

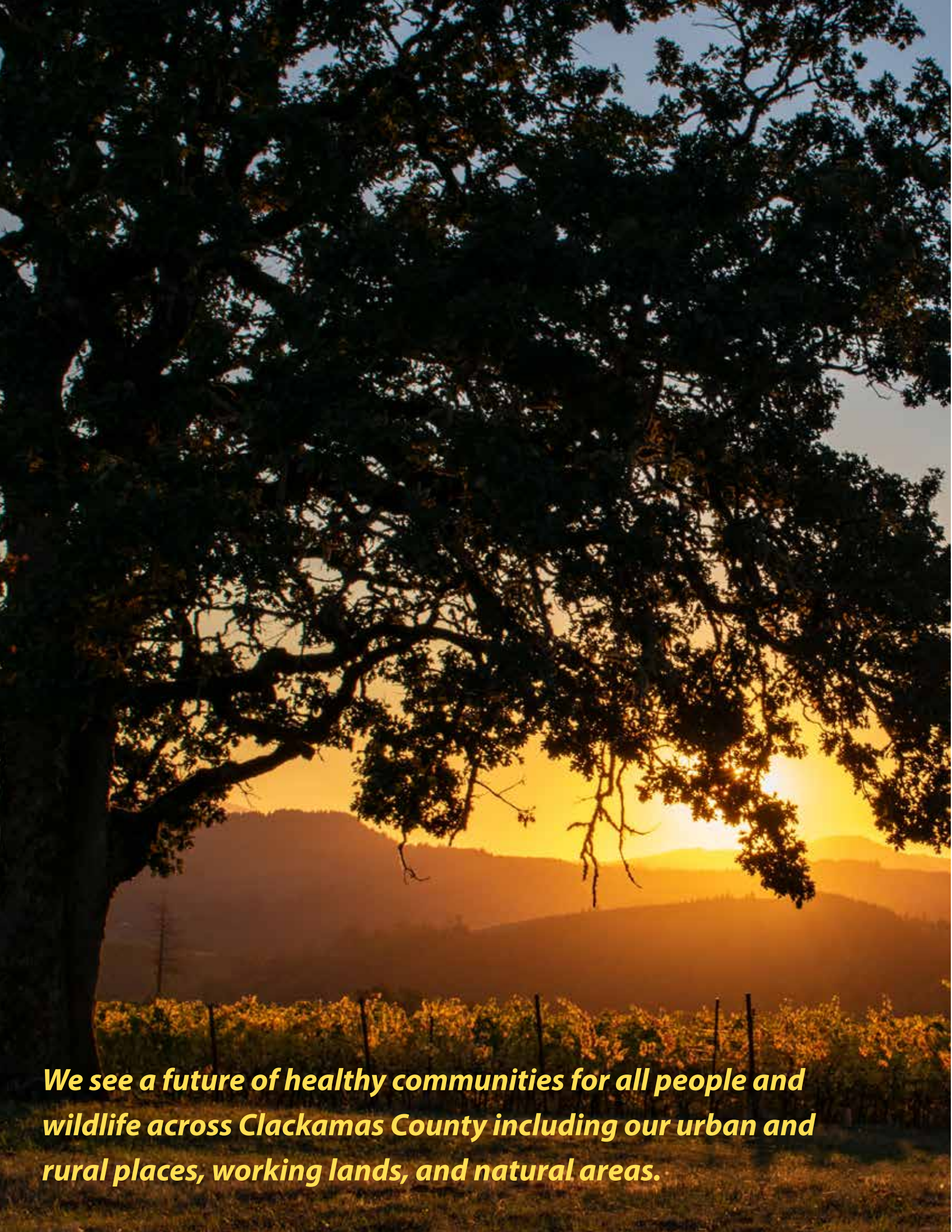
Strategic Plan 2023-2026



CLACKAMAS SOIL AND WATER

CONSERVATION
DISTRICT

Good dirt. Clean water.



We see a future of healthy communities for all people and wildlife across Clackamas County including our urban and rural places, working lands, and natural areas.

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Welcome to the Clackamas Soil and Water Conservation District Strategic Plan

For the past twelve months, the Clackamas Soil and Water Conservation District has worked to create a roadmap that will guide your District for the next three years and beyond. Developed collaboratively by Board directors and staff with input from our stakeholders and partners, this plan articulates both traditional and new approaches to support the natural resource priorities of the District and to realize our full conservation mission potential.

