

Fiscal Year  
2021 - 2022

## 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 (Tualatin 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 & Grants**

Annie Bronez

Andrew Felton

Adriana Lovell

Kristina Peterson

Jen Shih

Charlotte Trowbridge

### **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.

### Major Accomplishments

- Continued to provide staff with relevant information and training related to COVID-19 rules.
- Updated the Tualatin SWCD Safety Plan to include new Heat Illness and Wildfire Smoke policies. All staff completed training regarding these new Oregon OSHA rules.
- Established a leadership team that holds regular meetings and engaged a business coach to provide leadership team training.
- Hired three new staff positions: Grants & Enrollment Specialist; Education & Outreach Specialist (2). Initiated the hiring process for an additional new position: Information Systems Coordinator.
- Implemented comprehensive data management systems to manage our customer relations, project planning and management, grant management, and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) data. Accomplishments in this fiscal year include:
  - Began using the beta-version of a custom-built project management software program, ACORN. Continued to customize and refine the program based on feedback from users.
  - Continued customizing and refining processes within a Customer Relationship Management software program, Insightly, and integrated the software with ACORN.
  - Began developing custom reports from the new databases to support budgeting and reporting needs.
  - Planned update of our GIS server to accommodate needs.

### 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 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](#).
- We participated on OSU Extension's Regional Extension Community Advisory Network.

## 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 2021-2022 Summary

The Rural Conservation team continued to support residents through technical and financial assistance. 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 Implementation Area) and the Dairy, McKay, and Middle Tualatin watersheds (focus areas for the USDA-NRCS's Regional Conservation Partnership Program). We prioritized financial assistance to protect water quality, improve soil health, and conserve water use on farms.

Our Conservation Easement program continued to expand, and we are planning for more outreach to residents around this service in FY23.

### Major Accomplishments

- Provided technical assistance to over 58 residents and implemented six new financial assistance projects, totaling \$303,410 in distributed funds. Projects included managing mud and manure, improving pasture management, and installing a water catchment system. We also provided residents with guidance on cover cropping, pollinator plants, and erosion control.
- Enrolled one conservation project in a partner-funded conservation program, the Regional Conservation Partnership Program of the Natural Resources Conservation Service.
- Acquired a conservation easement over a 105-acre property adjacent to the Tualatin River. This easement will protect wetland habitat with a large emergent wetland, native shrubs, and riparian forest. It is part of a large berry farm.
- Mailed over 80 outreach letters to residents in the Lower Gales and Carpenter Creek watershed offering assistance with soil health and water quality

conservation practices. We also began a multi-year effort monitoring water temperature in several tributaries in these subwatersheds.

- Completed a land use map to better understand residents' resource concerns and further hone our geographic focus areas.
- Purchased a manure compost spreader to add to our equipment and tool loan program. The no-till seed drill was rented out five times.

### 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 an associate member of the [Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts](#) and member of the [Oregon Community Food Systems Network](#).
- We collaborated with Washington County Farm Bureau and [Oregon Aglink](#) to create and distribute rural road safety signs.

# 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 thirteen cities and unincorporated Washington County. We provide educational opportunities to help people better steward private lands, urban greenspaces, parks, and shared waterways.

## Fiscal Year 2021-2022 Summary

The Urban Conservation Program saw increased interest in financial assistance programs and enrolled many new sites in the Direct Financial Assistance and Habitat Conservation funding programs. We saw the completion of several conservation projects that were enrolled in the first year of the Direct Financial Assistance program (FY20). Participants were excited to share their completed naturescaping, rainwater harvesting, and pollinator hedgerow installations with others.

Community-led projects took center stage this year, including a Backyard Habitat Certification Program demonstration site at Centro Cultural (Cornelius) and outreach and engagement planning with the Edwards Meadows, Deline, and Cross Creek Homeowners Association communities.

We began implementing recommendations from an urban market research project completed in 2020. This included the development and launch of the *Watershed Navigator* website, an educational resource that provides fresh and accessible information about natural resources within the Tualatin River watershed. Additionally, we continued meeting with community liaisons who had taken part in the initial market research to better understand environmental needs and concerns within our diverse and underserved communities.

