

# ANNUAL REPORT

FISCAL YEAR 2021-2022  
(JULY 1, 2021 - JUNE 30, 2022)

BENTON  
SOIL AND WATER



CONSERVATION  
DISTRICT

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## REPORT THEME: Sharing Our Story

As the staff of Benton SWCD began to discuss the theme for this year's Annual Report, so many wonderful anecdotes were exchanged - stories of connections made, boots muddied, trees planted, and projects accomplished. As we talked, one undeniable fact became clear: our Soil & Water Conservation District does a LOT for Benton County.

Yet, another realization also became clear: there are many local residents who don't even know that we exist, much less what we do.

And so, we decided that this year's report would be a showcase of what we do best - engaging people and partners in the conservation of natural resources. You'll find stories about our work with local landowners, ways we can prevent potential pests, and our wonderful, hard-working Board of Directors.

We hope you enjoy our stories, and share them with others! Most of all, we invite you to join us in ensuring that the land, waters, and forests of Benton County are healthy and resilient through the care and effort of everyone in our community.

Learn more about what we do at [www.bentonswcd.org](http://www.bentonswcd.org).

*Our Mission is to engage Benton County residents in the conservation and stewardship of natural resources for current and future generations.*





# STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2023-2027

## Strategic Goals

### Goal 1

Ensure that the soil, water, and ecosystems of Benton County, including in wild, working, and urban lands, are protected, restored, and resilient.

### Goal 2

Deliver engaging education and outreach opportunities that inspire residents to protect and restore soil, water, and habitat.

### Goal 3

Develop clear, consistent communications so people throughout Benton County can easily participate in our services and take action to steward our resources.

### Goal 4

Enhance strategic partnerships and revenue to increase our impact.

### Goal 5

Implement operations that support highly effective programs and services.

## Strategic Themes

### Climate

We will increase our focus on reducing greenhouse gases and creating climate resilience.



### Targeted Impact

We will ensure our programs are directed towards specific audiences and outcomes.



### Equity

We will increase inclusion and access for marginalized and under-resourced communities.



### Collaborative Leadership

We will work with our partners to strategically leverage our specific organizational strengths in pursuit of shared goals.



## SIX DECADES OF BOARD SERVICE AND LEADERSHIP

By Holly Crosson, Executive Director

The Oregon Secretary of State's Office certified BSWCD as an organization on December 28, 1956, after public hearings in Asea, North Albany, Monroe, and Corvallis.

To give you a sense of what was happening at that time in the U.S. and popular culture: "The Wizard of Oz" had its first TV airing, Elvis Presley appeared on the Ed Sullivan Show, the DNA molecule was first photographed, a first-class stamp cost \$0.03, an IBM hard disk had 3.75 MB of storage and weighed over 2,000 lbs., and Dwight D. Eisenhower was President. As the saying goes, "We've come a long way, baby!"

We recognize that our conservation work at the District today builds upon the challenges, successes, and leadership of those who came before us. When I think about the 66-year timeline of service from those early days to the present, I'm astounded by how much dedication and passion this represents: over 23,000 volunteer hours committed to monthly Board meetings alone! That conservative estimate doesn't include time that our Directors contributed on their evenings and weekends to attend committee meetings or volunteer at countless District-sponsored events over the years (these days, events include our annual native plant sale, native bulb and seed sale, Salmon Watch, and others). [continued on next page]





## SIX DECADES OF BOARD SERVICE AND LEADERSHIP

By Holly Crosson, Executive Director

[continued] Our volunteer Board members, past, present, and future, are passionate ambassadors that bring unique talents and keen insight to guide our District as we accomplish our mission and advance our long-term vision. Directors ask critical questions and see the big picture. They engage new conservation partners and mobilize community supporters to act. They mentor and inspire staff. They help us grow to be more responsive, resilient, and relevant as an organization.

The breadth of expertise that our Directors and Associate Directors bring to the table is impressive. They are farmers and planners, restoration experts and entrepreneurs, beekeepers, and social enterprise experts. Some have had illustrious careers in medicine, business, science, and the arts. They all have a deep commitment to conservation and serving our community.

We are grateful for the invaluable contributions of all of our Board members! We celebrate and thank outgoing Directors whose terms are coming to an end in December 2022: Henry Storch (2010), Grahm Trask (2014), Faye Yoshihara (2016), and Bob Morris (2018). In January 2023 we'll welcome two new Directors: Marcella Henkels - Zone 2, and David Barron - Zone 1.

