



ANNUAL REPORT - 2025

UPPER WILLAMETTE WORKING LANDS PROGRAM

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With additional staff capacity, the Working Lands program increased our reach and impact, doubling the number of land managers reached with educational programming and technical assistance.

In the fall of 2024, we were awarded a cooperative agreement with the Natural Resource Conservation Service to launch a Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative. This four year agreement will allow us to reach more managers of grazing lands with technical assistance for grazing and pasture management, peer support opportunities, and educational programming with a focus on beginning farmers and ranchers.

Collaboration and with our partners has allowed us to reach farmers and ranchers with a wider variety of support, pursue solutions to common farmer challenges, and to leverage local & state resources to create positive change on the ground.

Working Lands continues to focus development on our role as a support hub for farm conservation and to invest in partnerships that advance our purpose.

WORKING LANDS PROGRAM

Purpose

The purpose of the Upper Willamette Working Lands program is to support farmers, ranchers, and other working land managers as they attempt to adapt to and mitigate the impacts of climate change.

Toward this end, we are pursuing several strategies designed to catalyze the adoption of regenerative agriculture as a standard practice for local farmers and ranchers.



The Problem:

With over 200,000 acres in Lane County under private management for agriculture, the operation and stewardship of these working lands can have a tremendous impact on soil, water, and habitat resources. In order to achieve desired watershed health outcomes, as well as adapt to the challenges of a changing climate, these working lands must adopt changes in management and practices that are regenerative to the landscape and its ecological functions.

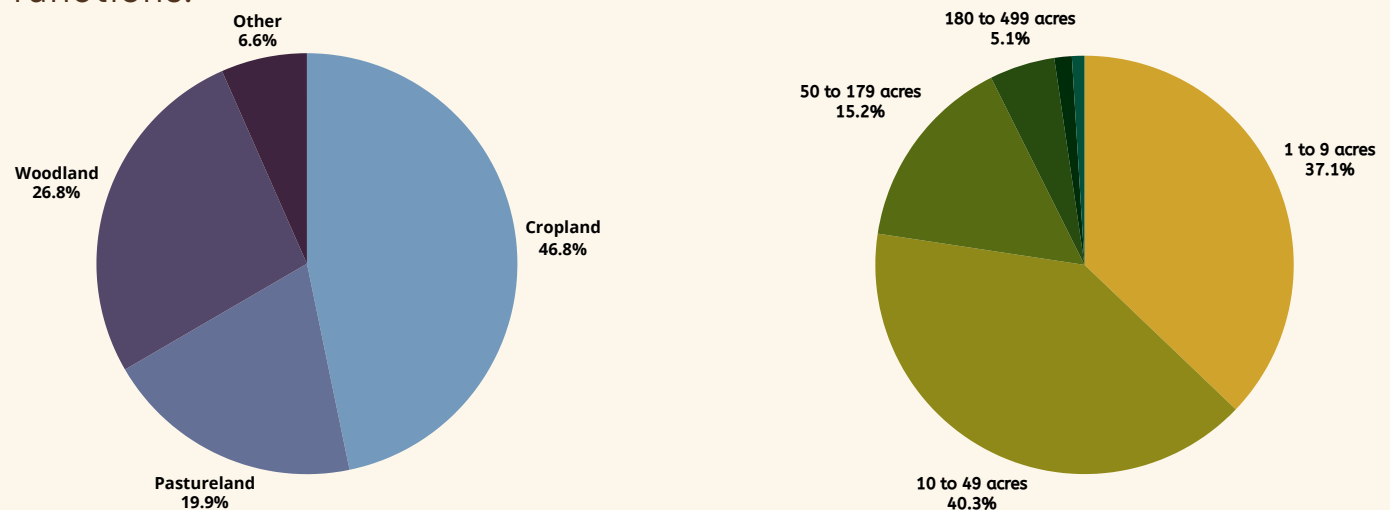


Figure 1 (left): Land in Farms by Use in Lane County, 2022 census of Agriculture

Figure 2 (right): Farms by Size in Lane County, 2022 census of Agriculture

Furthermore, nearly 80% of these private farm properties are under 50 acres, and half of those are less than 10 acres. This translates to a large population of farm managers making independent decisions about land stewardship on these properties.

OUR GOAL

The goal of the Upper Willamette Working Lands Program is to shift the active management of these private farm properties to practices that are protective and regenerative to the soil, water, and habitat in a changing climate.

Program Objectives

Our program objectives focus on **developing the role of farm manager as land steward**, and supporting these individuals in **accessing information, skills development, and resources** for adopting best management practices and on-farm conservation:

1. **Raise awareness among** farmers, ranchers, and agricultural landowners about the connection between their working lands management, watershed health, and climate change adaptation.
2. **Lower barriers** to adoption of regenerative practices.
3. **Collaborate with partners to fill gaps** in support and create opportunities to engage landowners in adapting to and mitigating for the impacts of climate change.
4. **Respond to landowner needs and challenges** navigating existing resources.

