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## MILLER WOODS RESTROOM PROJECT COMPLETED

The Yamhill Soil and Water Conservation District (District) met at Miller Woods on August 22 for a ribbon-cutting and official opening of the newly completed bathroom facility. Larry Ojua, Executive Director, and Barbara Boyer, District Chair, acknowledged Miller Woods volunteers, contractors, District board members and staff, and others for their efforts to plan, design, and construct the new facility. The District also voiced appreciation to those in the community who have supported the project with donations, volunteerism, and regular patronage of the District's annual native plant sale, the primary fundraiser that supports Miller Woods. The new restroom facilities consist of three units, two of which are handicap



accessible and have changing tables, along with two outside sinks for hand washing. The building design included an overhang for rain protection, motion-detection lights, electric hand dryers, heaters, and other typical bathroom fixtures. The building was designed by architect Marcia Mikesch, and constructed by Brian O'Neil Construction. Warrior Construction completed the excavation work and installation of utility lines, and McMullen Electric installed the electrical service and fixtures. Many thanks to all who have been involved in the planning and construction of this project. Make sure to check out the new facilities the next time you visit Miller Woods.

*Miller Woods is owned and operated by the Yamhill Soil and Water Conservation District.*



## FAREWELL EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR LARRY OJUA

As of August 25, 2022, Larry Ojua has retired from his position as Executive Director at the District. The board would like to thank him for his dedication and enthusiasm for the past 11 years. His keen eye for opportunities helped expand the District's budget from \$1.7M to \$5.8M between 2012/13-2022/23! Moving forward, the District promises to uphold this legacy as we navigate the future Larry helped set up.

**Our future is bright! THANK YOU LARRY.**



*These were the common words used to describe Larry when District Board Members were interviewed*

## Yamhill SWCD

### Directory

#### Board of Directors

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**Dave Cruickshank**

*Vice Chair, At Large 1*

**Leo Krick**

*Secretary, Zone 3*

**Pat FitzGerald**

*Treasurer, At Large 2*

**Sam Sweeney**

*Zone 5*

**Ximena Orrego**

*Zone 1*

**Gordon Cook**

*Zone 4*

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**Lucien Gunderman**

**Henry Wyman**

**Ken Nygren**

#### Director Emeritus

**Gordon Dromgoole**

**Patricia Farrell**

**Jim LeTourneau**

#### Staff

**Larry Ojua**

*Executive Director*

**Andy Bleckinger**

*District Manager*

**Jordan Anderson**

*Resource Conservationist*

**Amie Loop-Frison**

*Habitat Conservationist*

**Keith Nasman**

*Conservation Technician*

**Jacob Rose**

*Stewardship Technician*

**Allison Schwister**

*Office Administrator*

**Joshua Togstad**

*Protected Lands Coordinator*

**Brady Watcherson**

*Miller Woods Property Manager*

#### Conservation Notes

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# NEW STAFF & CHANGES TO THE DISTRICT TEAM

BY LARRY OJUA, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

It was a busy spring and summer for the District as we conducted recruitments to fill several vacant positions. I am pleased to announce the District made four appointments in June and July, which brings the conservation team up to a full staffing level. Here's a summary of the occurring changes.

Andy Bleckinger joined the District as the new District Manager on July 5th. Andy comes to the District after spending the last three years with the San Juan Soil and Water Conservation District in New Mexico as the Assistant District Manager, focusing on district operations and overseeing their outreach and education programs. He is quickly becoming fully involved overseeing operations, finances, grant management, and working to prepare for this year's financial audit. Andy is also working closely with District staff, board members and our conservation partners on projects and conservation program delivery.

Andy is excited to return to his home state of Oregon where he grew up and received his Bachelor of Science from Southern Oregon University. Andy has a strong background in grant management, youth and conservation education, and conservation district administration. His education, background,

and experience will certainly benefit the District team, our conservation partners, and the people we serve in the

community. Please be sure to reach out to Andy at our community events, the native plant sale, or whenever you might be at the District office.