While this document will serve as a framework to guide the actions of the District for the coming years. We recognize that, as with all strategic plans, it is a fluid plan, and we will utilize adaptive management practices to accomplish our stated goals and strategies.

The conservation landscape has changed in Clackamas County. The county's population growth has placed new demands on the environment. This combined with environmental stressors from a changing climate creates a need for the District to reassess how we provide our services.

Specifically, the plan sets forth 5 goals representing the pillars of the District's conservation direction moving forward. Each goal is assigned corresponding strategies and actions to implement the goal. Our focus is on prioritizing our work, expanding programs where appropriate, and committing to regional conservation efforts and community engagement while fostering an equitable culture throughout staff and board.

The Clackamas SWCD Strategic Plan will drive these efforts: leading when appropriate and supporting our partners when able.

Yours in conservation,



Christopher Lapp
District Manager

Introduction and Background

Our History

Soil and Water Conservation Districts were first formed under federal authority in 1939 in response to the Dust Bowl, to provide a connection between federal assistance through the Soil Conservation Service (now the Natural Resource Conservation Service) and local land managers. In 1974, the North and South Clackamas Soil and Water Conservation Districts combined to create the Clackamas Soil and Water Conservation District (CSWCD) to provide land managers with tools and services to conserve their soil and water. In 2006, the residents of Clackamas County voted to establish a tax base to further the work and services provided by CSWCD.

The Clackamas SWCD Today

Today, our status as a special district with a locally elected board is primarily funded by taxpayer dollars, but we leverage those dollars to protect the public's investment and to assure continuing accountability to the community. Our non-regulatory nature and long history of working with both private and public landowners and other valued partners help us build trust throughout the community.

We are flexible and responsive; state statutes allow us to address a broad range of natural resource concerns, and as a special district and local government we can partner with other public agencies including federal, state, regional, and local agencies, as well as nonprofit and community organizations. We collaborate with many entities and often serve as a convener around natural resource issues affecting our county.

The Need and Our Response

The Need

Our ever-changing county continues to face important natural resource concerns including water quality and quantity, threats to wildlife habitat, management of invasive weeds, the risk from wildfire, and the need to improve soil health and agricultural viability. Many of these concerns are or will be worsened in a rapidly changing climate with more frequent drought, heat waves, and other extreme weather. These shifts are also introducing both urgent and long-term concerns about forest health, wildfire vulnerability, and water availability.

The population of our county is also growing larger and becoming more urban and diverse every day. As conservation needs increase, so does the need to make conservation relevant and accessible to everyone throughout Clackamas County. We recognize the challenges of doing so when individuals, families, and communities also face many competing priorities.

Our response: CSWCD Conservation Direction and Commitment

As the urgency and breadth of conservation issues increase, and as our community grows, we are called upon to play an ever more thoughtful leadership role in helping people respond and adapt. Over the next several years the Board of Directors and staff of CSWCD will align efforts that span all aspects of our work with a balanced land ethic approach among the many competing needs and issues. A brief description of our strategic conservation programmatic direction and supporting implementation commitments follows.

Our Program Directions

Administration. The District will continue to pursue organizational efficiencies through the duration of the strategic plan and be accountable to the residents of Clackamas County. We will thoughtfully prioritize staffing and programs and seek resources to ensure we can equitably and effectively meet the needs of our growing county for the long term, within the capacity of the District. We will continue to expand our support of programs using grants, cost-share money, partnerships, and volunteers.

Conservation Planning. We will continue to provide professional technical expertise and connect landowners, land managers, and partners with available financial resources to address natural resource concerns that have an impact on the greater community. We will work with landowners and organizations to promote and implement projects that restore native habitats on land and in rivers and streams for the benefit of ecosystems, wildlife, and future generations. The District will continue and broaden our support and participation in connecting with and providing services to a broad diversity of urban dwellers of Clackamas County. We will strive to provide reasons and opportunities for urban residents to engage and understand conservation practices.

