



# UPPER WILLAMETTE

SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT



July 2020– June 2021 Annual Report

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## BOARD MEETINGS

Meetings are held every second Tuesday of the month at 3 pm in the USDA conference room and are open to the public. \*COVID-19 Update: Meetings will be held virtually via Zoom until it is deemed safe to resume regular meetings. Zoom code available upon request.

## Our Mission

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

We coordinate with regional partners to protect, restore and enhance local natural resources through voluntary programs and education. We work with the community on water, land, fire safety and agriculture. We strive to assist the community in learning more about natural habitat conservation and protection. We provide grants to local property owners to help with restoration and conservation projects.

## A note from our Chair, Al Hrynyshyn:



“For the Upper Willamette Soil & Water Conservation District, the 2020-2021 fiscal year was a roller-coaster of energy, activity, and emotion. We continued to serve our constituents to the best of our abilities, and while our scope was limited, our effectiveness was as good as ever. I would like to extend thanks to our amazing and dedicated staff, Dave, Lily, and Clarissa, and the hard work and thoughtful input from the Board of Directors.

The flip side of the energy and emotion rollercoaster was the wildfire season of September, particularly with the Holiday Farm Fire. The devastation and disruption of lives was especially hard so close to home, and we all suffered in some way. Our hearts go out to those who experienced the worst of the losses. The UWSWCD has been able to be part of the recovery efforts though. Our staff, especially Lily, has been deeply involved in the recovery and restoration efforts and has worked hand in hand through Pure Water Partners, EWEB, and other public and private conservation partners in helping our most affected constituents and natural resources recover and begin the road back to a new normal. The Board of Directors is extremely grateful and appreciative of these efforts, and are glad we could be of service in this. We are proud to represent the people of Lane County in natural resource conservation and value our opportunities to work with the residents in our region.

Along with the rest of the population, we still dealt with COVID-19 issues and restrictions. An upside to this is that we are now seasoned Zoom veterans. Although we have adapted many of our practices to keep our community and staff safe, it’s still no true replacement for in-person meetings. The Board was successful in obtaining passage of our Measure 20-312, which appeared on the general election ballot in November of 2020. While we had to shift the method of educating Lane County about the measure, we found great energy and enthusiasm from partners and supporters, and are grateful of the positive outcome from the community.

The UWSWCD started the transition process in January of 2021 and continues to move forward with putting the communities tax dollars to work with current fire relief efforts, new programs for landowners, and community outreach efforts. We will be in the spotlight more than ever in the coming year productive years ahead. Next year’s Note from the Chair will be very interesting- stay tuned!”

# Water Quality Monitoring Programs

During the 2020-21 fiscal year District staff completed its first National Water Quality Initiative Strategic Plan for the McKenzie Watershed. This Plan was developed in partnership with NRCS, State and local Water Quality agencies and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The Plan identifies and provides measures to address impaired water bodies that include source water protection for surface water and ground water public water systems through voluntary conservation.



This plan will assist partners in adapting and expanding source water protection and identify critical source areas needing further treatment related to agricultural land uses. The assessment determined the primary influences of hydrology and human actions that impact the drinking water quality and resource concerns in the plan area.

As the McKenzie plan was finalized and the implementation phase started through incentive funding provided by the Natural Resources Conservation Service's Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP), the district was ready to move on to a second Strategic Planning area. For the second plan the district chose the Bear Creek sub-basin a tributary to the Long Tom River that provides source drinking water for the city of Monroe, Oregon.

Once again, the district partnered with the same federal and State agencies as well as the Long Tom Watershed Council to start the planning process. After the initial application process through the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) national office was approved, the planning process began in October of 2020. To date, two of the four planning phases have been completed with a final plan completion date of March 2022.

