

Fiscal Year  
2020 - 2021

Annual Program Reports



Tualatin Soil and Water  
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Conservation is for everyone.

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## Our Organization

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The Tualatin Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) is a local unit of government that helps the community improve conditions of soil, water, and other natural resources. We are a non-regulatory organization. We work with Washington County residents on a cooperative, voluntary basis to conserve our shared resources for current and future generations.

## Our Staff & Board

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### **Executive Director**

Lacey Townsend

### **Operations**

Kelly Dawes

Judy Marsh

Aaron Shaw

### **Rural Conservation Program**

Nicole Ruggiero

Tatiana Taylor

### **Urban Conservation Program**

Maura Olivos

Briita Pajunas

### **Forest Conservation Program**

Brandy Saffell

### **Habitat Conservation Program**

Mike Conroy

Bethany Lund

Mary Meier

Trevor Norman

### **Invasive Species Program**

Olivia Hurd

Tyler Pedersen

Eli Staggs

### **Conservation Education**

Annie Bronez

Andrew Felton

Charlotte Trowbridge

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### **Board of Directors**

Jerry Ward – *Zone 1*

Eldon Jossi – *Zone 2*

Thomas Dierickx – *Zone 3*

Anna Jesse – *Zone 4*

Matt Pihl – *Zone 5*

Steve VanGrunsven – *At-Large*

Dean Moberg - *At-Large*

Kieran Sikdar – *Associate Director*

Jayson Hoffman – *Associate Director*

Sally Krahmer – *Associate Director*

## Operations

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### Program Overview

The Operations Program manages human resources and finances, maintains an office and associated infrastructure, and manages our work as a public entity. The Operations team ensures compliance with fiduciary responsibilities in using public monies and complies with all applicable state and federal laws. The Operations team ensures the Tualatin SWCD's employees and board members have the knowledge, tools, and support needed to do their jobs.

### Fiscal Year 2020-2021 Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic forced Tualatin SWCD and its programs to adapt this fiscal year. A temporary funding freeze for grant programs and direct financial assistance was implemented at the beginning of the fiscal year as a precaution to unknown budget limitations. Despite challenges brought on by the pandemic, such as providing services remotely, the District Operations team had many accomplishments.

We continued to directly support the activities of the Board of Directors, including monthly meetings and committee meetings. During the 2020 election cycle, we welcomed one new Board Director and saw the re-election of four incumbent Board Directors.

### Major Accomplishments

- Adopted a new [Strategic Plan for 2021-2025](#).
- Updated staff job descriptions to comply with Oregon's Pay Equity Law.
- Provided staff with relevant information and training related to COVID-19 rules.
- Hired three staff positions:
  - Habitat Conservation Program Technician
  - Urban Conservation Program Technician
  - Invasive Species Technician
- Developed comprehensive data management systems to manage our customer relations, project planning and management, grant management, and Geographic Information Systems data. Accomplishments in this fiscal year include:
  - Completed the beta-version of a custom-built project management software program, ACORN.
  - Customized and implemented a Customer Relationship Management software program, Insightly, and integrated the software with ACORN.
  - Completed integrating our grant management software, Submittable, with Insightly.

- Completed development of a new system for managing *Permit of Entry* data for the Invasive Species Management Program.

### Relationship Building & Partnerships

- We continued to support the operations of the [Tualatin River Watershed Council](#) by providing direct funding and administrative assistance. Our staff participate on a variety of the council's committees, including the Executive Committee, Restoration Committee, and Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Justice Committee.
- We continued to participate in the [Oregon Conservation Education & Assistance Network](#), alongside representatives from other conservation districts. We provided extensive planning support for the annual CONNECT conference. Kelly Dawes (Director of Finance & Operations) served as Treasurer for the organization.
- We continued to provide assistance to the non-profit organization, [Jackson Bottom Wetlands Preserve](#). Lacey Townsend served as Chair of the organization.
- We participated on the Lower Willamette West regional team of the [Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board's Small Grant Program](#).

## Rural Conservation Program

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### Program Overview

We provide services for people living or working on rural lands, including small farms, rural residential areas, and agriculture operations. Our rural lands provide important space for natural resources and produce agricultural products that we use and depend on. We support healthy lands and viable agriculture in Washington County by promoting natural resource conservation on farms, providing resources for succession planning, supporting programs for new and beginning farmers, and holding agricultural conservation easements to preserve farmland.

