, the district has had over \$2,150,000 in direct local economic impact. With additional revenue resources, this economic impact would greatly expand.



# PARTNERS AND PLANNING PROCESS

Partnership with local conservation organizations, non-profits, local, state, and federal agencies, members of the community, and rural landowners has been, and will continue to be, a key component to the success of the Upper Willamette SWCD. By planning together, coordinating activities, and sharing resources and knowledge the District is better and more efficiently able to accomplish its mission and

vision, and provide needed conservation and water quality programs to the residents of Lane County.

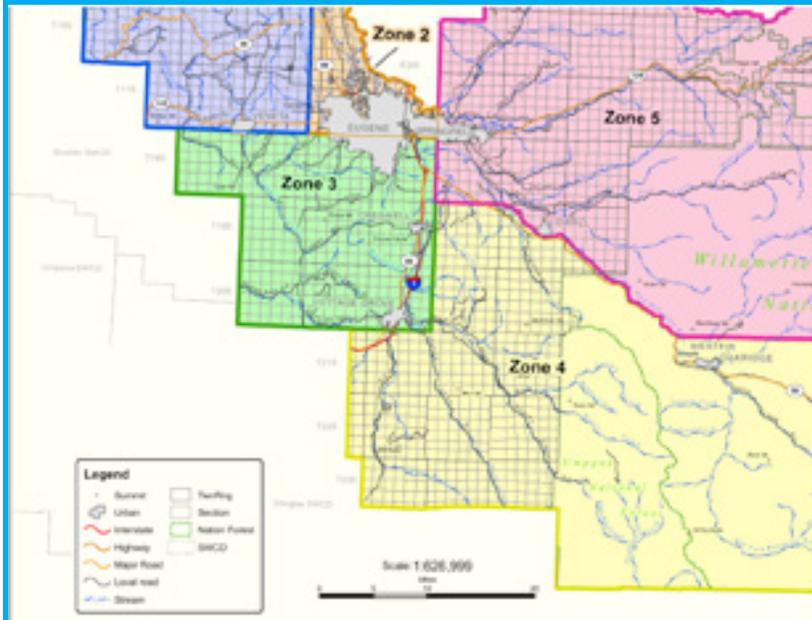
The following core partners have participated in the District's Resource Enhancement Committee (REC) which has helped develop this strategic plan and advised the District on possible enhanced revenue streams:

- Eugene Water and Electric Board
- Long Tom Watershed Council

- McKenzie Watershed Council
- Coast Fork Willamette Watershed Council
- Middle Fork Willamette Watershed Council
- McKenzie River Trust
- Natural Resource Conservation Service, USDA
- Oregon Department of Agriculture
- Upper Willamette Stewardship Network

# APPENDIX

## 1. MAP OF UPPER WILLAMETTE SWCD



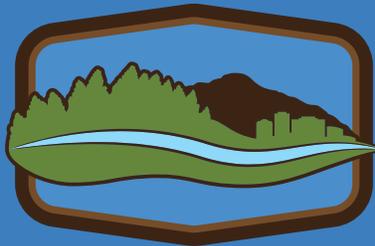
## 2. CURRENT BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND STAFF

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Al Hrynshyn	Zone 1	Chair
Mary Durfee, Ph.D.	Zone 2	
Gary Jensen	Zone 3	Secretary/Treasurer
Abel Kloster	Zone 4	
Ralph Perkins	Zone 5	Vice-Chair
Chuck Arrera	At Large	
Malcom Wilson	At Large	
Eric Nusbaum	Associate Director	

### STAFF

Dave Downing	District Manager/Watershed Technical Specialist
Lily Leitermann	Conservation Specialist
Clarissa Berndt	Administrative Specialist



**UPPER WILLAMETTE**  
SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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