## Major Accomplishments

- Provided technical assistance to over 130 residents. Completed approximately 60 site visits. We provided guidance related to beaver and nutria management, pollinator habitat creation, invasive plant control, localized flooding and ponding, and naturescaping, among other topics.
- Completed conservation planning and contracting for thirteen new financial assistance projects, totaling \$109,187 in distributed funds. This represents a

noticeable increase from just six Urban Direct Financial Assistance projects enrolled the year prior. Projects included converting lawns to urban meadows, planting pollinator hedgerows, installing rain gardens, and restoring upland and riparian forest habitat.

- Enrolled one new landowner in the [Glencoe Swale Habitat Conservation Project](#), adding 0.7 acres of urban wetland to the project.
- Enrolled three new landowners in the [Hall Creek Habitat Restoration Project](#), representing 1.1 additional acres. We installed 4,885 native plants at over 35 enrolled sites. Over 50 percent of focal sites along this priority urban waterway are now enrolled.
- Developed and launched the new [Watershed Navigator](#) website, containing local natural resources-related information for people who live, work, and play in the Tualatin River Watershed. This project was a partnership between Tualatin SWCD and Clean Water Services, with support from Stamberger Outreach Consulting.
- Collected channel morphology and vegetation data at 80 streambank locations within the Cedar Mill/North Johnson Creek areas. Data will inform future mapping and community engagement strategies in this high priority subwatershed.
- Completed a soil suitability analysis for the urban areas of the Tualatin River watershed (in coordination with David Evans and Associates Inc.). This will provide the basis for identifying appropriate locations for infiltration projects such as raingardens, bioswales, and vegetated filter strips.

### 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 assist residents with improving the health of local woodlands, reducing wildfire risk, and managing forests to benefit both people and wildlife. We prioritize and 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 2021-2022 Summary

The Forest Conservation Program continued to deliver comprehensive woodland management guidance, forest stewardship plans, project management, and education programs – and assisted more residents than in any prior fiscal year. We expanded outreach to beginner woodland managers by creating and mailing a welcome packet to recently purchased forest tax lots across Washington County. The packet included basic woodland management information and references to local resources for technical and financial assistance. We also continued to define geographic focus areas for financial assistance to address forest vulnerability to climate change and wildfire.

## Major Accomplishments

- Provided technical assistance to over 35 residents. We provided guidance related to forest health concerns, weed management, planting recommendations, and forest stewardship planning.
- Wrote forest stewardship plans for seven residents, covering more than 330 acres of forestland.
- Enrolled four new financial assistance projects, totaling \$148,188 in awarded funds. We continued to manage four projects and completed two projects enrolled in previous years.
- Distributed 169 educational packets to beginner woodland managers in subwatersheds that are considered high priorities for forest health and resilience.

## Relationship Building & Partnerships

- We partnered with the [Forest Stewards Guild](#) to offer two *Forestry for the Birds* workshops for local woodland managers in June 2022.

- We continued collaborating closely with the [Build Local Alliance](#) to implement the *Into the Woods* program and offered our first co-led workshop in October 2021.
- We supported a wildfire preparedness planning project led by the Joint Water Commission and Clean Water Services, based on our work on the Tualatin Basin Quantitative Wildfire Risk Assessment.
- We maintained our working relationship with the Oregon Department of Forestry, the Natural Resource Conservation Service, and OSU Extension on defining forest conservation focus areas in Washington County and 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 2021-2022 Summary

The Habitat Conservation Program expanded its services to include project opportunities for more habitat types. While most of our projects continue to focus on streamside restoration, we have been conducting outreach to properties that may be well-suited for Oregon white oak conservation projects. We also continue to identify priority opportunities for aquatic restoration. The increase in intentional outreach has resulted in more requests for site visits with landowners. During site visits, we provided technical assistance and identified opportunities for project enrollment or for connecting landowners with partner programs.

In addition to planning and managing over 100 active restoration projects, we procured native plant material for all Tualatin SWCD's planting projects. This included sourcing over 260,000 plants. We also worked with the Grants & Enrollment Specialist to streamline enrollment and contracting processes to improve client experience and internal data management.

