



Wheeler Soil and
Water
Conservation
District

2024-2030

Long- Range Business Plan

Prepared By:
District Staff

Approved By:
District Board of Directors

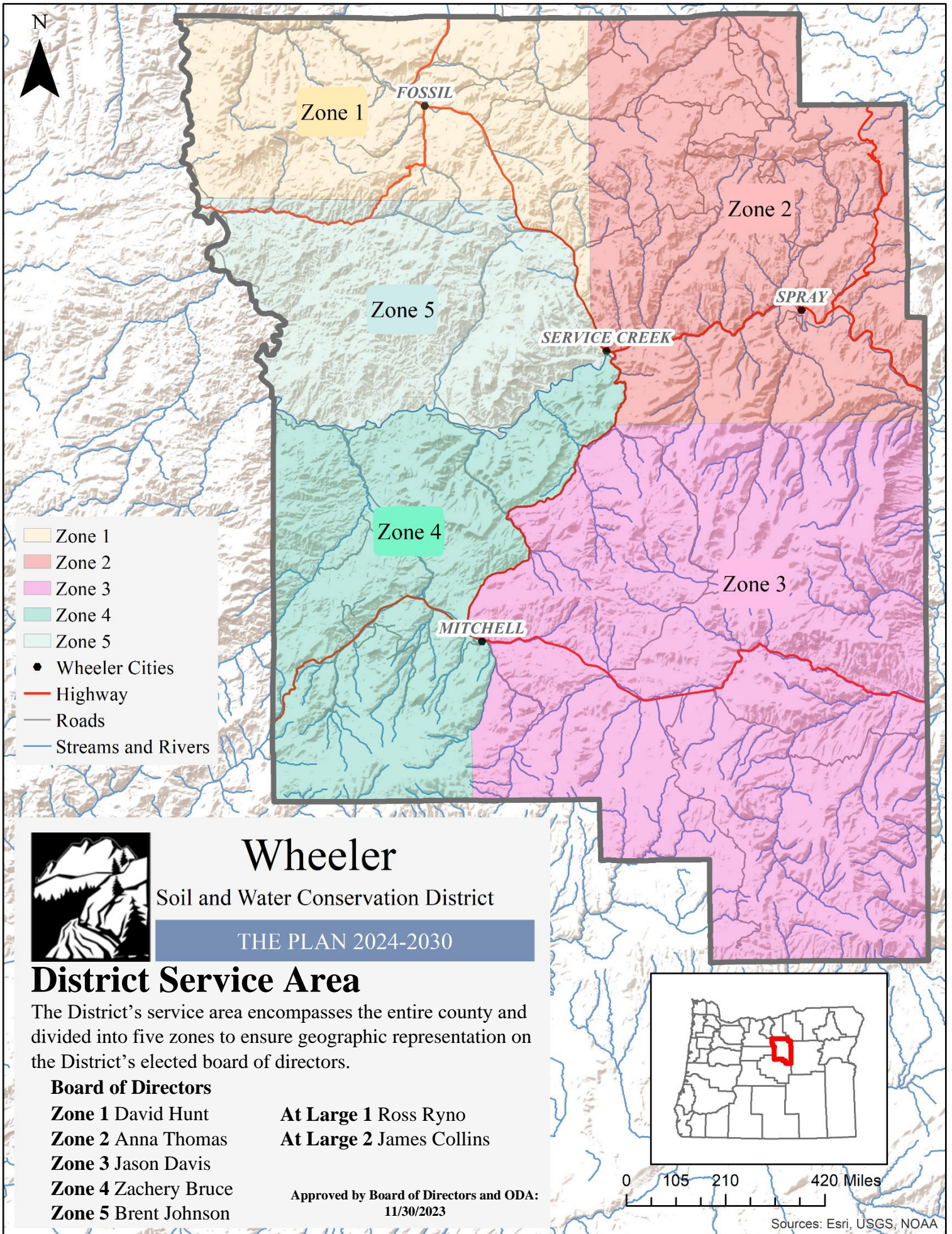
Adopted January 8, 2024



A nation that destroys its
soils destroys itself. Forests
are the lungs of our land,
purifying the air and giving
fresh strength to our
people.

- Franklin D. Roosevelt





Wheeler

Soil and Water Conservation District

THE PLAN 2024-2030

District Service Area

The District's service area encompasses the entire county and divided into five zones to ensure geographic representation on the District's elected board of directors.

