

Yamhill Soil and Water Conservation District Annual Work Plan 2016-2017

Purpose: The purpose of the annual work plan is to provide a summary of the Yamhill Soil and Water Conservation District's (district) anticipated work priorities for the current year. It is not intended to provide a complete analysis of workload and/or activities, but rather provide an overview of the major program areas, and several examples of planned work tasks that represent the majority of the district's anticipated workload. Because of changing priorities, the district board may direct staff to take on new work responsibilities or modify plans to fulfill its obligations and meet the public's needs. The district operates its programs and services using revenues from a local tax assessment, grant resources, and from income-generating enterprises, such as the native plant sale. Grants typically provide funding that must be used for specific work responsibilities and deliverables. The district board of directors set the priorities and budget funds for projects of highest local need.

The annual work plan provides a general description of work tasks to be completed with grants and local resources. Funders such as the Oregon Department of Agriculture and the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board that provide grants for programs such as the Agricultural Water Quality program and CREP Technical Assistance, work the district to develop grant agreements and specific work plans. Grant agreements and work plans are available and can be reviewed for additional details.

Leadership: The district is governed by seven elected board members who serve without pay.

Barbara Boyer, Chair

Dave Cruickshank, Vice-Chair

Sam Sweeney

Gordon Dromgoole

Pat FitzGerald

Leo Krick

Gordon Cook

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Conservation Program Areas: The program areas in the 2016-2017 annual work plan include:

1. District Operation and Fiscal Management
2. Agricultural Water Quality
3. Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)
4. Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) for Fender's blue butterfly
5. General Technical Assistance, USDA Programs, and other Conservation Programs
6. Education and Outreach
7. Noxious Weed Control and Vegetation Management
8. Conservation Easements
9. Long-term Land Protection and Property Management
10. Partnerships

1. District Operations and Fiscal Management

The district is classified as a special district and local government entity, and therefore must comply with a variety of state laws and administrative rules relating to financial management, public records, employment, public meetings, public officials ethics, and reporting.

To provide quality service and adhere to the various statutory requirements of a local government, the district implements a variety of administrative and fiscal responsibilities to ensure effective district operations. Work tasks for 2016-2017 include:

- Regular board meetings (a minimum of one meeting per month)
- Preparation of agendas, board meeting materials, and completion of meeting minutes
- Preparation of an annual budget that complies with Oregon Local Budget Law
- Completion of various public meeting notices, public hearing notices, and elections notices
- Completion of an annual financial audit – contracted through a third party
- Maintain and submit reporting for grants, board meetings, fiscal agreements, project status, and other requirements
- Create, publish and distribute an Annual Report
- Provide ongoing financial accounting and bookkeeping
- Payroll reporting and management of employee benefits programs
- Preparation and approval of an Annual Work Plan
- Employee management, annual reviews, and administrative and supervisory responsibilities
- Maintain Personnel and Policy Handbooks
- Assist walk-in clients
- Maintain the district website
- Utilize staff and safety meetings to ensure good communication
- Identify and provide training as needed
- Maintain district equipment and vehicles
- Conduct filing, database, and computer maintenance

2. Agricultural Water Quality

The district will continue to provide local leadership to implement the Yamhill Agricultural Water Quality Plan. This work is supported by and completed in cooperation with the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA). For 2016-2017, the district will continue its efforts in the selected focus area for agricultural waters quality work in the North Yamhill area. The district has solicited feedback from landowners in the area through a landowner survey to provide a more directed outreach and technical assistance to the area. Work will continue following the work plan that was approved by ODA for the 2015-2017 biennium. The plan outlines the types of outreach and technical assistance the district will undertake to inform agricultural landowner and managers about the water quality plan rules, and identifies the new focus area for the plan, located is the North Yamhill River basin.

The district receives funding from the ODA to employ technical staff to conduct outreach and provide technical assistance. The district also supports the Oregon Department of Agriculture as they initiate work in two Strategic Implementation Areas in Yamhill County. ODA has been contacting landowners and operators in these areas to conduct an assessment of compliance. As a result of this effort, the district has applied and received grant funding to begin work on a 2.3 mile riparian buffer on the North Yamhill River outside of Carlton. The district's role in this process is to provide technical assistance to constituents as needed, and to help them implement conservation projects and best management practices on their operations. Work planned for the 2016-2017 fiscal year includes:

- Newspaper/Newsletter Articles
- Site Visits and Technical Assistance (soils, nutrient management, and manure management)
- Conservation Planning Assistance
- Project Design and Implementation, Construction Inspection and Project Monitoring
- Interagency Partnerships (Grant Opportunities, Communications, and Referrals)
- Grant Monitoring
- Participation in Water Quality Complaints and ODA Site Visits
- Grant reporting/Request for Payments & Grant financial tracking
- Organize and Host Workshops, Tours, and Trainings
- Assist with Outreach events (Ag Shows, School Groups, Farmers Markets, etc.)
- Provide Direct Mailings
- Volunteer Coordination
- Organize and Host Local Advisory Committee Meetings
- Engage the Agricultural Community in Problem Solving and Conservation Solutions
- Participate in the Pesticide Stewardship Partnership Program

The district is complementing its on-the-ground water quality work by working with partners on the Pesticide Stewardship Partnership (PSP) Program. Work associated with the PSP Program in the coming year includes water sampling on West Palmer Creek and Cozine Creek, education and outreach activities.

3. Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)

The district provides technical assistance to support the CREP Program in Yamhill, Marion and Polk counties through a partnership between the Yamhill, Marion and Polk SWCDs, Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB), USDA, Oregon Department of Forestry, and local watershed councils. This is a continuation of current work that has been producing good results over several years. The district secured funding from OWEB to support the majority of costs to employ a riparian planner who provides assistance to local landowners interested in establishing riparian buffers. This program complements the Agricultural Water Quality Program, and various state conservation initiatives such as the Oregon Conservation Strategy.

District technical staff provide outreach through workshops, tours, presentations, group meetings, landowner interviews, and through direct referrals from conservation partners. The objective of the program for the coming year is to establish a minimum of 6 miles of riparian buffers in Yamhill and Marion counties, and to assist Polk County with establishment of new contracts (approximately one mile or more). Program goals include:

- Establish 20 new buffer projects that meet or exceed USDA standards for numbers of native trees and shrubs per acre.
- Provide technical assistance for the 95 existing CREP customers.
- Increase awareness, acceptance, and adoption of CREP by commercial farmers in Yamhill, Marion, and Polk counties through outreach, education, and demonstration.

4. Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) for Fender's blue butterfly

The district completed the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) for Fender's blue butterfly in 2014. The plan was submitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to allow the district to receive an incidental take permit under the Endangered Species Act Section 10(a)(1)(B) for Fender's blue butterfly. Private landowners who wish to be covered under the incidental take permit may apply for a Certificate of Inclusion to the permit after signing a Cooperative Agreement with Yamhill SWCD. This will allow landowners within identified butterfly habitat in Yamhill County to continue to perform otherwise lawful activities which have the potential to impact Fender's blue butterfly.

The district will continue support the plan as financial resources allow.

In 2016-2017, the district will continue to work in cooperation with USFW to:

- Promote conservation of Fender's blue butterfly and its habitat at sites with the species.
- Explore options to enhance suitable habitat at occupied sites to increase populations of Fender's blue butterfly.
- Expand existing Fender's blue butterfly networks and promote new independent populations of the species in Yamhill County.
- Work on compliance situations where landowners may affect known populations of Fender's blue butterfly or its habitat.
- Provide consultation and meet with Landowners
- Prepare and submit required reporting

5. General Technical Assistance, USDA Programs, and other Conservation Programs

The district utilizes its General Fund, grants, and other resources to provide technical assistance to landowners and operators who seek to make improvements in wildlife habitat, water quality, water conservation, and other areas of natural resource management. The district will continue to provide the following services that help clients access funding from USDA, OWEB, USFW, the newly established Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) and many other sources:

- Site visits, consultations and conservation planning
- Planning assistance on soil and water conservation projects
- Design assistance and specifications for various conservation practices
- Facilitate use of educational and outreach materials (i.e., online tools)
- Mapping and database management
- Grant writing

Providing technical assistance will help customers become eligible for funding to implement conservation plans and practices that address priority conservation issues in the district.

