

## Appendix 4: About the Clackamas SWCD

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## Clackamas Soil and Water Conservation District

### 4.1 Governed by Seven-Member Board of Directors

The District is governed by a seven-member Board of Directors. Individual directors are publicly elected in county-wide elections administered by Clackamas County. Five directors are elected to represent specific zones in the District, and two directors are elected “at large,” meaning they do not represent a particular zone.

The District boundary is identical to that of Clackamas County, Oregon. The District office is located in Beavercreek in an attempt to balance easy access by the majority of Clackamas County citizens with proximity to active farming areas.

### 4.2 Assistance Provided by Technical and Professional Staff

The District has 16.0 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions. These people work to assure the proper management and administration of the District, to educate and inform our constituents, and to provide conservation services to our customers.

The majority of the District’s employees are engaged in providing conservation services to the public, with specialized skills addressing large and small farms, streams and the health of streamside vegetation, conservation in the urban environment, wildlife needs, outreach and education services, and invasive plant species.

Four employees provide management and administration of the organization: a contracts specialist, a financial administrator, an administrative assistant, and a general manager. All work occurs under the supervision of a general manager who reports to the Board of Directors.

### 4.3 Some Work is Contracted

The District also utilizes specialized contractors to provide additional service. For example, vegetation management contractors are used to treat invasive species, and some urban conservation services are provided through a contract with the Backyard Habitat Program.

## Clackamas County

### 4.4 Overview (updated March 2021)

#### 4.4.1 Population and People

Clackamas County is the third most populated county in Oregon, with a population of 416,075 people. The median age is 41.4 years old and the median household income is \$81,278 a year in 159,000 households. (Source: 2015 data available at <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/clackamas-county-or/>)

Ethnicity in 2015 was 81.4% White, 8.86% Hispanic, 4.57% Asian, and 3.46% Multiracial. Other races or ethnicity were less than 1% each, including Black, Native, Islander, and Other.

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The most common foreign languages are Spanish, Chinese, and Russian. Compared to other places, Clackamas County has a relatively high number of Russian speakers.

A large percentage of Clackamas County residents are veterans. The most common service period was the Vietnam War, followed by the 1990's Gulf War and the 2001 Gulf War. The Korean War and World War II are also represented in the population of veterans.

#### **4.4.2 Economy and Employment**

Employment in Clackamas County totals 208,000 workers. The largest employment sectors are: healthcare and social assistance; manufacturing; and retail trade. Compared to other counties in Oregon, Clackamas County has an unusually high number of residents working in farming, fishing, and forestry with 3,131 people employed.

#### **4.4.3 Property and Transportation**

The median property value in Clackamas County in 2018 was \$439,100, significantly higher than the median property value in Oregon of \$341,800 and the median property value in the Portland-Vancouver Metro Area of \$397,500.

Owner occupied housing units made up 71.1% of the total in Clackamas County, higher than the national average of 63.9%.

The largest share of households in Clackamas County have two cars, followed by three cars. The average commute time is 26 minutes, slightly higher than the United States average of 25.7 minutes. However, 1.55% of the Clackamas County workforce have commutes in excess of 90 minutes. Commute time for Clackamas County residents is, on average, more than in Oregon and more than in the Portland-Vancouver Metro Area.

The most common method of commuting is driving alone (75.5%), carpooling (9.0%), and working at home (8.73%). Public transit accounts for 3.17% of commuting trips for Clackamas County residents.

### **4.4 How Much Land?**

The District covers all of Clackamas County, with a total area of 1,879 square miles. Land covers 1,868 square miles and surface water covers 11 square miles. The 11 square miles of water exists as wetlands, ponds, lakes, creeks, streams, and rivers.

### **4.5 Ten Feet of Precipitation in Mountains, Four Feet in Lowlands**

#### **4.5.1 Precipitation**

The eastern part of the District is bounded by the Cascade Mountains where luxuriant forests help to capture snow and rain. Water is an abundant resource but it is not evenly distributed, with some areas receiving far more than other regions. Some places end up with too much water and some too little.