Board of Directors

Zone 1 David Hunt

Zone 2 Anna Thomas

Zone 3 Jason Davis

Zone 4 Zachery Bruce

Zone 5 Brent Johnson

At Large 1 Ross Ryno

At Large 2 James Collins

Approved by Board of Directors and ODA:
11/30/2023

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Wheeler SWCD Office Directory

Current Location:

40535 Hwy 19
Fossil, Oregon 97830
Phone: 541.468.2990
Fax: 541.468.2991
Email: administration@wheelerswcd.org
Website: www.wheelerswcd.org
Facebook: <https://facebook.com/WheelerSWCD>

New Location by 2030:

37941 Hwy 19
Fossil, Oregon 97830
Phone: 541.468.2990
Fax: 541.468.2991
Email: administration@wheelerswcd.org
Website: www.wheelerswcd.org
Facebook: <https://facebook.com/WheelerSWCD>

Staff

District Manager: Cassi Newton, administration@wheelerswcd.org
Conservation Manager: Ayla Morehouse, aylamorehouse@wheelerswcd.org
Office Assistant: *Vacant*
Conservation Technician II: Brooke Moore, brooke.moore@wheelerswcd.org
(CREP/RCPP Programs Lead)
Conservation Technician I: Kristen Neuburger, kristenneuburger@wheelerswcd.org
(Weed Programs Lead)

Board of Directors.....Term end

Zone 1: David Hunt.....2026
Zone 2: Anna Thomas, *Vice Chair*.....2024
Zone 3: Jason Davis, *Treasurer/Secretary*.....2024
Zone 4: Zachery Bruce.....2026
Zone 5: Brent Johnson.....2026
At Large 1: Ross Ryno.....2024
At Large 2: James Collins, *Chair*.....2026

Director Emeritus

Ted Molinari.....2024
Jeremiah Holmes.....2024

Associate Directors

Monthly Meetings

Monthly meetings are a public event held at 6:00 p.m. on the last Thursday of the month. While at *Current Location*, monthly meeting location will be announced in the monthly meeting notice/agenda, Wheeler SWCD website, and social media. After transitioning into the *New Location*, monthly meetings will occur at that address, in the facility conference room. Meetings will also be accessible virtually with the link posted on the monthly meeting notice/agenda.

Executive Summary

The Wheeler Soil and Water Conservation District (“District”) is excited to further develop this Long-Range Business Plan (LRBP) to better service our constituents as needs change and require re-evaluation. The LRBP is a strategic planning document that serves as a broad outline of the District’s purpose, response to natural resource concerns, and current and future operations. It guides the scope of the District’s conservation work and the supporting financial sustainability and organizational health initiatives needed to implement this work. The plan is centered on recommencing the mission, vision, and strategic direction of the District. During the term (2024-2030) of this LRBP, the staff and Board aim to renovate the existing direction by engaging the public throughout the process. This LRBP will also guide the development of the District’s annual work plans and budgets for the next seven fiscal years.

Our mission

To maximize economic and environmental watershed values for Wheeler County residents by developing, conserving, and protecting water, soil, plant structures, and other natural resources.

Our Vision

The vision of Wheeler Soil and Water Conservation District is to be an organization that improves the health of the watersheds through holistic measures that enhance water quality and quantity, soil health, and conservation for beneficial uses; provides education and outreach to the public; and manages the business of the district in an efficient and effective manner.

Strategic Directions

Each strategic direction has a set of strategies that further details the areas of focus for the District’s work over the next seven years. Strategic directions are listed in priority order.

Organizational Health | Maintain an effective public organization through best management practices and strong internal communication, while demonstrating a commitment to long-term sustainability.

Partnerships | Nurture robust partnerships with diverse stakeholders to further our shared goals related to community health and natural resource conservation.

Community Engagement and Education | Provide accessible, inclusive, and responsive education opportunities to motivate and empower residents to conserve natural resources.

Working Lands and Forest | Foster agriculture and forestry to ensure viable and sustainable practices, working lands are conserved, and the next generation of farmers and foresters are educated and supported.

Vegetation | Foster robust plant communities that create resilient forests, support healthy crops, are protected from invasive species (see appendix C), sequester carbon, and provide for quality vegetation.

Habitat | Conserve diverse, resilient, and well-connected habitats that support healthy native populations of fish, wildlife, and beneficial insects.

Healthy Soil | Promote healthy soil practices to prevent erosion and to positively impact productivity, carbon sequestration, water infiltration and storage, and animal and plant use.