If you have an interest in serving on our Board of Directors, the Zone 4 position is currently open! For more information, please visit our website at [bentonswcd.org](http://bentonswcd.org).



2017 Board Members. Front Row left to right: Heidi Goracke, Faye Yoshihara, Henry Storch; Back Row left to right: Cliff Hall, Jerry Paul, Pat Malone, Grahm Trask.



Jerry Paul and Bob Morris, 2019

## EMERALD ASH BORER: A THREAT WE CAN ALL PREPARE FOR

By Michael Ahr, Natural Resource Conservation Program Manager

On June 30, 2022, an ash tree infested with emerald ash borer (EAB) was found in Forest Grove, OR. This was troubling news for both our Invasive Species Program as well as the Willamette Mainstem Cooperative. The emerald ash borer (EAB) is a wood-boring pest that is native to Asia. It is notorious for decimating forests in the Midwest and east coast of the U.S. The EAB is attracted to all species of ash tree, including our native Oregon ash, and unfortunately they will kill these trees over time. In Benton County, we're beginning to consider possible impacts of this pest.

Oregon ash (*Fraxinus latifolia*) is a dominant tree in the riverside forests of the Willamette and its tributaries. When these trees become infested with EAB, it will have a large impact on the health of our river ecosystem. At this time, we don't know when the EAB will arrive in Benton County, but surveys this spring and summer might provide more updates. We could have close to 10 years before EAB is in our county, or we might find that it's already here.

*Oregon ash is the most prevalent tree growing along the Willamette River in Benton County. The loss of Ash trees due to Emerald Ash Borer would have devastating consequences.*



The Emerald Ash Borer beetle (*Agrilus planipennis*)

It is common to plant Oregon ash along streams to improve habitat and water quality. Benton SWCD has planted ash on sites that have very wet soil. In the last few years, we have decreased the numbers of Oregon ash that we plant, as the threat of emerald ash borer has grown. Some ecologists recommend not planting ash trees in these natural areas moving forward, and urban foresters are even more resolute in advising against ash plantings. In fact, Corvallis removed all ash species from their approved street tree list a few years ago.

We have had some inquiries about what a land manager can do with existing ash trees, and we offer some advice based on the questions we have heard. [continued on next page]



[continued] First, there aren't any harvesting techniques that help reduce the spread of EAB. Please do not cut down all of your ash trees in an effort to prevent the spread! In our region, we have so many ash trees that your removal won't change the overall outlook. You're better off letting these trees survive for several more years where they offer critical ecosystem functions. Thinning, or "selective harvest" of trees, won't help either. Some forest insect pests target sick and dying trees, so thinning is helpful. THIS IS NOT TRUE for EAB because they attack healthy trees.

In rural areas, there is not currently any rule against planting ash trees, but we think it's time to try other species in wet areas near streams. This is not an easy fix because Oregon ash grows in specific conditions where other trees frankly haven't performed well. On your site, consider trying a mix of white alder, willow, and black cottonwood, and see what performs the best. You can add more trees once you see what is thriving. Meanwhile, existing Oregon ash will still spread seed and move into areas where it grows well.

Some insecticides can help as a preventative measure before EAB arrives. This treatment is thought to be practical when you wish to protect just a few ash trees, but is likely too expensive for vast stands of native ash. Consult with an arborist or forest consultant for more insight on this practice.

Lastly, please look for EAB in Benton County. You should look for the insects themselves and for sick ash trees that might be affected. Know the signs, and report any sightings to the Oregon Invasive Species Hotline at [oregoninvasiveshotline.org](https://oregoninvasiveshotline.org). You can learn more about EAB detection at OSU Extension: [extension.oregonstate.edu/ofpd](https://extension.oregonstate.edu/ofpd).