### Major Accomplishments

- Enrolled four new streamside planting projects in the Vegetated Buffer Areas for Conservation (VEGBAC) program. These new projects totaled 36 acres of riparian habitat.
- Re-enrolled five older streamside planting projects in conservation programs. These continuing projects total 47 acres of habitat. Two projects had new landowners that chose to expand the boundaries of their project to enroll an additional 7 acres.
- Completed one aquatic construction project targeting instream fish habitat, erosion control, and floodplain enhancement on Gales Creek, in partnership with Clean Water Services.
- Enrolled four new projects in the Habitat Conservation Funding Program, totaling 47 acres of oak, upland, and wetland habitat.

- Completed prioritization of oak habitat and connectivity in collaboration with the Oak Prairie Working Group.
- Developed a wildlife habitat monitoring protocol and collected baseline data at a subset of projects to be monitored regularly

### 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 2021-2022 Summary

The Invasive Species Program has been busy slowing the spread of our watershed's priority invasive species. We continue to coordinate surveys and on-the-ground treatments across Washington County. We conduct weed risk assessments for species designated as *Early Detection and Rapid Response* (EDRR). These assessments influence our program goals and budget. We updated the Weed Watchers Workshops to promote awareness about emerging invasive species. This combination of education and on-the-ground work helps us identify and control species before they get out of hand.

## Major Accomplishments

- Completed 196 property visits to survey and treat invasive weeds.
- Provided technical assistance to 57 people related to weed identification and control.
- Received 260 signed *Permit of Entry* letters allowing treatment of invasive species on private properties.
- Trained 91 community members as Weed Watchers via online workshops.
- Treated 17.59 acres of EDRR weeds, including (but not limited to):
  - 4.52 acres of garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*)
  - 2.65 acres of knotweed (*Polygonum* species)
  - 0.019 acres of oblong spurge (*Euphorbia oblongata*)
  - 1.8 acres of goatsrue (*Galega officinalis*)
  - 2.3 acres of puncturevine (*Tribulus terrestris*)
  - 4.5 acres of Italian thistle (*Cardus pycnocephalus*)
- Achieved an 85% reduction in giant hogweed sites along Fanno Creek since 2012.
- Received 540 users on the website's [Weed and Pest Directory](#), totaling over 660 views.

- Loaned 12 weed wrenches to 11 landowners.

### Relationship Building & Partnerships

- We formed a new partnership with Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) to assist with trapping and removing invasive turtles. ODFW trained staff to trap and measure native and invasive turtles. Traps will be deployed in summer 2022 along Fanno Creek.
- We continued to work with students from the Cascade Education Corps (CEC) to remove garlic mustard from sites on Gales and Abbey Creeks. 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 maintained a close working relationship with the [4-County Cooperative Weed Management Area](#) (CWMA) partners to manage priority weeds throughout the Portland Metro Area. We are working with partners to standardize a data collection method to improve the regional database of weed observations.
- We partnered with Clackamas SWCD to treat 6.5 acres of milk thistle near our county boundaries.

# Conservation Education Program

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## Program Overview

Community awareness and involvement are essential to conserving our natural resources. The Conservation Education Program engages with and educates the community through informative workshops, engaging digital media and print resources, and direct outreach to increase the community's knowledge of natural resource conservation and to 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

This was a year of rapid growth for the Conservation Education Program. We nearly doubled the capacity of the program by hiring two additional Education & Outreach Specialists, bringing the team to a total of five employees. This expansion helped meet the growing need to reach our community members and support the outreach and education needs of Tualatin SWCD's various program areas.

We continued to operate in a socially distanced manner, hosting learning opportunities and presentations virtually and distributing outreach materials via mail and partner groups. Our program dedicated substantial time to establishing outreach strategies for a variety of conservation projects and initiatives, including neighborhood-scale stream restoration projects, outreach to new woodland owners, recruitment for riparian planting and oak conservation projects, invasive species management, and water quality initiatives on rural lands. As we move into the next fiscal year, we will be working to implement and expand on all these initiatives.