Jordan Anderson joined the District on July 1st as the new Resource Conservationist. Jordan is no stranger to the District. He has volunteered at the annual native plant sale for several years, worked with the District on roadside vegetation projects in cooperation with Yamhill County Public Works, and has served as a

contractor with the district for invasive plant surveys. Jordan's primary responsibility is to oversee and provide technical assistance for the district's Agricultural Water Quality Program, which focuses on supporting and implementing conservation practices to

improve water quality. Jordan will also participate in our cooperative work with the county's roadside vegetation program, contribute to various outreach events, and work on collaborative partnerships with the community and local, state, and federal agencies.

Jordan received a Bachelor of Science in Geography and Environmental Science from the University of Oregon in 2009, and recently completed a Master of Science in Rangeland

Ecology and Management from Oregon State University. Please reach out to Jordan if you have interest in conservation work relating to water quality, erosion control, cover crops, and other related natural resource issues.



Welcome to the District, Andy!



Welcome to the District, Jordan!

In April, Sonya Wilkerson, the district's Miller Woods Property Manager, announced plans to leave the district. The district is very grateful for Sonya's tireless work at Miller Woods, and for her many accomplishments during her tenure. The care of the Miller Woods property, its trail system, the building and facilities, and the native plant nursery are all top-notch thanks to Sonya's contributions. She also coordinated and nurtured a fantastic volunteer program at Miller Woods, assisted with school and educational functions, and coordinated many aspects of the district's native plant sale, which is one of the primary annual fundraisers for Miller Woods. We thank Sonya for her dedication and wish her the best.

In July, the district hired Brady Watcherson as Miller Woods Caretaker and Volunteer Coordinator. Brady comes to the district with experience in construction and contracting, forest management and fire protection, and equipment operation. Brady is overseeing the care of the native plant nursery, working with the Miller Woods volunteers, and assisting with the general care and operations of Miller Woods. We welcome Brady to the district team.

In June, the district hired Jacob Rose as a seasonal Stewardship Technician. Jacob will be working closely with Josh Togstad, our Protected Lands Coordinator, and Amie Loop-Frison, Habitat Conservationist, district Wildlife Habitat Specialist, this summer to help restore and maintain conservation properties owned or managed by the district. In addition to Jacob's stewardship duties, he will draft a management plan for one of the district's protected lands holdings. Jacob comes to the district by way of Portland State University, where he is currently pursuing a Master of Environmental Management.



*Welcome to the District, Brady!*



*Welcome to the District, Jacob!*

The final staffing update relates to my position here at the district. One of my primary goals over the last year was to assist the district board with hiring new administrative leadership and facilitate a transition plan. With the recent hiring of new staff bringing the district team back to full capacity, I will be leaving the district at the end of August to pursue other personal and professional goals. It has been a privilege to serve the district for over 23 years, and to be involved in many conservation accomplishments during my tenure. It has been rewarding to see small projects, like the native plant sale that started over 25 years ago with a few hundred plants, evolve into a major community event that draws almost 1,000 people each year. The district's efforts and accomplishments relating to oak and prairie restoration, water quality protection, and work associated with protected lands programs and conservation easements has grown steadily for the last 10 to 15 years. Properties like Miller Woods and Chegwyn Farm are protected in perpetuity for agriculture and forestry, wildlife habitat, conservation education, and other community benefits. These types of projects developed over the years through the collective work of an effective board of directors, a competent and enthusiastic team of staff members, dedicated volunteers and conservation partners, and many committed landowners and Yamhill County citizens. I am grateful for having been a part of this important work, for having the opportunity to build and maintain professional relationships, and for all the friendships that have developed over the years. With the current district team and board, I am confident the district is positioned for a great future. In the months ahead I hope for the opportunity to connect with folks at a future native plant sale, Miller Woods, or other community events. Best of luck to you all as you continue to pursue conservation efforts and keep Yamhill County a great place to live.