### Help prevent EAB by knowing the signs!

- ✓ *Thinning or dying tree crown*
- ✓ *Suckers on infested tree*
- ✓ *Galleries under the bark*
- ✓ *D-shaped holes*
- ✓ *Larvae on the wood*

## EMERALD ASH BORER: A THREAT WE CAN ALL PREPARE FOR

By Michael Ahr, Natural Resource Conservation Program Manager



ABOVE: EAB peeking out of their trademark D-shaped exit holes in a tree. (Photo credit: Debbie Miller, USDA Forest Service)

BELOW: Carved "galleries" in a tree created by EAB larvae on wood. (Photo credit: iStock.com)



## BUILDING SOIL-MINDED RELATIONSHIPS FOR RESILIENT CROP SYSTEMS

By Teresa Matteson, Resource Conservationist

Soil is our ultimate support system for life as we know it. It's the foundation for buildings and roads, and vital for food and fiber production. It is also the basis for our nation's conservation movement. In response to devastating dust storms brought on by an era of soil abuse and severe drought, in 1935 Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Soil Conservation Act. This Act sought to "control floods, prevent impairment of reservoirs and maintain the navigability of rivers and harbors, protect public health, public lands, and relieve unemployment."

Today, 87 years later, conservationists continue to offer technical and financial assistance to improve soil and address those 1935 issues. In the past decade, management to promote soil health has emerged as a key strategy for improving climate resilience on many fronts, including private and commercial agriculture, forestry, range lands, home gardens, and public spaces. Since 2009, when Benton SWCD launched the Soil Quality Project, we have been working to raise awareness of the importance of soil and to promote practices that improve soil function.



*Brian Woodcock is a farmer who gained sub-surface insights during a consult with Andy Gallagher of Red Hill Soils.*

*OSU student Adam Thomas learned about soil sampling and in-field assessments during his soil health internship.*



The most recent chapter of BSWCD soil health work began in May 2021, when we received a grant through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board to offer free soil health tests for 30 crop fields in three Benton County priority areas. The grant also funds BSWCD wages and benefits, internships, books, and contract work with Oregon State University Soil Health Lab (for the soil health assessments) and Red Hill Soils (for soil classification services). In collaboration with NRCS, we are writing a proposal to secure dollars for on-the-ground soil health practices. If awarded, those funds will be available starting in 2024. [continued on next page]



[continued] Additional benefits from the NRCS partnership include the use of tools that help us interpret soil health results: an in-field Soil Health Rapid Assessment Tool and the Soil Health Assessment Protocol and Evaluation model.

Thanks to Benton County property taxpayers, our soil health work reached a broader community of citizens, beyond the grant priority areas. For example, BSWCD tax base funds provided soil tests and row cover for Growing Ancestral Roots, a local non-profit organization that acquires resources and grows food in a safe space for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) to concurrently “grow” connections with our culture as our community. The row cover is a barrier that protects crops from pests without chemical impacts to beneficial soil creatures (the soil health realm work force).

Soil test results help farmers make informed management decisions, increase organic matter (the foundation of soil health), and reduce excess nutrient inputs that may contaminate water resources. Soil ROCKS!

## BUILDING SOIL-MINDED RELATIONSHIPS FOR RESILIENT CROP SYSTEMS

By Teresa Matteson, Resource Conservationist

*Teiya Inokuma with Growing Ancestral Roots row cover. Teiya was a spring 2022 soil health intern, and introduced BSWCD to this project.*



NRCS soil health testing training, July 2021



## COORDINATED RESTORATION EFFORTS WITH ENGAGED LANDOWNERS

By Donna Schmitz, Resource Conservationist



“ You can't stay in your corner of the forest waiting for others to come to you. You have to go to them sometimes.

- A.A. Milne ”

The "100 Acre Wood" property is located adjacent to an area with strong community activism towards healthy ecosystems. This is demonstrated by partnerships of landowners, conservation organizations, local, state and federal governments cooperating to conserve native habitats in Benton County. The east property boundary adjoins two contiguous NRCS Wetland Reserve Program easements. This specific area of the Willamette Valley, Muddy Creek watershed, is recognized as having high quality Oregon white oak upland prairie, wetland prairies and ash/oak dominated floodplain habitats.

Conservation organizations have identified the Muddy Creek watershed as an important wildlife corridor connecting USFWS William L. Finley National Wildlife Refuge to similar habitats associated with the Marys River and Willamette River (Benton County Habitat Conservation Plan, Oregon Conservation Strategy). Partners for this project included: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, NRCS, and the landowner, a local expert in selective grazing for native plant restoration.

Although this property had been heavily grazed for many years, a mosaic of diverse habitats existed. Perennial and seasonal streams cross the property, and Muddy Creek borders the property line to the east. Significant natural features on the site include Oregon white oak savanna and woodlands, wetland prairie, and riparian forest associated with the Muddy Creek floodplain. The grant was for \$125,582 (total \$177,927 with match), starting in Fall 2017.