### Fiscal Year 2020-2021 Summary

Despite the pandemic, the Rural Conservation team continued to support residents through virtual meetings and workshops as well as socially distanced, masked in-person field visits. We scaled back financial assistance offerings for most of the year as the Board remained cautious about the budgetary implications of the pandemic. While we responded to all inquiries, we prioritized financial assistance projects in the Lower Gales and Carpenter Creek watersheds (Oregon Department of Agriculture's Strategic Investment Area) and the Dairy, McKay, and Middle Tualatin Watersheds (Regional Conservation Partnership Program). We also initiated a research project that will help us better understand residents' resource concerns and further hone our geographic focus areas.

### Major Accomplishments

- Provided technical assistance to over 129 residents. We commonly provided guidance related to nutrient management, water quality, pasture management, and pollinator plants.
- Implemented five new financial assistance projects, totaling \$52,486 in distributed funds. Projects included planting native hedgerows on farms, managing heavy use areas for livestock, and improving pasture management.
- Enrolled four conservation projects in a partner-funded conservation program: the Regional Conservation Partnership Program of the Natural Resources Conservation Service.
- Mailed over 100 outreach letters to residents in the Lower Gales and Carpenter Creek watershed offering assistance with soil health and water quality conservation practices.
- Purchased a no-till seed drill to add to our equipment and tool loan program.

- Completed a study looking at the effects of cattle grazing as a management tool for native prairie restoration.

### Relationship Building & Partnerships

- We continue to be active participants in local and regional partnerships focused on oak and prairie habitats, including serving on the steering committee of the [Oak Prairie Working Group](#) and the [Cascadia Prairie-Oak Partnership](#).
- We represent Tualatin SWCD as a new member of the [Oregon Community Food Systems Network](#).

## Urban Conservation Program

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### Program Overview

We provide technical and financial support for people living and working inside the Urban Growth Boundary in Washington County. We connect landowners, renters, and members of communities such as schools, churches, and cultural centers with information and resources to improve soil, water, and wildlife habitat. We serve a growing, vibrant, and diverse community within the boundaries of 13 cities and unincorporated Washington County. We provide educational opportunities to help people better steward private lands, urban greenspaces, parks, and shared waterways.

### Fiscal Year 2020-2021 Summary

In order to continue providing timely and accessible resources, we offered virtual consultations and socially distanced and masked site visits. As funding was reduced for our grant and financial assistance programs, we pivoted to focus on planning future projects and enrollment in our conservation programs.

Special community-led projects took center stage this year, including the Backyard Habitat Certification Program demonstration site at Centro Cultural and greenspace design at the Deline and Butternut Creek Homeowners Associations. Additionally, a multi-year effort to better understand the environmental needs and concerns within our diverse and underserved communities gained momentum with the completion of the Urban Market Research Report in collaboration with Stamberger Outreach Consulting and Community Engagement Liaison Services.

### Major Accomplishments

- Provided technical assistance to over 50 residents. Completed approximately 30 site visits. We provided guidance related to beaver and nutria management, invasive plant control, localized flooding and ponding, and naturoscaping.
- Implemented six new financial assistance projects, totaling \$22,379 in distributed funds. Projects included converting lawns to urban meadows, planting pollinator hedgerows, installing rain gardens, caring for community and school gardens, and restoring upland forest.
- Enrolled four new landowners in the [Glencoe Swale Habitat Conservation Project](#), adding 2.67 acres to the project.
- Enrolled 21 new landowners in the Hall Creek Habitat Restoration Project, representing 4.74 additional acres. Held a socially distanced, masked open

house to inform community members about the ongoing project. Fifty percent of targeted sites along this priority urban waterway are now enrolled.

- Completed target audience research and began development of the *Watershed Navigator* website, an educational resource that will connect urban community members to information on watershed health topics.
- Completed a GIS mapping project with students at Portland Community College to inventory current and potential community and school garden sites in Washington County.
- Hired new Urban Conservation Technician, Maura Olivos, in May 2021.

### Relationship Building & Partnerships

- We continue to be active participants in local and regional partnerships focused on delivering educational information and resources to urban residents. We are active members of the Tualatin Basin Public Awareness Committee, the [Tualatin River Watershed Council](#), and the [Tualatin Watershed Enhancement Collaborative](#).

## Forest Conservation Program

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### Program Overview

We work with small woodland owners, farmers, and residential landowners to promote long-term forest health and sustainability. We help residents improve the health of local woodlands, reduce wildfire risk, and manage their forests to benefit both people and wildlife. We specialize in providing guidance for new woodland managers, planning for forest resilience in a changing climate, and balancing wildlife habitat enhancement with economic management objectives.