Climate Change | Assess, support, and educate at risk communities and restoration efforts with climate change impacts in mind to ensure a sustainable and adaptive future.

Implementation and Performance

This LRBP will be implemented through the District annual work planning and budget adoption process. Annual work plans determine which strategic directions and goals each staff member will be implementing through their programs of work. Not all goals will be implemented in any given year; especially those goals and tactics that the District needs to build capacity and better understanding in order to implement. Performance for implementing this LRBP will be based on an annual review of defined measures of success for each strategic direction. For each measure, performance will be rated as successful, in progress, or in need of improvement based on our level of accomplishment toward the measure.

Introduction

Information Gathering

Information gathering has occurred informally through the District's historical documentation, research of similar agencies, and conversations with the District's Board of Directors. To better inform the revision of this plan in 2030, we intend to reach out to our community members, leaders, workers of the land, conservation program participants, organizational partners, staff and boards. Information gathered will help shape the renovation of the strategic direction, goals, and tactics of the District in the years to come.

Structure and Governance

The Soil Conservation Service (SCS) was initiated nationally by the Soil Conservation Act of 1935, in response to the obvious need to conserve natural resources. It soon became apparent that this new federal agency needed local leadership to coordinate efforts in conservation and tie assistance programs to local conditions and priorities. The SCS was authorized by Federal Legislation in 1937. Through the framework of the USDA and the urging of President Roosevelt, Oregon passed the Standard State Soil Conservation Districts Law in 1939

enabling the formation of soil and water conservation districts, the local leaders in conservation. In 1994, the Soil Conservation Service was renamed Natural Resource Conservation Services (NRCS). Today, there over three thousand conservation districts across the country.

The Wheeler Soil and Water Conservation District is one of 45 conservation districts in Oregon, which are defined in Oregon law as political subdivisions of state government. The District is not a state agency; rather it is classified as a municipal corporation, a form of local government, which is required to follow many of the same laws that govern state agencies and special districts. It is specifically governed by ORS 568.210 to 568.890 and ORS 568.900 to 568.933. Appendix B lists other statutes and administrative rules to which the District is subject.

History

The Wheeler Soil & Water Conservation District was formed December 3, 1963, with a Certificate of Organization issued by the Secretary of State on December 10, 1963. The District was organized to encourage conservation; to obtain and operate conservation equipment; and to obtain technical assistance from the Federal Soil Conservation Service (now NRCS) on flood control, water storage and management, range and woodland improvement, soil problems, and the development of small watersheds.

The original boundaries of the District closely followed the boundaries of Wheeler County, with the exception of approximately 33,000 acres in townships 8-11 south, all in range 25 east. Those acres were transferred from Monument SWCD on February 24, 1974 to create the present-day boundaries, which includes all of the lands within the legal boundaries of Wheeler County.

The first Board of Supervisors in 1963 were Mitchell Chapman, Lyle Ostrander, Gus Strecker, Clarence Franke, and Virgil Misener. The first Secretary was Ann Culver, who served the District in a variety of roles for over 35 years. The first

budget passed was a two-year budget of \$1,018.00, with the largest budget item being “mileage reimbursement” at eight cents a mile. In 1964, Gilliam County SWCD, in an effort to help establish this new district, gave a \$100.00 grant to be used by Wheeler SWCD without restrictions.

For the first 30 years, the District operated as a working board with only one part-time employee, the secretary. As the District grew, tasks became more complicated and time consuming, requiring specialized skills and greater responsibilities. The secretary position transitioned into the District Manager and additional positions were created to maintain the increasing demand for conservation.

The District has maintained operations with a voluntary board of directors and grant funded staff without a property tax levy.

Leadership

We take the lead in soil and water conservation within Wheeler County by working closely with landowners, operators, public officials, various local, state and federal agencies, and private organizations.

Directors

Directors are elected by the electorate of Wheeler County at the General Election in November on even-numbered years. Directors may be appointed by the Board to fill a vacancy between elections for the duration of that position’s term. Five of the seven positions are classified as zone positions and must meet the zone requirements and terms of office specified in ORS 568.560. The other two positions are classified as at-large, which may be held by any persons residing within the district boundaries and are registered to vote in Wheeler County.

The Wheeler SWCD Board of Directors works cooperatively as a unit to govern the District. An individual director has power only when acting as a part of the board as a whole. Individual board members may be delegated authority or power to act on behalf of the Board in specific, limited tasks. This authority or power is granted through Board

action (resolution, motion, policy, etc.) and must be recorded in the meeting minutes.