Restoration activities include installing fencing to protect the streams/wetlands from grazing, stream crossing to protect stream banks, and watering troughs. A vernal pool was enhanced in the wetlands. Funds paid for site preparation, planting of riparian trees and shrubs, and native grasses and forbs to restore the prairie wetlands, oak savanna, and oak woodlands, and post weed control to reduce competition and improve survival. Prescribed grazing was also used to reduce weed pressure.

[continued on next page]

# COORDINATED RESTORATION EFFORTS WITH ENGAGED LANDOWNERS

By Donna Schmitz, Resource Conservationist



2017: Streams are over-grazed and eroded.



Winter 2017: Riparian planting begins.



2018: Native bulbs and plugs are planted by US Fish & Wildlife crews.



2019: Vernal pool in Muddy Creek floodplain.



2021: 80% survival of trees after several years of drought



2022: 15 acres of riparian buffer planted, and 5500 feet of fencing installed.

*The 100 Acre Wood project in pictures - from eroded grazing land to riparian habitat, 2017-2022.*

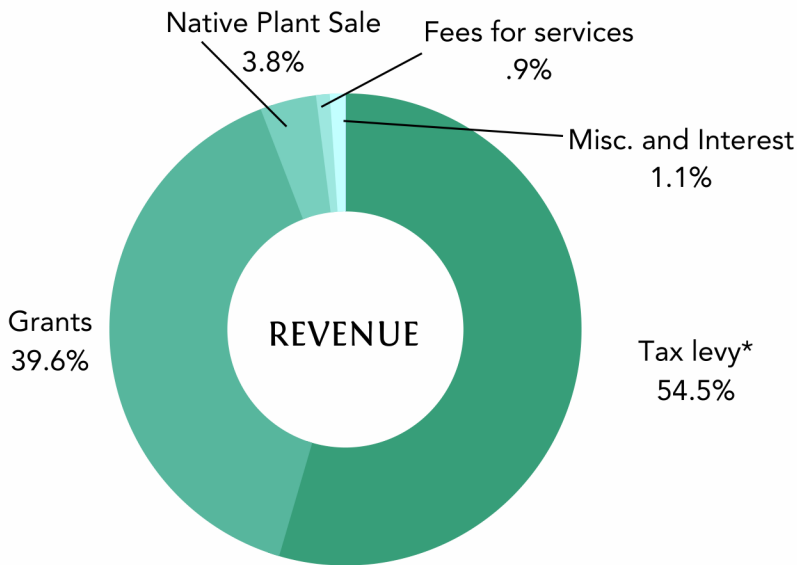
# FINANCIAL REPORT

## FISCAL YEAR 2021-2022

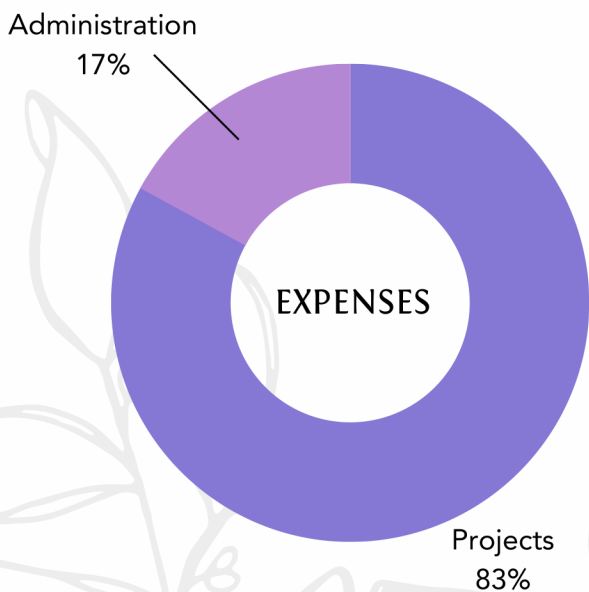
(JULY 1, 2021 - JUNE 30, 2022)



All data is from audited financial information.



| Revenue            |                  |
|--------------------|------------------|
| Tax levy*          | \$482,474        |
| Grants             | \$350,612        |
| Native Plant Sale  | \$34,036         |
| Fees for Services  | \$8,296          |
| Misc. and Interest | \$9,406          |
| <b>TOTAL</b>       | <b>\$884,824</b> |



| Expenses       |                  |
|----------------|------------------|
| Projects       | \$672,433        |
| Administration | \$138,183        |
| <b>TOTAL</b>   | <b>\$810,616</b> |

\*\$.05 per \$1000 assessed property value

**Net change in funds: + \$74,208**



# Benton Soil and Water CONSERVATION DISTRICT

You're invited to learn about our most recent conservation and outreach efforts at our...