# ODA Agricultural Water Quality Program

In 2020-21 the district continued its partnership with the Oregon Department of Agriculture to provide local technical assistance to agricultural landowners through the Agricultural Water Quality Program. The district committed one FTE position during the year to provide technical assistance and seek funding opportunities for agricultural producers to address water quality concerns associated with their individual ag operations. This work was funded by an ODA ag water quality grant of \$58,000. This work was more complicated by the Covid 19 pandemic prohibiting contact with individual landowners, as well as group outreach and educational meetings. Also, by a lack of district capacity due to the district transitioning to a tax base funding structure. During FY 2020-2021

District staff work consisted of:

300	Individual producers contacted
260	Acres of agricultural lands covered by 18 conservation plans that were developed to address water quality concerns
194	Producers provided with technical assistance
70	Producer site visits
5	Applications submitted for project funding
4	Landowner engagement events sponsored and coordinated
4	Landowner visits to assist ODA compliance division
1	Bi-annual meeting : UW/US Local Advisory Committee to review the ODA Agricultural Water Quality Plan & Rules

## OWEB Small Grant Program

In 2020-21 the district continued to utilize the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) Small grant program to assist district landowners with smaller scale projects on their land. The small grant program provides up to \$15,000 per project for planning, design, and implementation of projects that address natural resource concerns that include water quality and habitat enhancement, declining habitat restoration, soil health, livestock management, and invasive species management.

Project duration is up to two years, with small grant area funding of \$100,000 per biennium for eligible applicants. During 2020-21 district staff developed 4 small grant projects addressing natural resource concerns with estimated costs of \$55,000, while completing 3 previous projects totaling \$45,000. These projects were located throughout the district and primarily focused on small acreage livestock operations addressing negative impacts on water quality.

# National Association of Conservation Districts

The Upper Willamette SWCD applied for and was approved for a second NACD Technical Assistance grant in 2020-21. This grant again provided funding to the district to provide technical assistance to agricultural landowners who are currently participating in Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) federal incentive programs. Projects assisted included soil health, crop productivity, surface water protection, and forestland management. District staff assisted NRCS staff by conducting outreach, conservation plan review, and practice completion inspection with photo documentation to ensure participating landowners were eligible to receive program incentive payments. Technical assistance was provided to 9 individual landowners conducting conservation activities on 430 acres. This grant funded a .29 FTE technical staff position totaling \$18,145 in grant funds.



Technical assistance was provided to 9 individual landowners conducting conservation activities on 430 acres. This grant funded a .29 FTE technical staff position totaling \$18,145 in grant funds.

## ODA Strategic Implementation Area Camp Creek SIA

The district continued to provide local voluntary technical assistance to agricultural landowners located in the Camp Creek sub-basin of the McKenzie watershed as a partner with the Oregon Department of Agriculture's Strategic Implementation Area Process to address ag water quality concerns. In the 2020-21 fiscal year staff assisted three landowners with projects that addressed potential negative impacts to water quality of Camp Creek a tributary of the McKenzie River. Two of the projects addressed livestock waste management on a total of 140 acres removing existing waste stockpiles and utilizing the waste as a soil amendment by spreading the material at an agronomic rate to enhance pastureland.

One of the projects achieved a revitalized pasture area that previously was non-productive which allowed for increased grazing capacity for the operation. While another project consisted of riparian habitat enhancement project that was approved for OWEB grant funding to implement. This project is in the planning and design phase with implementation to begin in winter of 2022.

# **NRCS – Annual Report**

## **Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP)**

The Natural Resources Conservation Service has been utilizing Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) funding to implement projects within the Conservation Implementation Strategy focus areas. In 2020, there were 20 projects funded through EQIP. In Lane County there are 3 local strategies, oak woodland restoration, forest enhancement and water quality improvements in the McKenzie Watershed. There were 7 oak projects funded totaling \$591,751 in obligations for those projects. In the forest funding pool, \$33,240 was allocated to fund 4 projects. In the McKenzie watershed 4 projects totaling \$84,382 was allocated to improve water quality in the McKenzie River. In addition to local funding pools, the State has a high tunnel funding pool and an organic funding pool. The Eugene Field Office completed 4 contracts totaling \$29,673 and one organic contract for \$70,078. The total EQIP funds utilize for fiscal year 2020 was \$809,124.