Land and facility management. Since 2013, the District has owned a 15-acre farm in Beavercreek where we have built our Conservation Resource Center (CRC). In 2018 the District also acquired the 315-acre Eagle Creek Community Forest (ECCF) located near Eagle Fern Park. As land management has become a significant part of the operations for the District, we will manage our properties through a lens of recognizing the important roles of working lands, farms, and forests under a balanced land ethic approach. We will walk the talk and collaborate with our neighbors, partners, and technical experts to share with the public and invite them to our lands to explore and learn. We will showcase conservation practices that they can use on their own properties while also providing areas to engage with nature. We will support efficient and safe operations of all District facilities to provide the public with safe and equitable access.

Invasive species management. The District has been a leader in the management of invasive species since 2009 with the development of the WeedWise program. We will continue to recognize the impact of non-native species, especially invasive species, on native ecosystems and the management of working and conservation lands. We will continue our leadership commitment to approaching the control of such species using an Early Detection Rapid Response approach.

Working lands and natural lands protection. Throughout the course of the strategic plan, we will work with partners to understand land protection needs in the county and explore our role in meeting these needs. We will examine the potential for approaches including fee title acquisition, purchase of conservation easements, and other management agreements; and we will lay the groundwork for moving forward on any of these approaches that make sense for the District.

Outreach and education. The programs the District provides are to benefit all residents of the County. Before people can support our mission, they need to be able to understand what we can provide them in terms of assistance. The District will continue to listen to the residents of Clackamas County to learn about their natural resource concerns and needs. We will improve our communication methods and develop useful educational tools so residents can be good stewards of the County and implement appropriate conservation practices on their own property. We will broaden awareness, especially with nontraditional audiences, of the services of the District.

Our Conservation Commitments

Adaptive management. We will use adaptive management for achieving the established goals for the District. Adaptive management is defined as a system of management practices (strategies) based upon clearly identified outcomes, where monitoring evaluates whether those actions are achieving desired results (objectives), and if not, reassess our approach to ensure success.

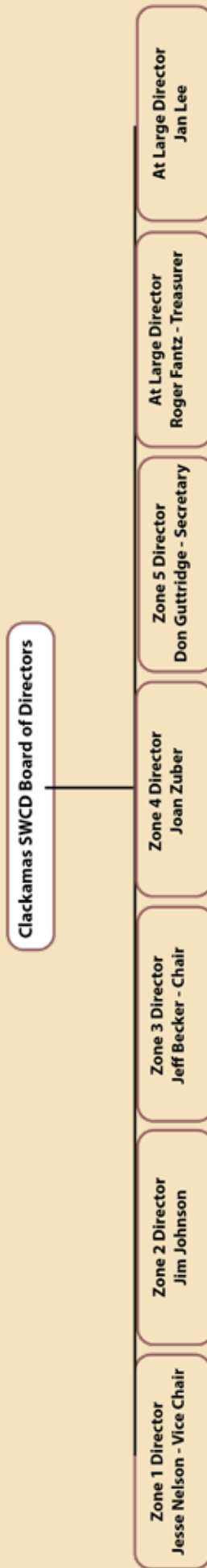
Advancing equity. We will commit to evolving and adapting as an organization to meet our constituents' needs equitably and responsibly, including those in Clackamas County's diverse communities. We will learn more about who benefits from and who participates in natural resource conservation. We will work independently and with partners toward solutions to address longstanding inequities.