ORS 568.560(4) requires all district boards to select a Chair and Secretary from among its Directors. We appoint a Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary/Treasurer to have the following delegated authorities:

Chair | Presides at and conducts all meetings.

The Chair is granted the responsibility to represent the District with other districts, agencies, associations, partners, organizations, legislators, and landowners consistent with the policies, plans, and interests of the District.

Vice-Chair | Given the authority to act as the Chair in case of the absence or unavailability of the appointed Chair.

Secretary/Treasurer | Ensures accurate accounts of meetings and financials are recorded, including the annual budget and audit.

Committees, standing or select, are an effective way for the Board to efficiently govern the District. The committees are often composed of board members (directors, associate directors, director emeritus, etc.), staff, representatives of cooperating agencies and associations, and/or interested citizens.

Staff

The Wheeler Soil and Water Conservation staff works with agencies to aid landowners in Wheeler County. Wheeler SWCD staff assist landowners applying conservation practices to enhance the landscape for a sustainable future. Our staff currently consists of five full-time (1 FTE) positions:

District Manager | Acts on behalf of the Board of Directors and manages the day-to-day operations of the District, which includes administration; risk management; personnel management and supervision; overseeing financial management and budgeting; grant and program management; conservation operations;

contracting; and the development, updating and implementation of the District’s Annual Work Plan and Long-Range Business Plan.

Conservation Manager | Works closely with the District Manager to provide leadership for the day-to-day activities of the District. The position is responsible for managing all conservation programs and projects, as well as supervising the Conservation Technicians.

Conservation Technicians | Provide technical and outreach assistance for programs and projects assigned by the Conservation Manager. The positions educate the public and solicit participation in the various agency programs and grant projects in Wheeler County.

Office Assistant | Assists with both administrative tasks and conservation projects which may include clerical assignments, grant applications and reporting, field work, and attending meetings.

Geography and Agriculture

The District’s service area includes all of the lands within the legal boundaries of Wheeler County, located in north central Oregon. It is divided into five zones and represents a highly diverse area of rural dwellings, forest, and farm land; and owners of both large and small properties.

Wheeler SWCD basin and Subbasin Profile

Wheeler Soil and Water Conservation District is located in the John Day Basin (HUC 6) and includes the following subbasins (HUC 8): Lower John Day, Upper John Day, and North Fork John Day (See Appendix D).

The John Day River Basin is one of the most scenic and environmentally significant regions in the country. The third longest undammed river in the continental United States, the John Day River flows 281 miles from the Strawberry Mountains to the Columbia River. The John Day provides pristine

habitat for wild steelhead, Chinook salmon, Westslope cutthroat trout, and interior Redband trout. The river basin hosts some of the last remaining wild populations of Chinook salmon and summer steelhead in the Columbia River Basin.

Topography and Land Use

Wheeler County encompasses 1,715 square miles, or 1,097,600 acres, of which 316,384 acres are public and 781,216 acres are private. Of the Private acres, 435,911 are rangeland, 280,625 are forestland and 14,000 are irrigated cropland.

The District exhibits a widely varying terrain from deep river canyons, embedded with prehistoric plant and animal fossils, to high timbered mountains covered in pine and fir trees. Within the boundaries are portions of the Ochoco and Umatilla National Management, John Day Fossil Beds National Monument, CTWS Pine Creek Conservation Area, Sutton Mountain Wilderness Study Area, John Day River, and other public BLM land (see Appendix E).

Focus Areas

Priority Watersheds

Wheeler SWCD is in the Mid-Columbia Basin (HUC 4), and benefits from the partnerships within the John Day Basin (HUC 6) to better coordinate conservation efforts across larger portions of Oregon than Wheeler SWCD directly oversees. There are 19 watersheds (HUC 10) within Wheeler County, these watershed boundaries are used to focus conservation efforts within the Districts service area to best practice ridge-top-to-ridge-top conservation.

The District has determined four HUC 10 watersheds as the priority focus areas. Mountain Creek, Butte Creek, and Thirtymile Creek are in the final implementation monitoring stages after prioritization efforts from the previous LRBP. Between 2024-2030, the District’s prioritization efforts will move into Bridge Creek Watershed (see Appendix F).

Priority Habitats

Wheeler County habitats are highly diverse and at-risk of degradation due to invasive species encroachment, lower annual precipitation, and higher annual temperatures. Wheeler County was predominantly grasslands with pockets of high-timber lands, but in the last 50 years, increased focus on fire suppression has led to invasive species encroaching the lands and replacing climate adapted, high quality grasses.