## **Holiday Farm Fire**

NRCS and the District spent two days at the Vida Store trying to let people know about USDA Programs as well as the UWSWCD and PWP programs. Together they held two outreach events with roughly 30 attendees. There were a mixture of people who lost homes on a couple acres of riverfront property and others who lost larger tracts of forest land. The stories that were shared are heartbreaking and we are so thankful that there were not more lives lost in this tragic fire.

## **Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)**

CSP is intended to increase the level of conservation on operations that are already adopting conservation practices. NRCS has criteria that we need to meet to address resource concerns. CSP is intended for people who would like to exceed the established criteria. I think CSP would be a good option for many of our forest landowners. There are opportunities to reduce fire hazard, improve wildlife habitat and generally benefit the overall health of the forest. I'm currently also taking CSP applications. There has not historically been much interest in this program in Lane County. I'd like to increase participation. Please let forest landowners know that there are opportunities for funding forestry projects.

# Pure Water Partners (PWP) Holiday Farm Fire Recovery Response

**\*The language adapted from and pulled directly from the OWEB grant report, EWEBs' report to OWEB, and SWCD staff\***

The Holiday Farm Fire (HFF) ignited over Labor Day weekend in early September 2020, starting west of McKenzie Bridge and quickly continuing to burn through Blue River, Finn Rock, Nimrod,

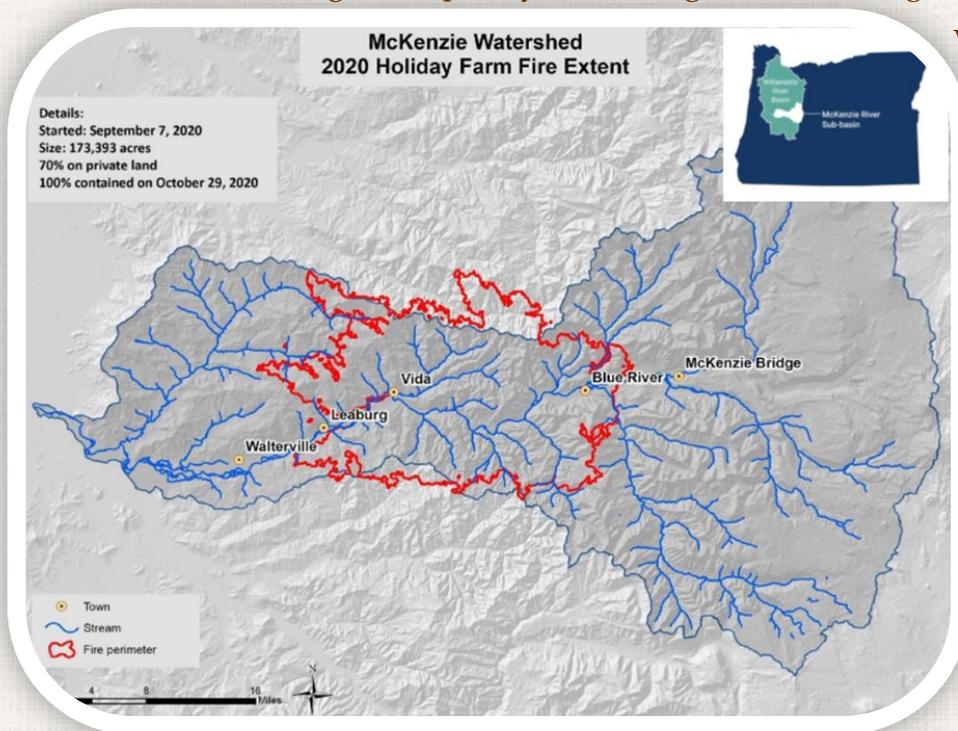
Vida, and Leaburg, mainly following the Oregon Highway 126 corridor (Map 1). The fire encompassed over 173,000 acres primarily in the McKenzie River Sub-basin and destroyed over 4350 homes and structures. Most of the fire-impacted area, 70%, is a mix of private rural residential and industrial timberlands.