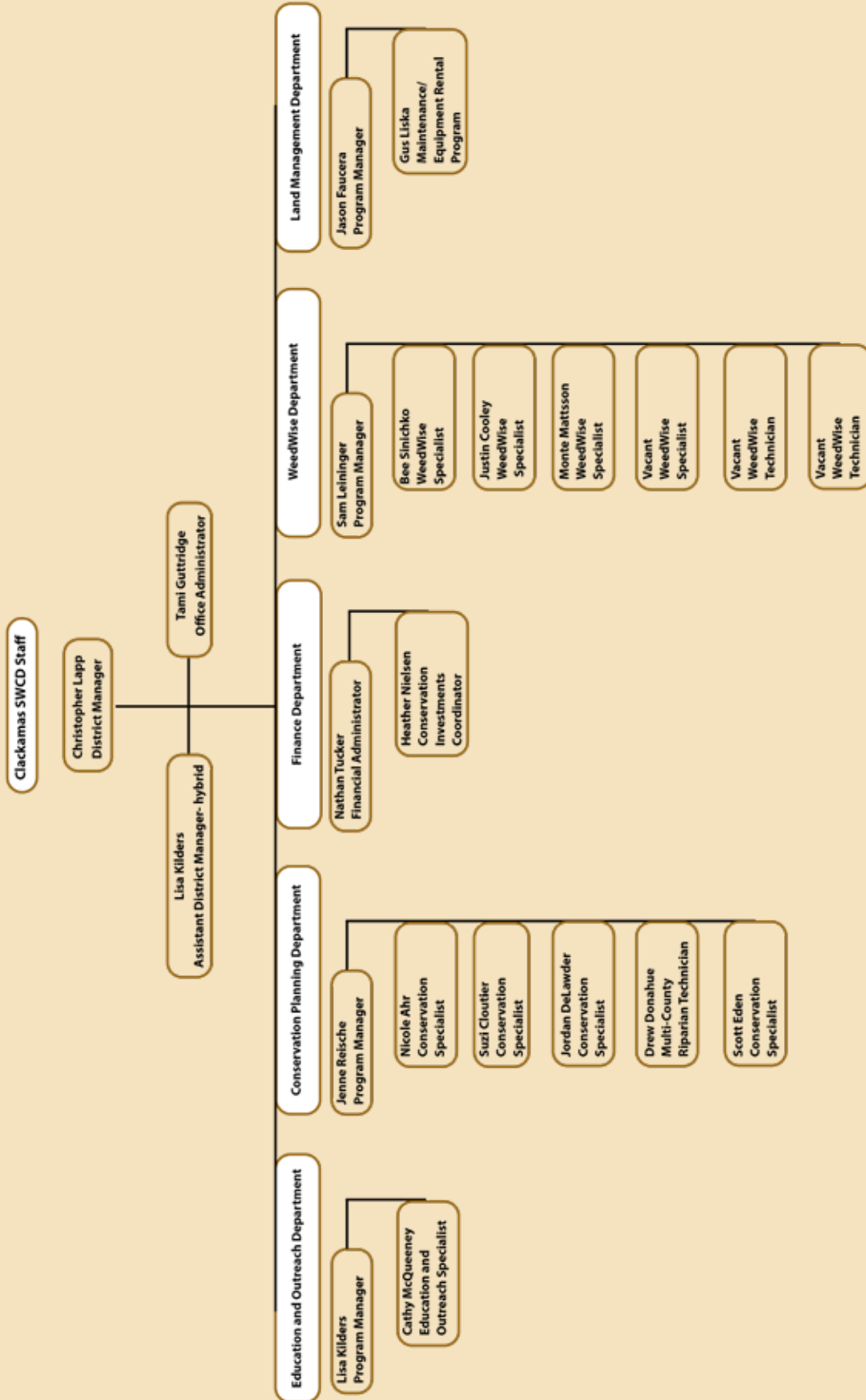
Climate resilience. Through our work and our many partnerships, we will commit to helping people throughout Clackamas County recognize how a changing climate interacts with other environmental threats and stressors. We understand that some will not share our view of climate change, but the District will promote practices that help land managers survive, thrive, and be resilient in extreme weather conditions.

Biological and scientific integrity. When evaluating the appropriate direction for the District tied to strategic goals, we will use sound professional judgment to determine the appropriate strategies and actions. We will commit to bringing the District's field experience, knowledge of natural resources, familiarity with the landscape, and the best available science, including input from those with whom we partner, to ensure the best possible solution and outcome.

Partnerships. It will be essential to partner with others to be successful in fulfilling our mission and accomplishing the goals and strategies of the strategic plan. The District currently partners with a number of organizations, including other public agencies, and nonprofit conservation organizations to implement conservation programs throughout the county. Partners provide funding, special expertise, and additional resources. We will commit to continuing these collaboration efforts and grow in the diversity of these partnerships into the future.

2023 Organizational Charts





Foundational Elements Of Clackamas SWCD

Mission

We support the people of Clackamas County to sustainably use, restore, and conserve our shared natural resources, today and for future generations.