Conduct Outreach to Farmers, Ranchers, and Managers of Working Lands

Connect farmers with existing financial resources, information, and technical assistance that facilitate the adoption of regenerative practice.

Identify and respond to gaps in services and support for regenerative agriculture practice.

Engage & steward landowner relationships to better understand and respond to emerging on-farm challenges.

OUR STRATEGY



Farmer Support

After several seasons of needs assessment, coalition building, piloting processes & materials, and building capacity, the Working Lands program has been able to move into our implementation phase in earnest.

We doubled our reach this past year, serving over 200 local farm managers with educational programming and on-farm technical assistance & planning.

- Hosted 4 farm tours to showcase innovative & regenerative farm practices
- Presented a 5-week workshop series for beginning land managers, and supported 2 additional workshops to highlight soil & water stewardship practices.
- Continued to reach the farming community through speaking engagements with local farmer associations and community farmers markets.

Many of these farmers will continue to engage with the program as they transition their land management to protect soil & water resources, restore habitat, and adapt to climate change.

Furthermore, **we've initiated agreements with a priority roster of 19 farm managers** who will collaborate to create long term conservation management plans and regenerative grazing plans.



Financial Support for Resilient and Regenerative Management

With support from Working Lands and our Farmer Advisory Team, the Upper Willamette SWCD was able to pilot its first Land Steward Grant Opportunity, awarding \$42,500 in small grants to 9 local farms to implement projects such as hedgerows, cover crops, and erosion control.

Working Lands also served on the Oregon Community Food System Network's Disaster Resilience Grant Committee for a second round of grants to small farms this year. Nearly \$800,000 was awarded for projects that help Oregon farms adapt to the challenges brought by climate change. Over \$82,000 went to farmers in the Working Lands Program.

Program Development



Tools & Systems for Farmer Support and Partner Coordination

With a grant from the Roundhouse Foundation and close collaboration with the Upper Willamette SWCD, the Working Lands Program has continued to refine our program processes and partner referral practices.

These systems are vital to supporting land managers through the process of navigating opportunities and leveraging the expertise and support of regional partners & programs.



Collaboration & New Partnerships

- We continued engagement of our Farmer Advisory and Program Advisory Teams this year for input on program development and regional needs. We welcomed two new farmers to our Farmer Team and welcomed Plaza de Nuestra Comunidad to our Program Team.
- We initiated new partnerships with the Friends of Family Farmers' Oregon Pasture Network, and the Center for Rural Livelihoods which have allowed us to reach more farmers with a wider array of support through our Willamette Valley Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative.
- In 2025 Working Lands joined the Leadership Team of the Oregon Community Food Systems Network (OCFSN) lending a voice to the strategic role of the Network in supporting farms across the state.
- Working Lands has been a partner on the statewide Capital Access for Local Farms (CALF) project, helping to lower farmer barriers to accessing farm capital, conducting focus groups and participating in a community of practice for farm service providers.





241 NEW FARMERS REACHED

- Direct on-farm technical assistance & conservation planning
- Educational programming, workshops, and farm tours

3953 ACRES

- Engaged in preliminary conservation planning and transition to regenerative management



\$771,946.36

- We supported our local farmers in securing \$125,384.86 for on-farm conservation projects
- We secured \$646,561.50 to fund our work to reach new landowners, and support the adoption of regenerative farm management.

4 NEW PARTNER COLLABORATIONS

- Oregon Pasture Network and the Center for Rural Livelihoods joined as partners on our Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative
- Plaza de Nuestra Comunidad joined our Program Advisory Team
- The Wild Farm Alliance presented on at our Spring 2025 Farm Tour



OBJECTIVE

ACTIVITIES

OUTCOMES AND DELIVERABLES

Collaborate with partners to fill gaps in support and engage landowners

- Refined current program systems and identified areas for improvement
- Inventoried tools and systems used by partners
- Engaged partners in discussion about needs for coordination
- Tried landowner intake tools and relationship management software
- Received a grant from the Roundhouse Foundation to pilot shared tools and systems
- Identified preliminary tools and systems to pilot with partners
- Served on the Planning Committee to host Oregon's first Soil Health Summit in Corvallis in January 2025
- Signed an MOU with Oregon Climate and Agriculture Network to serve as a regional hub in a statewide Healthy Soils Network
- 110 farmers and farm service providers engaged and a statewide Healthy Soils Network was launched.
- Will pilot an Upper Willamette hub of the Oregon Healthy Soils Network in 2025



ACCOMPLISHMENTS

2024-2025

OBJECTIVE

ACTIVITIES

OUTCOMES AND DELIVERABLES

Raise awareness among farmers

- Farm Tour at Stroda Brothers' Farm in Junction City
- Farm tour at Fair Valley Farm in West Eugene
- Two tours of project sites at Townsend Woods and Coyote Spencer Wetlands
- 5-week Living on the Land Workshop series
- Two IPM Workshops for English and Spanish speakers at Lane Community College
- Pure Water Partners Naturescaping workshop in Leaburg
- Presentation at the 2025 Lane County Farmers Market Member Meeting

- 241 farmers reached with education & resources for rural land stewardship, innovative farm management, and examples of practices that protect water quality, build soils, and promote native wildlife habitat on farmland.