The District will be prioritizing funding towards habitats that would benefit from increasing water quantity and quality, improved fire resiliency, and encouraging a climate adaptive environment. The District has determined the habitats in most need of improvement to be fish bearing streams, Juniper-dominated landscapes, and rare and declining habitats such as aspen groves (see Appendix G).

Audience

The intended audiences of this plan include Wheeler County residents, workers of the land, absentee landowners, general public, and business leaders to best describe the services and assistance we can provide. Local, state, federal governments, lawmakers, and potential funders may use this document as a guide to best achieve mutual goals as we strive to gain their support, cooperation, and participation in District activities. It will also be a living document to guide District staff and Board of Directors in their daily operations and to help ensure that policies, programs, services, and decisions are beneficial to the District. We hope that our audiences find this to be a useful document for tracking and holding us accountable in our behaviors, operations, and actions.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, Commitment

At Wheeler Soil and Water Conservation District, we understand that conservation and social justice are interconnected, and that more inclusive conservation efforts are necessary to ensure lasting

and equitable outcomes. We cannot authentically and effectively advance our mission to help people care for land and water without also caring about the people. Everyone deserves a healthy environment and should have a voice in shaping what that means for their communities. We are committed to engaging and listening to all residents of Wheeler County as full and equal partners with respect for the history, culture, and traditions of each community. We commit to acting in solidarity and with purposeful mutual support of all partners engaging in natural resource conservation. We pledge to make Wheeler SWCD an accessible and inclusive organization where each person we engage feels valued, supported, and safe to be their authentic self.

Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge the original stewards of the land we are occupying and working on, and are committed to continuing to learn how to better care for and strengthen our relationship with all who have come before and will come after. It is important that we recognize and honor the cultural significance of the land, plants, and animals.

Who We Are and What Guides Our Behavior

As natural resources are the pride of Wheeler County, it is important to ensure sustainable use of those resources by protecting and maintaining them for generations to come. We provide resources, information, and expertise to help people achieve their conservation and stewardship goals to actively enhance and protect air and water quality, fish and wildlife habitat, and soil health.

Mission

To maximize economic and environmental watershed values for Wheeler County residents by developing, conserving, and protecting water, soil, plant structures, and other natural resources.

Vision

The vision of Wheeler Soil and Water Conservation District is to be an organization that improves the health of the watersheds through holistic measures that enhance water quality and quantity, soil health, and conservation for beneficial uses; provides education and outreach to the public; and manages the business of the district in an efficient and effective manner.

Guiding Values

The values the District strives to meet are:

- A voluntary, collaborative, local, non-regulatory approach to **solving problems**
- The importance of a healthy environment to the **economy** of our area
- Open space and other **environmental benefits** provided by agriculture and forest landowners
- **Respect** for the property rights, confidentiality, decisions, and experience of all landowners/clients
- Community partnerships and the resources/expertise made available through these **collaborative relationships**
- **Education** as a means to promote environmental stewardship
- Helpful, courteous, prompt **customer service**
- **Communication** with the public and within the office
- Well-trained staff that is committed to **leadership and professionalism**
- **Conservation** as a part of our daily operation
- Fiscal responsibility with **public funds**
- **Innovative solutions** to natural resource issues
- **Identifying** potential long term local **risks** to our communities

Guiding Principles

Principles that guide the District's services, programs, and administrative operations are:

- **Private landowners** will solve their conservation and environment problems voluntarily if given incentives, technical assistance, and education.
- Private landowners have a right to maximize the **economic profitability** of their land. They also have a responsibility to use natural resources in a wise and responsible manner.
- **Resource management** is best achieved with a voluntary, locally-led, and holistic approach dealing with watersheds.
- Natural resource **conservation efforts** can be planned and implemented to sustain long-term healthy, economically viable, productive land uses.
- We have independent **responsibilities**, but we recognize our dependence on others to deliver programs successfully.
- We form **partnerships** dedicated to common principles, goals, and objectives. These partnerships ideally include communications, coordination, joint decision making when possible, mutual support, and shared leadership in collaborative efforts.
- We value the **relationships** with our partners who have common goals, while respecting the differences in mission, cultures, and targets.
- We recognize the need for **appropriate regulation** and that the best results will occur when an industry regulates and polices itself.
- We believe enduring conservation is achieved only by the **cooperative efforts** of individuals, agencies, and organizations working together.
- We believe a **locally led**, watershed-based approach to resource management on private lands is key to conserving natural resources.