Values

Four intertwined principles guide the way we work with the community and within our organization:

Integrity and public trust

It is the public's trust that makes us successful. To earn that trust we seek the best information available and provide training for our staff to make sure our advice and services are current, technically sound, and science-based. We provide tangible results by using financial resources and staff time effectively and efficiently. We evaluate our successes, work hard to correct our mistakes, and always strive to be better.

Service and responsiveness

We help our customers, our volunteers, and each other by listening carefully to needs, then looking for solutions together. We cover technical topics in everyday language. We are transparent about how we can and cannot help, and we provide accurate referrals to other resources. We adapt as needs change, solve problems as they come up, and offer multiple alternatives whenever possible. We seek out and learn from feedback and make ourselves available to answer questions.

Being in community

We strive to be approachable and helpful in our interactions with customers, partners, and each other. We convey our pride in our work through our actions and our attitudes. We recognize that our community and our organization include a wide variety of people who come at conservation from different points of view, with different needs and experiences. We take time to understand each other by listening with empathy, compassion, and humility. We create opportunities to get to know each other and learn together. We work both within our organization and with partners to understand strengths and develop collaborative approaches to achieve shared goals.

Equity and inclusion

As our board-adopted equity statement states, “We believe that a resilient ecosystem is only possible when people of all identities are included, and we are committed to using our power and privilege as a historically white-led organization to do our part in creating a just, equitable, and inclusive conservation community.” In practice, this means we are learning about and developing a growing understanding of Clackamas County’s diverse communities and their conservation needs. We work toward designing our programs, services, and outreach offerings to reduce barriers to understanding and engagement. We strive to recognize and value a variety of experiences and wisdom within our board and staff, actively encourage diverse candidates to seek staff and board positions, and empower and support all team members to be leaders. We act with intention and persistence, knowing we are investing in complex, long-term change.

Expanded Vision Statement: An Image of the Future

We see a future of healthy communities for all people and wildlife across Clackamas County including our urban and rural places, working lands, and natural areas.

We believe this vision will be possible when those who live, work, and recreate here share a collective commitment to care for each other and the land because we recognize and celebrate the inherent worth of people and places.

We imagine a future where:

Everyone in our community is engaged and valued for their contributions to conservation.

All people have the information and resources they need to care for the land and wildlife on both private and public land, and community decisions about land consider the communities and creatures who are most impacted.

Water, soil, and habitat meet the needs of people and wildlife.

The water in our streams and rivers is clean and healthy, and plentiful enough to serve communities who use it wisely; natural habitats and threatened native plant communities are protected and restored; precious soil is conserved, nurtured, and enriched from backyard to farm to forest; invasive weeds are controlled; and streams are cool and shaded for native fish and other wildlife.

Farms, forests, and natural lands provide for people and support healthy ecosystems.

Farms and forests continue to provide food, timber, and other useful goods which help support our local economy; farming and forestry practices help people steward these lands with care for generations to come; and undeveloped natural lands are protected as places for wildlife and people to co-exist.

Together, we prepare for and adapt to a changing climate.

Together, our community recognizes and plans for our shifting climate. We strive to store and capture carbon to offset emissions. We are resilient and responsive to the emerging needs associated with our changing climate.

Clackamas SWCD Goals, Strategies, and Priority Actions

Introduction

District goals are descriptive, open-ended, and often broad statements of desired future conditions that convey a purpose, but do not define measurable units. Goals must support the District vision and describe the desired end result. We established five goals with supporting strategies and priority actions to address the conservation priorities and organizational values. Included below are the goals.

Goal #1 Working lands and rural lands

From working farms and forests to homesteads of all sizes, landowners and land stewards in rural Clackamas County have access to conservation assistance that meets their needs and reflects CSWCD's core strategic initiatives.

Rationale: In the face of the changing climate and increasing population and development pressures, CSWCD is uniquely situated to help people steward rural lands for ecological, economic, and human values. At the same time, requests for assistance are growing as land ownership in rural Clackamas County increasingly includes a diverse population new to managing significant acreage and livestock. We aim to help both working lands owners and stewards, and others who do not make a living from the land but wish to be good stewards.