Federal lands accounted for

over 29% of the burn area, and Lane County lands less than 1 percent. While the HFF primarily burned a mosaic pattern, stand-replacement fire conditions were prevalent on private and public land.

The McKenzie River supports exceptional water quality and high-quality habitat for native fish and wildlife. The river is the sole drinking water source for over 200,000 people in the greater Eugene-Springfield metropolitan area and is home to numerous ESA-list species, spring Chinook salmon, and bull trout. The impacts of the HFF devastated local communities, threatened the drinking water quality of the McKenzie River and a range of habitats for native species.

Wildfires can dramatically increase erosion by reducing tree cover and altering the physical and chemical properties of soils. Post-fire ash, debris, and sediment can impact water quality for downstream communities and native fish and wildlife. Increases in peak flows laden with debris and



sediment may accelerate channel scour and hillslope erosional processes. The introduction and spread of noxious weeds threaten native plant communities. Riparian forests that experienced stand-replacement fire represent a threat to critical habitat for native species and the protection of water quality.

Local conservation organizations, the public utility, and government agencies formed the Pure Water Partners (PWP) program in 2014 to protect and enhance riparian forest habitats on private lands in the McKenzie Sub-basin. The PWP is an incentive-based strategy to promote voluntary partnerships with private landowners. The program created riparian assessments, long-term landowner



agreements, centralized financial management, and project implementation procedures. Partners include Cascade Pacific Resource Conservation and Development (CPRCD), EWEB, McKenzie River Trust (MRT), McKenzie Watershed Council (MWC), and Upper Willamette Soil and Water Conservation District (UWSCD), and the USFS. The

PWP adapted the established programmatic framework to respond to significant watershed recovery and restoration needs on private property impacted by the HFF in fall 2020. EWEB funds supported the initial post-fire recovery work during the acquisition of additional funding sources. In January 2021, CPRCD received OWEB's Wildfire Response grant to support the work of the watershed recovery project managers from the MRT, MWC, and UWSWCD.

**The following is a chronological summary of the McKenzie PWP Watershed Recovery Task Force's 2020-2021 restoration efforts:**

- ◆ Immediately following the fire, the PWP team began outreach to the HFF affected residents offering help with erosion control on moderately to severely burned properties.

- ◆ From October 2020- April 2021, The PWP team completed burn assessments on over 230 properties.
- ◆ The PWP team implemented erosion control mitigation on over 100 properties.
- ◆ The PWP team developed planting plans, and secured 7-year agreements with 89 landowners, which allowed crews to plant approximately 210,000 native trees and shrubs in high priority burned riparian and floodplain areas.
- ◆ After completion of winter 2021 replanting on burned sites, the PWP team switched to implementing treatments to reduce fire fuels on 35 priority properties using the Northwest Youth Corps (NYC) and contractors. This work was accomplished under a tight timeline due to use of Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) grant funds that had to be spent by June 30, 2021. EWEB funds also supported this work.
- ◆ Due to drought conditions and the stress on recently planted seedlings, the PWP team began rapid assessments of the 89 properties to assess plant mortality and identify those that could benefit from wood chip mulch and/or irrigation. The NYC and contractors were deployed to 35 high priority sites to improve replanting success rates.
- ◆ Once the ODF-funded fuels work was completed, EWEB and the PWP team transitioned to a longer-term restoration effort and revised the property assessment process to include collecting site information on fuels reduction needs, invasive vegetation issues, potential erosion problems, and revegetation needs.
- ◆ The PWP team is also encouraging nature scaping concepts and suggesting Firewise best practices when providing recommendation to landowners following these property assessments. The PWP is also supporting an effort to create Firewise communities in the McKenzie Watershed.
- ◆ New GIS applications have been essential to both data collection needed for the HFF response efforts and for prioritizing work on the ground. GIS work completed in 2021 included revamping the public facing dashboard, updating the field applications that support property assessment data collection, completing LiDAR and ortho imagery flights of the McKenzie (50% funded by the USGS), and conducting GIS analysis/prioritization of F-2 lands or smaller woodlots impacted by the HFF that have special replanting needs.