# What's Happening at Miller Woods

Follow us on Facebook for frequent updates! [facebook.com/EnjoyMillerWoods](https://facebook.com/EnjoyMillerWoods)



## New Boardwalk

Large amounts of rain this last spring resulted in a number of repairs to trails at Miller Woods. Several new side and cross trail rock drains have been constructed. Runoff patterns showed the need for new drainage dips - which have now been dug. A poorly sited switchback was moved up trail out of a gulley in which it was originally placed. And runoff down and through the meadow showed that a rock drain built last winter was inadequate in the face of the large amounts of water that poured through this year (see Photo 1).

The solution is a short new boardwalk to take hikers and joggers up and out of the water (see Photo 2).



Photo 1: Inadequate drainage means soggy shoes!



Photo 2: What an improvement! Thank you Miller Woods Volunteers!



Photo 3: Perfect for a walk among the ferns.

One final water related project was just completed. A short section of gravel walkway has been constructed in a section of trail near the lowest point in Miller Woods where the changing flow of water from a nearby spring resulted in significant amounts of mud on the trail (see Photo 3).

*Here's to drier feet as you use the trails at Miller Woods!*





## Seven-H Reserve

# Welcome to the Family!

BY AMIE LOOP-FRISON, HABITAT CONSERVATIONIST

Not only has the District added new staff members in recent months, but has also added acreage to our portfolio of protected lands. In the past eight months we have acquired two properties using funds from the Willamette Wildlife Mitigation Program (WWMP) which is funded by Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) and administered through Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. WWMP provides funding to land trusts, tribes and conservation districts to acquire properties with important wildlife values for the purpose of permanent habitat. A conservation easement held by BPA is placed on these properties so that they can never be developed into uses that would violate their conservation values.

### Seven-H Reserve

This 326-acre property at the southeast end of Muddy Valley is a unique mix of oak woodland, savanna, upland prairie and mixed coniferous forests. It has been owned by the same family for almost a century and managed both for timber production and wildlife habitat. The District is honored to continue the family's legacy in preserving this beautiful piece of land. It is home to several rare species including Kincaid's lupine and western pond turtles. The headwaters for the east fork

of Muddy Creek originate here and there are four man-made ponds which provide important aquatic habitat as well as future wildfire protection. Many of the large Oregon white oak have been released from Douglas fir competition within the last several years. The property will be managed for healthy stands of oak, diverse native prairies, and late seral conifer forest.



*Dupee Valley Reserve*

### Dupee Valley Reserve

This 137-acre property adjoins the District's Muddy Valley Habitat Reserve. It is a forested property with a variety of stand types varying from purely conifer to riparian hardwood stands. There is also a small stand of Oregon white oak mixed with fir which will be restored to oak woodland. A tributary to Dupee Creek runs along the boundary of the property and is home to

beaver and hopefully turtles in the future! Besides releasing oak, District staff will be focusing on weed control and thinning some of the overstocked Douglas fir.

These District properties are closed to the general public at this time to protect the habitat and critters that use these lands. We occasionally hold workshops and demonstrations on these properties so continue to watch our newsletter or check out our website for opportunities to visit these properties in the future.



# 2022 WEEDS OF NOTICE: POISON HEMLOCK & TANSY RAGWORT

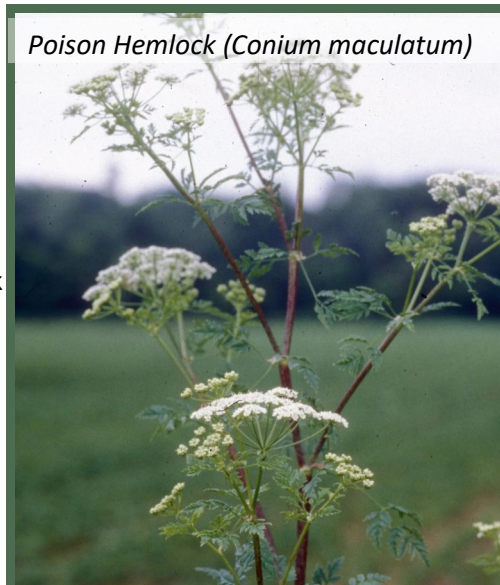
BY KEITH NASMAN, CONSERVATION TECHNICIAN

This year's prolonged, wet spring continues to ripple through the seasons. From delayed planting due to soggy conditions to delayed swathing of the fescue, it is still causing havoc with scheduling. One thing is certain, some plants thrived with all that spring moisture. Field grasses on the District's properties are exceedingly tall and thick. Among the happy plants there are a few that we wish were not thriving as much, notably poison hemlock and tansy ragwort. These dangerous weeds have exploded this spring.