While we will continue to address key priorities through direct one-on-one conservation assistance, to serve everyone we must also adapt our approach to focus more on education and assistance that is accessible to all, presented through formats and media that can assist multiple land stewards with related concerns. Our CSWCD-owned properties will also showcase many practices relevant to these audiences. Recognizing that maintaining working lands in sustainable, productive agriculture and forestry is critical to future food security, habitat diversity, and more, we prioritize working lands for CSWCD technical services, financial assistance, education, and outreach, and we work with partners to help landowners understand options for succession to new ownership and even permanent land protection.

Public policy and public perception are also critical to keeping lands in working use. CSWCD and its partners can help elected officials understand how to best support working land, and we can educate and inspire others by raising awareness of how the conservation practices on rural lands benefit everyone in our county, including our urban and suburban residents.

Strategies

1.1. Deliver high-quality technical and education services to support conservation on working lands and rural properties.

Ongoing work to provide technical assistance and conservation plans; invasive weed management; conservation education and referrals; and participation in local and regional collaborative groups.



1.2. Define priorities for CSCWD’s technical and financial assistance and educational programs.

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3 [and beyond]
Develop/update prioritization systems for technical assistance, including equity considerations.	Update prioritization systems for financial assistance.	Work with partners to assess conservation concerns and service gaps
Propose updates to the CSWCD cost-share system	Identify other project funding for working lands.	Continue
Expand resources for landowners/stewards e.g., tool and equipment program, list of qualified contractors.	Continue	Continue
	Develop new rural educational materials identified through prioritization; collaborate w/ other SWCDs on offerings.	Leverage CRC for education and demos.

1.3. Advocate for public policy and public awareness that support conservation best practices, the long-term viability of working lands, and habitat conservation and management.

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3 [and beyond]
Activate Board Advocacy Committee in collaboration with Working Lands Committee.	Continue	Continue
Support Oregon Association of Conservation Districts advocacy.	Continue	Continue
Continue coordinated advocacy with regional partners.	Continue	Continue
	Develop communications strategies to promote the benefits of rural/working land conservation.	Continue

1.4. Explore current and potential land protection strategies for Clackamas County.



Year 1	Year 2	Year 3 [and beyond]
Seek/maintain partnerships with land protection organizations, including those that hold and acquire easements.	Continue	Continue
Work with partners to encourage farm and woodlot succession planning	Continue	Continue
Identify land protection priorities.	Research potential protection tools, funding sources, capacity needs.	Make land protection strategy recommendations to the board based on findings and long-term feasibility.

Goal #2 Urban and suburban areas

Residents, partner organizations, and local governments throughout urban and suburban Clackamas County have opportunities to support and participate in resource conservation.

Rationale: Urban and suburban residents make up a significant and growing portion of the population in Clackamas County. This increasingly diverse group needs resources and tools to improve urban wildlife habitat, control invasive weeds, manage stormwater, reduce pesticide use, and adopt other sustainable practices that enhance the livability and health of their homes and communities. We will focus on achieving impact in our urban and suburban communities by leveraging resources to reach more people as well as a greater diversity of people. New and expanded support of partners who share our values and mission will offer opportunities for residents to participate in and learn about conservation from people they trust in settings that are comfortable for them. The development of new outreach and educational materials and resources will make conservation information accessible to broader and more diverse audiences. More outreach to local governments will help CSWCD and other public agencies collaborate to achieve shared goals.



Strategies

2.1 Continue to support conservation in urban and suburban areas through strategic partnerships and landscape-scale initiatives.

Ongoing work to provide limited technical assistance and serve as a referral center for common resource conservation questions; engage urban residents in landscape-scale invasive weed eradication efforts; and provide grants, encourage collaboration, and identify opportunities with Watershed Councils, Farmers Markets, neighborhood associations/Community Planning Organizations, and nonprofit partners.



2.2 Expand and develop new partnerships with organizations that directly support residents and businesses in urban/suburban areas, with a focus on reaching underserved communities.

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3 [and beyond]
Conduct research to understand the diversity of people and communities within our District.	Continue	Continue
Inform partners of SWCD resources and focus areas to build understanding and accurate referrals.	Continue	Continue
Increase partnerships connected to underserved communities in urban/suburban Clackamas County.	Seek additional funding to support existing and new community partners to engage residents and businesses.	Continue

2.3 Develop educational resources that address urban/suburban natural resource needs.



Year 1	Year 2	Year 3 [and beyond]
Research specific concerns of urban/suburban residents, businesses, and underserved communities.	Develop new educational materials and offerings directed at key concerns.	Continue
	Collaborate w/ other Metro SWCDs and our federal partners on high-priority urban/suburban educational offerings.	Continue
	Leverage CRC property for education and demonstration.	Continue

2.4 Educate and partner with local governments throughout Clackamas County.

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3 [and beyond]
Develop or renew connections with elected officials and department heads in municipalities and relevant special districts.	Opportunistically develop joint activities with municipalities and relevant special districts.	Continue
		Provide tools to support municipalities in developing conservation policy.