# Healing, Resilience, and Recovery

The Pure Water Partners program and the Upper Willamette SWCD recognizes that the McKenzie river fire-affected community, residents, and landowners have all experienced some level of trauma. Field staff and project managers working in the fire perimeter and with impacted residents also feel the weight of this collective trauma over time and might experience a level of trauma. Recognition is given to the reality that the trauma will manifest differently among individuals. Organizations and collaboratives such as the PWP need to ensure that impacted staff can access established support systems, including referrals for mental health, paid time off, flexible work scheduling, and regular check-in times with colleagues or supervisors to share experiences.

The value of solid collaboratives is another fundamental aspect of the PWP's wildfire recovery work since the 2020 Labor Day wildfires. The nearly ten years of intentional partnership organized through the PWP helped local partners respond efficiently and effectively. This framework developed the templates for shared funding, fiscal administration, cooperative outreach, coordinated fieldwork, and perhaps more importantly, it created an environment of trust and understanding among numerous partners. The lesson learned is that the structured collaborative environment that the PWP built before the Holiday Farm Fire allowed for partner organizations to respond at a scale, scope, and speed that exceeded any previous watershed restoration or outreach effort undertaken in the McKenzie River sub-basin.



*Habitats Contracting Replanting a Burned Property.*



*NYC installing jute wattles to reduce erosion on a severely burned landscape.*



*Jute wattle used for erosion bloomed with willows and wildflowers in the spring 2021*

Promoting equity is also central recommendation emerging out of this project. Pre-Holiday Farm Fire, PWP assisted landowners along the McKenzie River and main tributaries with conserving and restoring riparian habitat within a specific boundary. This restrictive geography meant that many of the program's landowners were of higher-socio economic status, given the proximity to the scenic

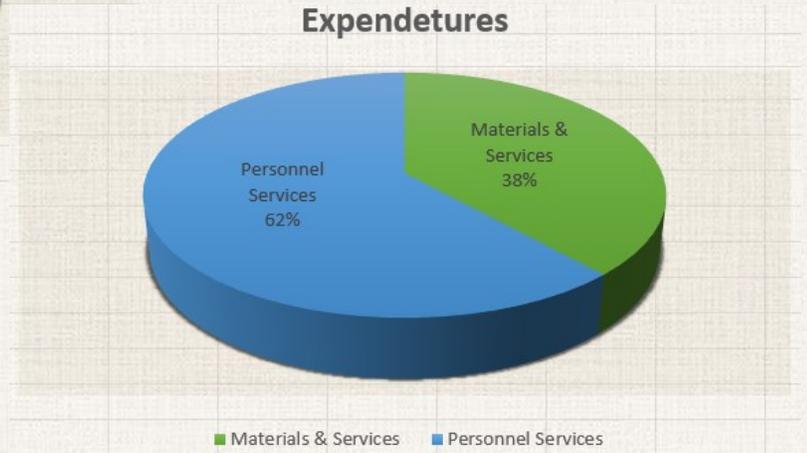
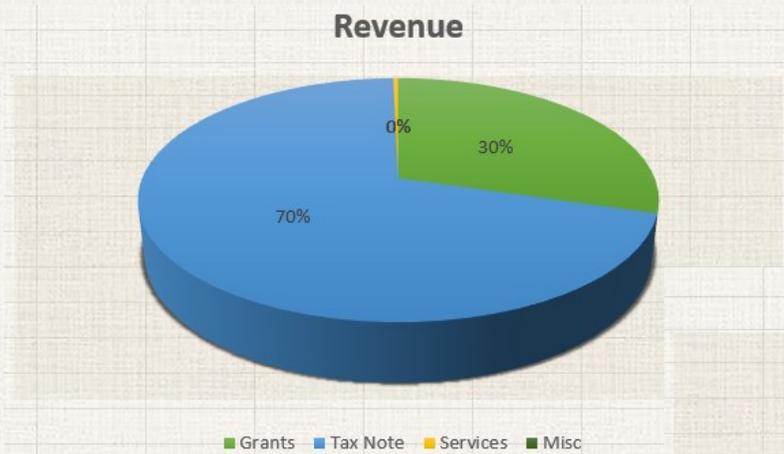