## Major Accomplishments

- Held 37 events, including virtual workshops, group presentations, and tables at community events. These offerings reached over 1,490 people and amounted to over 57 hours of educational content. Highlights included:
  - Provided workshops about naturoscaping, pollinators and beneficial insects, soil health, pasture management, mud management, invasive species identification, and rainwater management.
  - Offered two Spanish-language workshops.
  - Celebrated the tenth anniversary of Soil School, a collaboration with West Multnomah SWCD.
- Provided education and outreach materials to over 3,800 residents via mailings and resource giveaways. Materials included:
  - Nearly 2,000 mailings to raise awareness about invasive species management initiatives.

- Over 1,000 mailings to educate residents about restoring riparian plantings, conserving oak habitat, improving water quality, and creating backyard habitat.
- Over 25 pounds of native plant seed for 600 residents to boost pollinator habitat, and more than 130 boot brushes to encourage best practices for minimizing the spread of invasive species.
- Increased our digital presence by developing website content, maintaining engaging social media channels, and increasing reach through our email contact list. Communications highlights from the past year include:
  - Received over 68,000 page views from over 25,000 viewers on the [Tualatin SWCD](#) website. Added new website content, including 12 blog posts, 7 weed species profiles, and 3 new webpages ([Growing Your Own Food](#), [Youth Education](#), and [Agricultural Conservation Easements](#))
  - Increased our following and engagement across all social media platforms. In one year, our YouTube following grew by 71%, and our Instagram and Facebook followings increased by about 20%.
  - Increased the number of people subscribing to our e-newsletter, now reaching over 3,000 recipients.
- Developed new outreach materials to educate the community about Tualatin SWCD programs, priorities, and projects. New materials included:
  - Branded infographics focused on two of Tualatin SWCD's priorities: local agriculture and water quality.
  - Two informational packets detailing land management rules, including the Oregon Forest Practices Act and the Agricultural Water Quality Management Area Rules.
  - Several graphic publications describing Tualatin SWCD offerings and educating about our natural resource priorities, including conserving Oregon white oak habitat and restoring stream sides.
  - An independent website, the [Watershed Navigator](#), to provide access to a variety of local conservation resources.

### Relationship Building & Partnerships

- We continued facilitating 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 2022 Pull Together event which brought together over 150 participants to discuss regional 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, and [Clean Rivers Coalition](#).

## 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 2021-2022 Summary

We had our biggest year of grantmaking yet, awarding over \$896,700 in funding through our four grant programs. We saw a return to pre-COVID application levels as organizations found their footing and decided to embark on new projects. We continue to work with all our grantees as they adapt to challenges that arose from the pandemic.

Internally, the Grants & Partnerships Program experienced growth in capacity with the hiring of a Grants & Enrollment Specialist. This expanded capacity allowed for more proactive grantee support and several major initiatives to organize and streamline internal documentation and processes.

### Major Accomplishments

- Awarded \$75,000 to ten 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 \$638,642 to eight applicants through the TREE Grant Program. Awardees included six non-profit organizations, one educational institution, and one local business. Projects included two habitat restoration projects (Hillsboro), three sustainable landscaping and rainwater management projects (Portland, Beaverton, Hillsboro), a community tree planting initiative (Hillsboro), and two watershed-wide research projects.
- Awarded \$109,650 to six applicants through the Conservation Education Grant Program. Grantees included three non-profit organizations, two educational

institutions, and one local government agency. The funding will support two farmer training programs, three field-based education initiatives, and a community science project.

- Awarded \$73,425 to seventeen applicants through the TWIG Grant Program. Awards were provided to nine school groups, four homeowners or neighborhood associations, and four non-profit organizations. Projects included creating or improving gardens at elementary schools and community spaces, installing native landscaping in neighborhood common areas, and conducting small environmental research projects.
- Provided over \$190,000 to support four continuing partnership efforts and a variety of partner events. Funded partnerships are detailed below.
- Closed out eight grants that had been awarded in previous fiscal years.

### Relationship Building & Partnerships

- We provided a fifth year of financial support for [Oregon Agriculture in the Classroom](#) to continue expanding programming in Washington County. In Fiscal Year 2022, this program supported 552 educators and reached 10,203 students.
- 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 organizational capacity.
- We continued to provide funding to the [Backyard Habitat Certification Program](#) to support program growth and expansion into Washington County. In Fiscal Year 2022, the program completed 286 site visits to Washington County backyards and certified 79 yards.