Goal #3 Natural areas and sensitive habitats

Natural areas and sensitive habitats of Clackamas County support healthy ecosystems for the benefit of all.

Rationale: Natural areas throughout Clackamas County, from public land on the Mt. Hood National Forest to state and local parks to spaces maintained by private owners only for ecosystem benefit—are critical to healthy, functioning ecosystems. These lands that are not actively managed to support human activity often support wildlife, endangered plants, cold water for fish, and much more. There are pockets of important sensitive habitat, from Oregon white oak woodlands to special zones near rivers and creeks, throughout Clackamas County. Over the next five years, CSWCD and our partners will continue to invest in conservation work on these lands to support our overall vision of thriving ecosystems.



Strategies

3.1 Support regional conservation efforts on high-quality natural areas and open spaces, biologically sensitive areas, and large intact landscapes on public and private lands.

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3 [and beyond]
Continue management of prioritized invasive weed species, efforts to protect and enhance sensitive oak and prairie habitats directly and through collaborative efforts including with Natural Resources Conservation Service and regional groups, and continue to serve as a technical resource to other public agencies.		
Identify additional priority natural areas.	Coordinate with relevant land managers to plan and implement key restoration and stewardship projects.	Continue
		Increase education and outreach efforts to encourage community stewardship of natural areas, including through demonstrations at CRC and ECCF properties.

3.2 Collaborate with regional partners to support and mitigate the impacts of landscape-altering conservation issues.



Year 1	Year 2	Year 3 [and beyond]
Continue to respond to emerging threats from invasive weeds and pests through an Early Detection and Rapid Response (EDRR) prioritization framework.		
Continue to coordinate with partners to identify mitigation practices related to wildfire recovery, fuel reduction, and wildfire planning to support more resilient landscapes.		
Coordinate with partners to develop strategies to mitigate local and regional impacts of climate change disruptions.		
Increase understanding of threats and disproportionate impacts from landscape-altering conservation issues such as emerald ash borer, sudden oak death, habitat fragmentation, new high-priority invasive weeds, etc.	Continue	Continue

Goal #4 CSWCD Properties

CSWCD properties promote and demonstrate key stewardship and conservation practices for farms, small woodlots, and residential settings.



Rationale: Clackamas SWCD owns a 15-acre farm in Beaver Creek where our Conservation Resource Center is located, and the 315-acre Eagle Creek Community Forest. CSWCD will use careful planning, analysis, and input from the Board of Directors, staff, partners, community members, and our advisory committee to develop management, financial, and program plans for these properties. As we make these plans, we will consider important factors including climate resilience; the land management demonstration potential of the properties; the possibilities for partnerships and revenue; and other ways we can align our properties with our overall goals.



Strategies

4.1 Maintain and manage current holdings.

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3 [and beyond]
Continue to maintain the land, buildings, infrastructure, and tenant needs at the Conservation Resource Center.		
Update and continue implementing the short-term forest operations plan for the Eagle Creek Community Forest - See strategy 4.3	Continue	Continue
Understand monitoring obligations and costs related to the Camp Adams Easement.	Implement needed activities on Camp Adams Easement.	Continue

4.2 Plan for and begin development of the CSWCD Conservation Resource Center farm as a destination for people from throughout our community, where CSWCD and partners promote and demonstrate sustainable and climate-resilient conservation practices.



Year 1	Year 2	Year 3 [and beyond]
Develop an initial site plan showing the natural area conservation zones, conservation practice demo areas, and CRC plaza/landscaping upgrades.	Begin initial site plan implementation.	Continue
Design a research/community input process for long-term conservation practice demonstration programming.	Gather partner and community input. Analyze program, staffing, and funding options. Decide program/staffing/funding design. Finalize site/infrastructure plans.	Begin long-term conservation practice demonstration program implementation.