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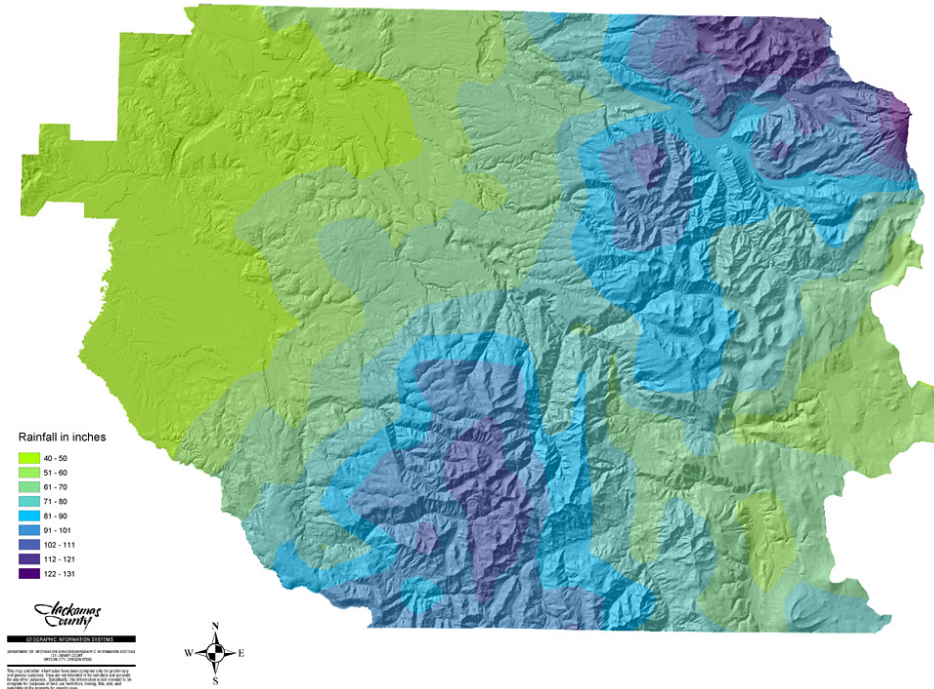


Figure 1: Average rainfall in Clackamas County

### 4.5.1 Changing climate

Clackamas County is experiencing changing weather patterns. Whether or not these changes continue into the future, the safest approach by farmers and forest owners is to assume that changes will continue. The District continues to contemplate the impact that drier summers may have on farming and forestry activities, and on fish and wildlife habitats.

### 4.6 More Farms Than Any Other County in Oregon

The District is home to one of the most favorable farming locations in the United States: the Willamette River Valley. The combination of rich, deep soil with a moderate climate makes it possible for farmers to produce a diverse array of food crops, livestock, nursery products, and Christmas trees.

Farming activity occurs on 285 square miles of land, or 15 percent of the total area of land available in the District. In general, public lands are higher elevation landscapes not suitable for farming activities. It comes as no surprise that most farming activity is centered on fertile valley bottoms and prairies.

Farming often involves disturbing soil for field preparation, weed control, planting, and harvesting. Clearly, farming is a major land disturbing activity, and with land disturbance comes increased potential for soil erosion, loss of native plant communities, invasion of weeds, and impacts to water quality.

The 2012 Census of Agriculture was updated in 2017 and results are now available. In 2012, Clackamas County had more farms than any other county in Oregon with 3,745 farms reported. In 2017, we still have more farms than any county but the number has increased to 4,297 on 157,426 acres. The District contains more than ten percent of the total number of farms statewide. However, the average size of a Clackamas County farm is only 37 acres, which is less than one-tenth of the average size across the state. Our average farm size continues to be the smallest in Oregon.

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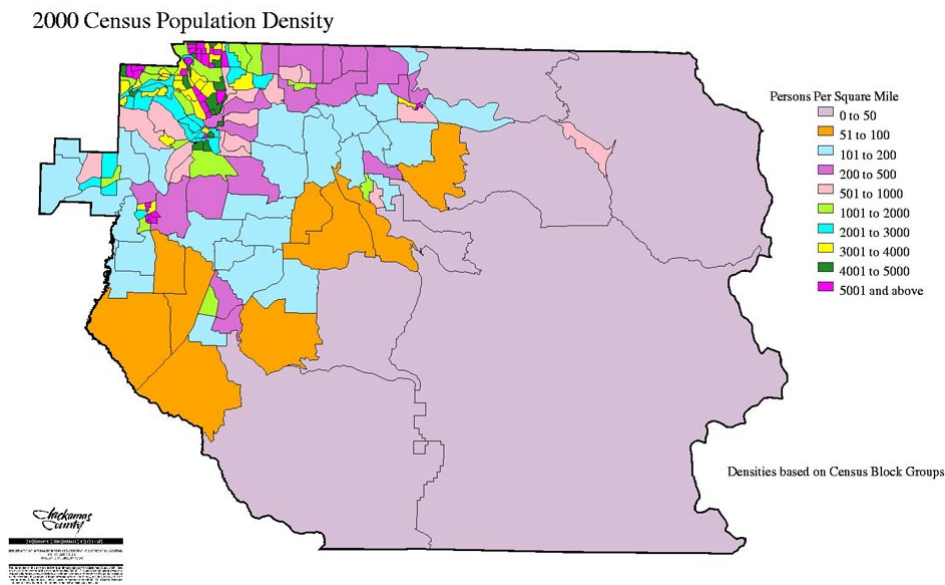
Approximately one-quarter of farms in the District irrigate land. About one-quarter of the farms in the District are owned by women.