## *Poison Hemlock (Conium maculatum)*

This plant is a dangerous one. All parts of the plant are toxic, especially when ingested. Poison hemlock can be singled out by its red or purple streaks on the lower stems and that all parts are hairless. It is sometimes confused with wild carrot, which only grows half as tall and has hairy stems with no red/purple coloring. Poison Hemlock is a biennial, growing low in its first year, and then growing tall and flowering in the second year.

**Control:** Wear gloves and long sleeves. Manual removal is recommended for small sites. Dig or pull up plants. Bag and dispose of any seed heads in the trash. Be aware that even dead canes are poisonous for up to three years. Wash your hands thoroughly after handling plants. Mowing is not recommended due to the risk of inhaling toxins. For chemical control, follow labels exactly as written. Do not cut down the treated plants until they have died.



*Poison Hemlock (Conium maculatum)*

## *Tansy Ragwort (Senecio jacobaea)*

First documented in 1922, this longstanding weed is poisonous to cattle and horses. It is a biennial, or short-lived perennial plant with deep lobes and dark green leaves. It can create dense populations.

**Control:** For small areas, manual pulling may be feasible. The plant is easiest to pull when in bud. Herbicide application before flowering is best, although you can mow, and then treat it in fall. Cut and bag all flower and seed heads to prevent seed dispersal. The seeds can lay dormant in the soil for up to 15 years. For chemical control, follow labels exactly as written.



*Tansy Ragwort (Senecio jacobaea)*

For additional information on these and other noxious weeds in our region, visit [yamhillswcd.org](http://yamhillswcd.org) or reach out to Keith Nasman 503-798-5221, [keith@yamhillswcd.org](mailto:keith@yamhillswcd.org)

# CHANGE CAN START WITH A QUESTION: WHAT DOES A TON OF TOPSOIL COST?

BY SAM SWEENEY, ZONE 5 BOARD MEMBER

Several decades ago, a farmer who worked in northwest McMinnville named Charlie Sitton came to a monthly board meeting and asked a question:

**“What does a ton of topsoil cost?”**

“Charlie, you can go to Kraemer’s and buy it for maybe \$8.00.” But that was not the answer that Charlie wanted; his question was more theoretical and probing.

So, what does a ton of topsoil cost? One answer is it takes maybe 400 years to make it through time and natural processes. Then again, what does a ton of topsoil cost when it erodes and enters public waterways and affects the fish and aquatic life that depend on clean water?

Later, Charlie modified a JD grain drill into a no-till drill. His question also motivated the District to become involved in no-till and we now have a no-till drill that can be rented by farmers within the county.

Charlie’s question is an open question that can be applied to nearly everything that humans are involved in. For example, plastic: we love it. But most of it is not recyclable after a single use and is discarded. Now we have an area of floating plastic in the Pacific Ocean the size of Texas that is severely impacting the ocean’s aquatic life.

Another application is climate change. Why is our planet

in serious trouble and all life on it? Humanity never asked themselves Charlie’s question.

In future newsletters we will try and answer this

question on natural resource issues. We will bring information, such as: What is the amount of carbon that a tree sequesters at a certain age? What is the value of a Great Horned owl family that hunts mice in a grass field? We will try to find numerical values in the natural world around us that we pay little attention to.

But the question is an open question that can be asked on everything that we do, and it's impacts on the world around us. We did not, were unable, and did not want to ask this question before. Now by default --- we have climate change. What can we do now? Well, we can change, and we have to. But how? By questioning everything we do.

*Check in future newsletters for more articles like this.*



Sam Sweeney, Zone 5 Board Member





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*Providing Natural Resource Leadership*

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*New Restrooms at Miller Woods Completed*

The District would like to extend a huge THANK YOU to all who contributed to this project!