### Fiscal Year 2020-2021 Summary

The Forest Conservation Program adapted to COVID-19 restrictions by shifting focus to socially distanced technical support and program development. We continued to deliver comprehensive forest stewardship plans, site visits, project management, and education programs. We also led efforts to learn more about wildfire risk, drought susceptibility, and woodland owner service gaps in the Tualatin River watershed. We began identifying priority areas for outreach and assistance.

### Major Accomplishments

- Provided technical assistance to over 40 residents. We provided guidance related to forest health concerns, weed management, planting recommendations, and forest stewardship planning.
- Wrote forest stewardship plans for five residents, covering more than 175 acres of forestland.
- Enrolled one new financial assistance project, totaling \$25,000 in distributed funds. We continued to manage five projects and completed four projects enrolled in previous years.
- Offered four virtual education opportunities, including an introduction to woodland management for Tree School; an interactive tour of two ongoing projects for local woodland managers; and the Land Steward Program for beginner land managers.
- Completed two prioritization efforts to: (1) identify areas of the county with new small woodland managers for future education and outreach; and (2) assess the risk of drought and wildfire damage to our forests for future forest health and resilience projects.

## Relationship Building & Partnerships

- We led a new partnership with the [Joint Water Commission](#), [Clean Water Services](#), [Tualatin River Watershed Council](#), and [Oregon State University Extension Service](#) to complete a wildfire risk assessment for the Tualatin River watershed. The assessment focused on protecting drinking water sources and water treatment infrastructure in the event of a large, high severity wildfire. This collaboration resulted in a report from OSU Extension wildfire experts with recommended next steps for partners, such as collaborating with state and local firefighters, increasing forest health and resilience, and reducing fuels around high-value infrastructure in high-risk areas.
- We continue to collaborate with [Clean Water Services](#) to conduct research on building climate-resilient ecosystems by sourcing plant materials from regions where the current climate matches our projected future climate. Progress in the last year included collecting plant community data in focal regions to identify plant species for further testing in the Tualatin River watershed.
- We maintained our working relationship with the [Oregon Department of Forestry](#), the [Natural Resources Conservation Service](#), the [dem Build Local Alliance](#), and the [Forest Stewards Guild](#) on various outreach efforts, assistance needs, and educational programs.

## Habitat Conservation Program

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### Program Overview

Washington County is home to a variety of important habitat types, including streams, wetlands, oak woodlands, and prairies. We provide financial support, project planning and management to private landowners who are interested in improving the quality of habitat on their property. These restoration projects result in increased habitat for fish and wildlife, cleaner water, and healthier soil.

### Fiscal Year 2020-2021 Summary

The Habitat Conservation Program drew on the strength of long-term relationships with partners, contractors, and landowners to maintain operations and launch new ventures while facing the adversity of the past year. We kept up on existing planting projects and project enrollments, but our diminished ability to conduct outreach will likely impact enrollment numbers in the coming year.

Our project implementation methods continue to evolve in order to address emerging challenges and opportunities with pollinators, beavers, climate change, and drought. There was increased competition for enrollment in our conservation programs, and we enrolled our first wetland focused conservation project. We also launched a pilot outreach campaign targeting oak habitats with the hope of future projects. The most exciting new venture was the launch of two complex, multi-year aquatic construction projects. These projects were conceptualized and designed this year and will be constructed in the late summer of 2021.

### Major Accomplishments

- Enrolled seven new streamside planting projects in the Vegetated Buffer Areas for Conservation (VEGBAC) program or the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). These new projects totaled 40 acres of riparian habitat.
- Re-enrolled four older streamside planting projects in the Enhanced Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (ECREP), VEGBAC or RCPP. Re-enrolled projects total 63 acres of habitat. One landowner tripled their acreage enrolled.
- Designed two aquatic construction projects targeting instream fish habitat, erosion control, and floodplain enhancement.
- Enrolled four new projects in the Habitat Conservation Funding Program, totaling 45 acres of riparian and wetland habitats.

- Completed prioritization of oak habitat and connectivity in collaboration with the Oak Prairie Working Group.
- Hired a new Habitat Conservation Technician, Trevor Norman, in April 2021.

### Relationship Building & Partnerships

- We continue to collaborate closely with [Clean Water Services](#), [Natural Resources Conservation Service](#), and [Farm Service Agency](#) to identify and enroll streamside planting projects in priority areas of the Tualatin River watershed.
- We continue to coordinate with [Tualatin River Watershed Council](#) and [Clean Water Services](#) to share prioritization efforts and identify large scale aquatic enhancement projects.
- In collaboration with the Forest Conservation Program, we began implementing a project to test the introduction of plant genetics and species that may be better suited to the future climate of the Tualatin River watershed.