6. Education and Outreach

The district will continue will various education and outreach efforts including:

- Cruickshank Woodland School
- Earth Day Event at Miller Woods
- Farmers Market
- Workshops and Educational Events (Various Topics)
- Annual Meeting
- Miller Woods Open House
- Native Plant Sale and Native Plant Workshops
- Newsletters and Website Information

7. Noxious Weed Control and Vegetation Management

- Planned work relating to noxious weed control include Knotweed Control Project
- Spurge Laurel Project
- Newsletter articles and other outreach
- Hold Annual Weed Committee Meeting
- Participation in Yamhill County Roadside Vegetation Committee
- Exploring whether it would be beneficial for Yamhill County to have a Weed District

8. Conservation Easements

The district will continue to meet its obligations regarding conservation easements. The district will conduct annual easement inspection on each property and complete the required reports. Additional work will be completed on the Mt. Richmond Property, which requires a higher level of involvement and management. The district completed a management plan on the property and submitted it to Bonneville Power Administration for review and approval. For 2016-2017, the district will continue to implement the management plan. Details regarding each conservation easement and associated management plans are available at the district office.

9. Long-Term Land Protection and Property Management

In addition to conservation easements, the district also implements long-term land protection through fee-title ownership. The district currently owns the Miller Woods Property (130 acres), and Chegwyn Farms (170 acres) and Yamhela Oak Conservation Overlook (173 acres).

Miller Woods

The district continues to manage the Miller Woods property, a 130-acre parcel bequeath to the district in 2004 by Frieda Miller, for long-term sustainable forestry, and for other public benefit such as environmental education and open space. Miller Woods provides over 5 miles of walking trails, improved access and parking to accommodate school buses, an instructional kiosk, information materials, trail signage, and much more.

Work priorities for 2016-2017 include:

- Property Management: Keep trails, public access, facilities and other property features in good condition to allow safe use of property. This will be accomplished with district staff, and from contributions of various volunteers.
- Operate the Miller Woods Nursery: Continue using the nursery facility to grow plants for conservation projects, the annual native plant sale, and a variety of conservation partners.
- Maintain the Miller Woods Residence and Other Property Infrastructure:
- Seek Opportunities for Future Partnerships: The district will continue to seek support to implement programs and projects through donations, fund raising, annual native plant sales, grant writing and memberships in *Natural Connections*. The priority focus for infrastructure improvements for the coming years is the installation of a new septic system, and construction of new bathrooms.

Chegwyn Farms

The property is owned by the district, but is currently managed by Charlie Chegwyn under a life-estate agreement. Under this agreement, Charlie Chegwyn controls day-to-day operations, leases, and cropping plans, and receives the majority of rental income. The district will continue to assist with maintenance of Chegwyn Farm as feasible, and will continue to seek funds for conservation work on riparian areas, noxious weed control, and other projects. The district will also complete the transfer of water rights to a new diversion point on the property, and work with the farmer currently leasing the land to utilize the irrigation right.

Yamhela Oak Conservation Overlook

The district acquired this 173 acre property in 2016, utilizing funding from the Willamette Wildlife Mitigation Program and Bonneville Power Administration (BPA). The anticipated workload in the coming year is to conduct property maintenance work and noxious weed control, and work with BPA to develop an approved long-term management plan for the property.

Muddy Valley Habitat Reserve

The district will work with the Willamette Wildlife Mitigation Program, BPA, and The Nature Conservancy to develop plans for the purchase of approximately 540 acres in Muddy Valley for wildlife habitat and long-term land protection. The district submitted a grant proposal in 2014-2015 and

received the #1 ranking and recommendation for funding. Work in the current year will include finalizing a tenant agreement, completing work to finalize the acquisition, and other related property transactions. The district will continue to work with the current landowners on oak and prairie restoration projects under agreements with the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

10. Partnerships

The district works regularly with many conservation partners, volunteer organizations, non-profits, local businesses, and various state, federal, and local governments.

In 2016-2017, district's board members and employees will continue to maintain partnerships with conservation partners including:

- Trout Mountain Forestry
- Confederate Tribes of the Grand Ronde
- Greater Yamhill Watershed Council
- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Farm Service Agency
- Yamhill Partners for Land and Water
- Yamhill County
- OSU Extension
- Natural Connections
- Native Plant Society
- Yamhill County Public Works
- Oregon Department of Agriculture
- Oregon Department of Environmental Quality
- Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
- The Nature Conservancy
- Trust for Public Land
- Columbia Land Trust
- Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Friends of Family Farmers
- Local municipalities

... and many local businesses, landowners, cooperators, and neighboring conservation districts.

Summary

This annual work plan provides an overview of the district's scope of work for 2016-2017. More information about specific projects, outreach events, technical assistance and partnership can be obtained by contacting the district directly or by visiting the district's website at: yamhillswcd.org

Review and Approved by the District Board on August 10, 2016

Barbara Boyer, District Chair

Date