river. While this decision was largely funding-based and not intentionally exclusive, it limited participation among the wider population. At the onset of the HFF response, the PWP partners opened the program to all properties impacted by the wildfire. While this was a first step towards addressing programmatic inequity, the application of the PWP program in response to the HFF has been far from perfect in terms of providing resources to those who can least afford them. The PWP continues to bring awareness to this issue while increasing efforts to

make resources available to those who lack connections or knowledge of available program or services.

The Pure Water Partners and UWSWCD staff recognize the resilience of the McKenzie watershed residents and landscape. Field staff conducting assessments witnessed the regrowth of native vegetation on severely burned soils. Over time the burned landscape will regenerate with new growth of vegetation. Like the landscape, the McKenzie river residents are rebuilding, changing, adapting, and recovering. The McKenzie River valley is resilient, healing occurs, and we are all working together to rebuild and recover this precious watershed.

# Financial Summary



<b>Profit &amp; Loss</b>		<b>Balance Sheet - June 30,2021</b>	
<b><u>REVENUES</u></b>		<b><u>ASSETS</u></b>	
State Funding	188996.04	Cash	572454.15
Federal Funding	43401.00	Equipment	4963.91
Tax Anticipation Note	550000.00	<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>577418.06</b>
Other Sources	3007.41	<b><u>LIAB &amp; EQUITY</u></b>	
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>785404.45</b>	<b><u>Liabilities</u></b>	
<b><u>EXPENDITURES</u></b>		Payroll Liabilities	7877.46
Personnel Services	196478.23	Credit Card	294.86
Materials & Services	122.093.95	Other Liabilities	549.05
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>318572.18</b>	<b><u>Equity</u></b>	
Net income	<b>466832.27</b>	Net Invest in Cap Asset	<b>2998.51</b>
		Retained Earnings	98865.91
		Net Income	466832.27
		<b>Total Liab &amp; Equity</b>	<b>577418.06</b>

# Board of Directors and Staff



**Board Chairman**  
**Al Hrynyshyn**  
**Zone 1**



**Secretary/Treasurer**  
**Gary Jensen**  
**Zone 3**



**Vice Chair**  
**Ralph Perkins**  
**Zone 5**



**Mary Durfee, Ph.D.**  
**Zone 2**



**Abel Kloster**  
**Zone 2**



**Chuck Arrera**  
**At Large 1**



**Malcolm Wilson**  
**At Large 2**



**Eric Nusbaum**  
**Assistant Director**



**District Manager**  
**Dave Downing**



**Admin Specialist**  
**Clarissa Berndt**



**Sr. Conservation**  
**Specialist**  
**Lily Leitermann**

# Thank you to Our Partners:

Thank you to our many partners, including:

USDA – FSA/NRCS, Oregon Dept of Agriculture, Oregon Dept of Forestry, Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB), Eugene Water & Electric Board (EWEB), Fresh Water Trust, Long Tom Watershed Council, Coast Fork Willamette Watershed Council, Middle Fork Willamette Watershed Council, McKenzie Watershed Council, McKenzie River Trust.