## Invasive Species Program

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### Program Overview

In collaboration with our partners and the dedicated residents of Washington County, we identify and treat invasive species that pose a threat to our communities and watershed. Our staff identifies new infestations and works quickly to keep them from expanding. We provide advice and tools to help residents manage invasive species on their property.

### Fiscal Year 2020-2021 Summary

The Invasive Species Program has been busy slowing the spread of our watershed's priority invasive plants. Despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have continued to coordinate on-the-ground treatments and surveys across Washington County. We updated our Weed Watchers Guide and online Weed Watchers Workshops to promote awareness about emerging invasive species in the watershed. This combination of education and on-the-ground work has helped us identify and control species before they get out of hand.

### Major Accomplishments

- Completed 190 site visits to provide technical assistance and weed treatments.
- Received 326 signed *Permit of Entry* letters allowing treatment of invasive species on private properties.
- Trained 90 community members as Weed Watchers via online workshops. The Weed Watcher program was also rebranded as the Tualatin Watershed Invasives Species Team (TWIST).
- Treated 5.85 acres of Tualatin SWCD's top four priority weeds, including:
  - 1.78 acres of knotweed (*Polygonum* species)
  - 3.29 acres of garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*)
  - 69 square feet of giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*)
  - 0.78 acre of purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*)
- Documented a 99% reduction since 2009 in known garlic mustard and knotweed infestations along lower Gales Creek.
- Received 1,175 views on the Weed and Pest Directory webpage since launching in November 2020.
- Hired a new Invasive Species Technician, Eli Staggs, in April 2021.

## Relationship Building & Partnerships

- We formed a new partnership with [Tualatin Riverkeepers](#). This collaboration resulted in the annual Aquatic Weed Watcher Workshop and Paddle Trip. This mid-summer event teaches participants how to identify and report aquatic weeds while recreating on the Tualatin River.
- We worked with students from the Cascade Education Corps to remove over 2,000 flowering garlic mustard plants and rosettes. In the future, we plan on holding a Weed Watcher Workshop with students to teach students how to identify and report other priority weeds.
- We continued to work closely with the [4-County Cooperative Weed Management Area](#) (CWMA) partners to manage priority weeds throughout the Portland Metro Area.
- We worked with University of Washington's [Conservation Canines](#) to survey for garlic mustard and false brome across 50 acres of the Tualatin River watershed.

## Conservation Education Program

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### Program Overview

Community awareness and involvement are essential to conserving our natural resources. The Conservation Education Program provides workshops, educational resources, and funding to increase the community's knowledge of local natural resource issues and promote awareness of Tualatin SWCD programs. Our goal is to empower residents to pursue conservation projects and actions in their homes, workplaces, and communities.

### Fiscal Year 2021-2022 Summary

As the COVID-19 pandemic continued to restrict our ability to hold in-person events, our program focused on providing distanced learning opportunities. We offered virtual workshops, provided educational resources via mail, and focused heavily on improving our visual communication and education tools.

One of our program's greatest accomplishments this year was the launch of our new website. The website provides the Tualatin SWCD with a sophisticated communications platform that has improved our ability to reach the community and share our stories. The website features program details, educational pages and blog posts, project highlights, and informational directories. It has received positive attention from local, regional, and national partners.

### Major Accomplishments

- Hosted 37 virtual workshops, totaling 59 hours of instruction. We had over 1,240 participants. Workshop topics included naturescaping, pollinators, soil health, pasture management, mud management, and composting. We also offered our first Spanish language workshop, which focused on waterwise landscaping.
- Hosted a pesticide collection event to allow residents to properly dispose of unwanted agricultural chemicals at no cost. Collected over 8,500 pounds of chemicals, including several banned substances.
- Completed a rebuild of the [Tualatin SWCD](#) website. This included developing 71 static pages and 102 pages of additional features including 42 blog posts, 15 project highlights, and 45 invasive species profiles. By the end of Fiscal Year 2021, the website had received over 44,000 views.
- Increased our following and engagement across all social media platforms.
  - YouTube following (subscribers) grew by 230%.
  - Instagram following grew by 70%.
  - Facebook following grew by 25%.
  - Twitter following grew by 4%.