Lower barriers to adoption of regenerative practices

- Supported the development and rollout of the 2025 UWSWCD Land Steward Grant
- Served on the OCFSN Disaster Resilience Grant Review Committee
- Launched the Willamette Valley Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative

- 9 small grants awarded to local farms for stewardship projects
- 7 large grants awarded to local farms for climate disaster resilience projects
- 2 new farmer mentorships positions created
- 19 farms engaged in planning support

Respond to landowner needs & challenges

- Held 2 farmer focus groups for the Friends of Family Farmers CALF Project
- Engaged the Working Lands Farmer Advisory Team to identify emerging needs
- Supported farmers with grant writing assistance

- Farmer feedback was gathered for future improvements to the UWSWCD Land Steward Grant
- Creation of a capital access resource database for farmers
- Farmers successfully secured grant funding for projects

NEXT STEPS

In the coming year, the Working Lands Program intends to step more fully into its role as a hub for farmers seeking to become better lands stewards, serving as an entry point and navigator for those committed to a more sustainable future in local agriculture.

Shared tools for partner coordination

- Work with partners to upgrade our spreadsheet-based system for farmer case management
- Collaborate with partners to adopt standard practices for making effective referrals
- Identify partner needs for more effective collaboration with working lands

Willamette Valley Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative

- Continue implementing our Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative, supporting farmers & ranchers with diverse support for pasture stewardship.
- Hold Living on the Land Workshops to engage beginning land managers.
- Hold virtual workshops on responsible farm management topics
- Provide technical assistance and grazing plans for pasture-based producers.
- Host farm tours to showcase best practices for pasture management.
- Welcome producers to a Willamette Valley-based peer-support network and mentorship positions for pasture managers

Oregon Heathy Soils Network Hub

- Serve as a pilot hub for the newly launched, statewide Healthy Soils Network, providing soil stewardship programming and technical assistance to farm managers.
- Leverage partner coordination efforts to bolster the role of the hub as a one-stop-shop for connecting with soil support resources and partners in our area.

Adaptive Program Management

- Engage participating farmers, the regional Working Lands Program Advisory Team, and Farmer Advisory Team for the continuous improvement to our program's strategic framework and operational processes.

In the coming year, The Working Lands Program will focus on implementing our exciting new initiatives to support the regenerative management of grazing lands, and to deliver soil stewardship support as a pilot hub in a new statewide Network. These new opportunities will extend our reach to new farm managers and better equip the program with resources for technical assistance, peer-support, farm tours, and educational workshops.

We are optimistic that our collaborative efforts and new partnerships will enhance the support we deliver to farmers & ranchers and create future opportunities to address local farmer needs. Our work with partners to clarify and formalize roles, and adopt tools & processes for coordination will streamline program delivery and allow us to better leverage local resources & expertise.

With our expanded capacity, Working Lands will continue to provide our conservation planning assistance and resource navigation support for local farm managers, equipping them with actionable plans and connecting them to resources & partners to create change on the ground.

A VISION FOR WORKING LANDS

"We envision a landscape where working lands are sustainably managed to balance ecological, economic, cultural, and community needs, and which conserve and enhance soil, water, and natural habitat.

"We envision a comprehensive and robust system of support from cooperating organizations across our region to assist farmers, ranchers, foresters, landowners and rural communities in protecting lands for farming and conservation activities, with an emphasis on land connection and management that preserves resources, knowledge, and livelihoods for future generations.

"We envision resilient agricultural communities that work together to create equitable access to land, local market opportunities, and ample resources for conservation agriculture; and whose interests and changing needs as producers and stewards are given voice in local, regional, state, and national policies. "



THANK YOU

To those who have tended to this program from our start, and your commitment to seeing us blossom.

Coast Fork Willamette Watershed Council

Friends of Buford Park & Mt Pisgah

Karen Wildish

Long Tom Watershed Council

McKenzie River Trust

McKenzie Watershed Council

Middle Fork Willamette Watershed Council

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board

Oregon Agricultural Trust

Oregon Climate and Agriculture Network

Oregon Community Food Systems Network

Oregon State University Extension

Plaza de Nuestra Comunidad

Roundhouse Foundation

Upper Willamette Soil & Water Conservation District

Upper Willamette Stewardship Network

Working Lands Farmer Tech Team

We thank you for your continued support and collaboration in our efforts to realize our vision for working lands.

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