Farms in the District are important to the local, regional, and statewide economy, generating the third highest agricultural product market value in Oregon.

### 4.7 Urban Land

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the District held 375,922 people in 2010, or nearly ten percent of Oregon's total population. The Census Bureau's estimate for July 1, 2019 is 418,187 people, a 11.2-percent increase since the 2010 census.

Most people live in the northwestern part of Clackamas County.



**Figure 3: Population density in Clackamas County**

Conditions in the urban environment challenge us in helping landowners conserve natural resources. In and around cities, native soil profiles have been disturbed through the building of roads, businesses, and homes. Our traditional conservation practices are based on having native soil profiles, and may not always work as expected in urban conditions.

Some conservation practices suitable for urban landscapes are quite expensive compared to working on farm and forest land. Urban areas also present many more potential users of our services in a smaller area, compared to delivering services in our farming and forestry-based communities.

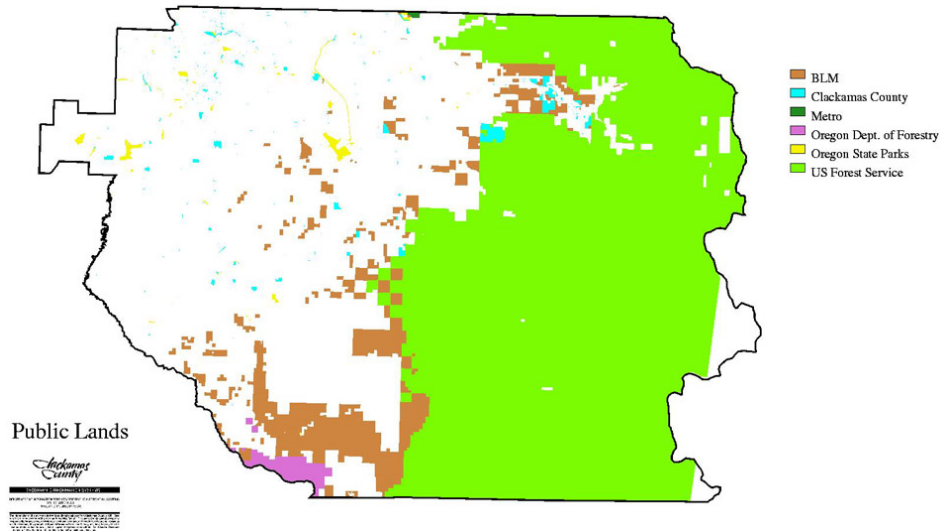
### 4.8 Forest Land

Forested land covers a large portion of the District. Figure 4 shows the distribution of public lands in Clackamas County, and in general, public lands are forested lands. In addition, private forest land occurs in a north-south strip between public lands to the east and farms to the west.

Almost all District activities occur in the western half of Clackamas County. Exceptions generally revolve around invasive species issues where the District may work with federal land managers.

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**Figure 4: Public lands in Clackamas County**

## 4.9 District Programs

We help people use natural resources responsibly so that those resources are available for current and future generations. Protecting water quality in a non-regulatory, collaborative manner is a core mission of the District. With so much land draining to a few large rivers, small changes in land-based practices can dramatically affect water quality.

Many of the District's core conservation programs revolve around land disturbance. Whenever land is disturbed, the potential increases for soil erosion, disruption of native plant communities, and invasion of foreign species. Whether in the forest, on the farm, or in an urban area, land disturbance is a central factor in determining the activities and support available through the District.

The District's conservation professionals are focused on conservation activities that roughly reflect the gross characteristics of the wide range of land uses on private lands in Clackamas County.

Our staff's wide skillset is derived from education and practical experience across various natural resource fields. All staff work in a cross-functional manner, meaning they work not only within their core area but also extend their knowledge, skills, and abilities to other staff members when needed.

The distribution of District staff skills outlined above occurred in response to the kinds of requests for help received by the District, in combination with the guidelines presented in the District's Master Plan that was developed in 2008, the District's five-year plan, and based on direction from the District's elected Board of Directors. Changes in these skills sets are likely to occur in the future as the District continues to shape how it responds to evolving natural resource conditions and shifting community needs.