4.3 Refine the Eagle Creek Community Forest’s long-term management, finance, and program plan to meet identified ecological, educational, and economic objectives.

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3 [and beyond]
Convene a planning committee. Design and conduct a planning process for a long-term ECCF Management Plan reflecting key priorities, community input, partnership opportunities, feasibility, and capacity.		Adopt the long-term Management Plan. Begin implementation (Year 4+).



Goal #5 Healthy organization

CSWCD has the team, support, and infrastructure needed to implement the strategic plan.

Rationale: The strategic plan is a collaborative effort developed by CSWCD’s staff and board, trusted partners, and valued members of the community. Successful implementation of the plan is contingent upon the energy, focus, and adaptability of the board and staff. We will need to secure funding for staffing levels that are adequate to the work described in this plan, and relevant professional development for the board and staff.

Success also depends on a strong organizational culture that honors transparent communication, innovation, and the recognition of individual and team contributions, with continuous attention to strengthening internal relationships. Offering our services equitably and inclusively also depends on and reflects an internal culture of inclusivity and fairness.

As of 2023, CSWCD employs 18 full-time and two part-time staff funded by a voter-approved tax base and numerous grants. To meet the ever-growing demand for our services and maintain public financial accountability and responsibility, CSWCD must carefully develop approaches that effectively leverage our assets and maximize collaboration with partners. Promote across all sectors.



Strategies

5.1 Ensure CSWCD internal systems and processes support effective operations.

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3 [and beyond]
Maintain essential systems: accounting, HR, technology, and other systems.		
Develop and pilot a tool to analyze the viability of options and opportunities through the lenses of conservation, equity, financial, and capacity implications.	Continue to refine the tool with board input.	Consider formal adoption by the board.
Evaluate internal processes including grants management and communication systems	Implement improvements including the development of standard operating procedures for administrative and operations procedures.	Continue

5.2 Secure the staffing and funding needed to implement this strategic plan.

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3 [and beyond]
Analyze staffing and organizational structure and identify and develop priorities and sequences for developing or adding staff capacity.	Implement priorities; create a professional development and training plan to align existing CSWCD staff to identified needs.	Identify models for engaging volunteers and interns, in conjunction with planning for CRC.
Develop a financial and revenue plan for CSWCD including analysis of criteria for grant funding.	Pursue targeted revenue opportunities that meet revenue plan criteria.	Continue



5.3 Maintain a healthy, collaborative, team-oriented culture, including integration of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion learning and best practices throughout staff and board operations.

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3 [and beyond]
Continue the Equity Team. Implement recommendations including for recruitment, hiring, orientation, and management approaches	Continue	Continue
Seek training and develop the tools for how to best work together as a team, based on CSWCD values.	Continue	Continue
Maintain annual calendar of staff/board planning, learning, and celebration.	Continue	Continue

5.4 Promote understanding and recognition of CSWCD and conservation issues in Clackamas County among key audiences.

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3 [and beyond]
Develop audience analysis, key messages, and overall communications strategy.	Implement across all communications.	
Redesign the CSWCD website in alignment with the communications strategy.	Maintain	Maintain





ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We thank...

- Members of the Strategic Planning Committee
- (Christopher Lapp (Chair), Cathy McQueeney, Jeff Becker, Don Guttridge, and Suzi Cloutier)
- Clackamas Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Directors
- Clackamas Soil and Water Conservation District Staff
- Amy Stork, Amy Stork Consulting and Allison Handler, Travertine Strategies
- Yee Won Chong, Strategist and Facilitator

As well as our valued organizational partners and stakeholders interviewed as part of this process, including...

- Tryon Creek Watershed Council
- Oregon Dept. of Fish and Wildlife
- U.S. Forest Service – Mt. Hood National Forest
- Clackamas River Basin Council
- Johnson Creek Watershed Council
- Oregon State University Extension Service
- Farm Service Agency
- Columbia Land Trust
- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Oswego Lake Watershed Council
- Lake Oswego Parks Department
- Clackamas River Water Providers
- North Clackamas Watershed Council
- Oregon Agricultural Trust
- Clackamas County Commissioners
- Susan Hanson (landowner)
- Hamlet of Beaver Creek