- Expanded our digital media library to include:
  - Six new infographics depicting the Tualatin River watershed, best practices for maintaining healthy soils, the basics of forest health, the ecology of invasive species, the process of Early Detection & Rapid Response, and the importance of habitat connectivity.
  - Fifteen new illustrations to use for outreach about Oregon white oak habitat, stream ecosystems, and local wildlife.
  - Four new videos for our YouTube channel, including a highlight of our partnership with Conservation Canines, an example of a manure storage project, footage from two forest health projects, and an educational video about soil health experiments.
- Provided education and outreach materials to over 600 residents via mailings and resource giveaways. Materials created and distributed included:
  - Over 350 mailers to educate residents about natural resource topics and projects, including stream restoration and Oregon white oak habitat.
  - Over ten pounds of native plant seed for eighty-four residents to boost pollinator habitat.
  - Over 110 boot brushes to encourage best practices for minimizing the spread of invasive species.

### Relationship Building & Partnerships

- We revived the Regional Soil and Water Conservation District Educators Group to continue building relationships, collaborating, and sharing information with educators from neighboring SWCDs.
- As a part of the [4-County Cooperative Weed Management Area](#) (CWMA), we helped host the 2021 Pull Together event which brought together over 190 participants to discuss regional topics relating to invasive species management and education.
- We continued providing education and outreach expertise to a variety of partner groups and projects, including the [Tualatin Watershed Enhancement Collaborative](#), Tualatin Basin Public Awareness Committee, [Clean Rivers Coalition](#), and Together for Watersheds.

## Grants & Partnerships Program

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### Program Overview

We provide a variety of funding options to support conservation projects, research, and events in Washington County. Through grants and funded partnerships, we support the important work of other organizations and groups focused on natural resource conservation. Our grants and partnerships allow us to leverage funding and expand our impact through the capacity and expertise of other entities.

We administer four grant programs: Tualatin River Environmental Enhancement Grant (TREE), Tualatin Watershed Improvement Grant (TWIG), Conservation Education Grant, and Farmers Market Grant.

### Fiscal Year 2020-2021 Summary

We were able to offer three of our four grant programs. In May 2020, the Tualatin SWCD Board of Directors implemented a temporary freeze to all grant programs due to the uncertainty around financial implications of the COVID-19 pandemic. In January 2021, the Board voted to reopen the grant programs, focusing funds on the TREE Grant, Farmers Market Grant, and Conservation Education Grant. The TWIG grant remained on pause for the entire fiscal year. Over \$560,000 was awarded in grants, and over \$150,000 was provided as organizational partnerships. Throughout the year, our staff worked closely with previous grantees to adapt funded projects in response to COVID-19. Our grantees demonstrated remarkable resilience and innovation as they reworked project plans to pursue their stated goals.

### Major Accomplishments

- Awarded \$45,000 to nine Washington County farmers markets through the Farmers Market Grant Program. Funds support activities that increase market participation and improve access to fresh, local food. Projects included providing matching funds for nutrition assistance programs, increasing signage and marketing, providing children's programming and food demonstrations, providing support to emerging vendors, and ensuring high standards of health and safety.
- Awarded \$462,315 to five applicants through the TREE Grant Program. Awardees included two non-profit organizations, two local businesses, and one local government unit. Projects included on-the-ground habitat restoration along Clear Creek (Gales Creek), Hall Creek (Beaverton), and at the Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge (Sherwood). Additionally, creation of a community garden and regenerative agriculture education programming in Forest Grove, and a research project related to green infrastructure and water quality improvements.

- Awarded \$60,000 to three applicants through the Conservation Education Grant Program. Grantees included a public high school and two non-profit organizations. The funding will support projects to provide field-based and lab-based conservation education opportunities for high school students and improve interpretive materials at Tualatin River recreation sites.
- Provided over \$150,000 in partnership dollars to support four continuing partnership efforts. Established two new sponsored partnerships for upcoming fiscal years. Funded partnerships are detailed below.
- Closed out 12 active grants that had been awarded in previous fiscal years.

### Relationship Building & Partnerships

- We provided a fourth year of financial support for [Oregon Agriculture in the Classroom](#) to continue expanding the program in Washington County. In Fiscal Year 2021, this program supported 444 educators and 7,719 students. This accounts for an 18% audience growth from the previous fiscal year. Our organizations renewed our partnership agreement for another four years.
- We continued our partnership with [Oregon State University Extension's Master Naturalist Program](#). Our funding allowed this program to return to Washington County and expand its reach.
- We continued our partnership with the [Tualatin River Watershed Council](#). Funding to the Council assisted with significant organizational growth.
- We continued to provide funding to the [Backyard Habitat Certification Program](#) to support program growth and expansion into Washington County. In Fiscal Year 2021, the program completed 315 site visits to Washington County backyards and certified 110 yards.