66th  
Annual  
Meeting

January  
23, 2023

6 - 8 pm (doors open at 5:30)  
Corvallis Museum  
Light refreshments provided!



## **KEYNOTE SPEAKER:**

**Joseph C. Scott**

Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians -  
Language & Culture Bearer

*Traditional Ecological Knowledge:  
Ancient Science That Works!*

Register at: [www.BentonSWCD.org](http://www.BentonSWCD.org)



## JOIN THE BOARD OF BENTON SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT!

We are seeking a representative for Zone 4 on our Board of Directors. Zone 4 encompasses southwest Benton County, including the community of Alsea.

Board Directors must be registered voters, and must own or manage at least 10 acres in the Zone they are representing.

Join us in engaging Benton County residents in the conservation of natural resources!



**BENTON**  
SOIL AND WATER  
CONSERVATION  
DISTRICT

### Board Member Responsibilities



Identify local conservation needs



Promote the District's work to partners and community members



Develop long-term goals and work plans

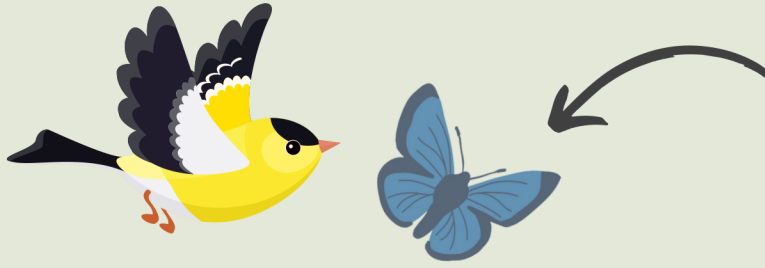


Oversee operations including budgets, audits, and contracts

For more information contact: 541-753-7208 / [office@bentonswcd.org](mailto:office@bentonswcd.org)

Visit our website at: [www.BentonSWCD.org](http://www.BentonSWCD.org)

# WHY CHOOSE NATIVE PLANTS?

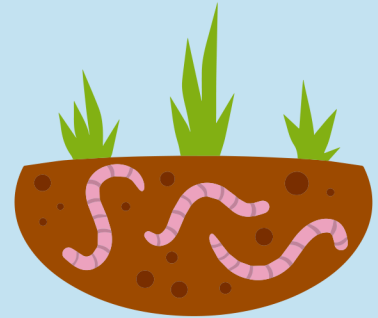


## support wildlife

native plants provide shelter and food for everything from bugs to bears, and are essential for the survival of many threatened species

## help soil

native plants have deep root systems that prevent erosion, capture nutrients, and support important soil microbes



## adapted to survive

native plants are adapted to local soils and climate, which can challenge non-native plants



## low maintenance

native plants need less water, don't need to be fertilized, and are resistant to pests and disease



Choose wisely.  
Choose natives!



Benton Soil and Water  
CONSERVATION DISTRICT



## Benton Soil and Water CONSERVATION DISTRICT

136 SW Washington Ave. Suite 201  
Corvallis, OR 97333  
541-753-7208  
www.bentonswcd.org

### Board Members 2021-2022

Zone 1 - Henry Storch  
Zone 2 - Bob Morris (Vice Chair)  
Zone 3 - Jerry Paul (Treasurer)  
Zone 4 - Grahm Trask  
Zone 5 - Kerry Hastings (Secretary)  
At Large Directors - Nathan Johnson (Chair),  
Eliza Mason  
Director Emeritus - Faye Yoshihara  
Associate Directors - Rana Foster, Marcella  
Henkels, David Barron

### Staff Members 2021-2022

Executive Director - Holly Crosson  
Natural Resource Conservation Program  
Manager - Michael Ahr  
Operations Manager - Linda Lovett  
Communications and Community Engagement  
Manager - Heath Keirstead  
Resource Conservationist - Teresa Matteson  
Resource Conservationist - Donna Schmitz  
NRCS District Conservationist - Amy Kaiser

### New Staff 2022-2023

Communications and Community Engagement  
Coordinator - Sara Roberts  
Operations Coordinator - Candace Mackey