Resource Concerns

Water Quality | Water temperature exceeds state standards in a number of stream reaches; sediment from human activities (roads, irrigation, under-sized culverts, off-road vehicles); bacteria source reduction, management and control.

Stream Flow and Hydrology | Inadequate summer/fall flows in several tributaries; loss of floodplains; and altered upland hydrologic regime.

Fish Populations and Habitat | Native fish populations have declined compared to historic conditions, prompting ESA listings; aquatic habitat (pool area, pool frequency, and gravel availability) is below desirable levels, and large, woody debris channel complexity is reduced compared to historic conditions; fish migration barriers (culverts, dams, diversions) and inadequate fish screens negatively impact fish populations.

Riparian Conditions | Inadequate healthy riparian vegetation to protect waterways and moderate solar radiation; inadequate large, woody debris recruitment potential to sustain aquatic life; reduced habitat and increased flood damage from streams that have been channelized and cut off from historic flood plains.

Upland Conditions | Invasive species including juniper out-competing native and cultivated plants; percentage of forest canopy and rangeland cover is low compared to historical levels exacerbating flooding and impacting streams, groundwater recharge, wildlife, and other resources; diseased, overstocked forests as a result of suppression of natural wildfire regimes and/or lack of forest management; soil erosion and other pollution; reduced quality of native and managed plant communities.

Operational Resource Concerns | Adequate staffing to meet natural resource concerns and office functions while not limiting productivity; data gaps; incomplete soil survey.

Fiscal Resource Concerns | Conservation investments are not a priority for landowners

with other, more pressing financial needs; some resource concerns (i.e. noxious weeds or upland habitat) have reduced funding due to fisheries-focused watershed restoration priorities; reliance on “soft” sources of state funding makes long-term budgeting and planning difficult and leaves the District vulnerable to state budget shortfalls.

Partnerships

We work with agencies and individuals as partners in efforts to achieve our vision. Various memorandums of agreement and/or understanding, working agreements, intergovernmental agreements, and informal arrangements formalize the partnerships. The District believes that our existing partners, which include non-profits, government organizations, private companies, community organizations, landowners and volunteers, and yet-to-be determined partners are crucial to us reaching our goals. Our work will only be successful if we are able to truly partner with communities, engage with respect, authentically listen, and have the commitment to share decision making, control, and resources. We must further examine and prioritize working with partners that share our equity goals to further maximize impacts with underserved communities.

Local Level

Landowners, producers, schools, community organizations, general public

The general public utilizes the District as a primary point of contact for District programs and information, but also Oregon Department of Agriculture and USDA’s Natural Resource Conservation Service. Landowners, schools, community organizations, producers, and the general public may seek technical assistance with natural resource concerns; and assistance in securing grant or loan funding for conservation projects.

Local Government

We work with a diverse group of key partners in local government agencies: Wheeler County, City of Fossil, City of Spray, and City of Mitchell.

OSU Extension Service

We maintain a working relationship with the Wheeler County office of Oregon State University Extension Service. The District collaborates with the OSU Extension staff on education and outreach pertaining to natural resources and conservation.

Other Local Partners

We partner with many other local groups that help us achieve our mission including Wheeler County Weed Board, Mid John Day Watershed Council, Oregon Paleo Lands Institute, and others. The District works closely with neighboring SWCDs, including Gilliam, Crook, Grant, Monument, and Morrow.

Regional Level

We work with the following regional partners to better coordinate efforts and maximize impacts: Chamber of Commerce, John Day Basin Partnership, John Day Basin Coordination Group, Lower John Day Working Group, Blue Mountain Land Trust, John Day SGT, and others.

Advisory Committees

Staff and board members have been involved in various advisory committees pertinent to our service area. In addition, the District continues to engage in the Middle and Lower John Day Local Advisory Committees (LAC) made up of landowners, ag producers, and environmental representatives to develop AgWQ Management Area Plans.

State Level

The Oregon Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Division provides administrative oversight, and partial administrative and technical support funding to the District. We work closely with, and receive technical assistance and funding from numerous state agencies including: Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, Oregon

Department of Environmental Quality, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Oregon Water Resources Department, Oregon Department of State Lands, Oregon Department of Forestry, Oregon State Weed Board, and others. Additionally, we receive technical and administrative assistance from Oregon Conservation Education Assistance Network, Oregon Association of Conservation Districts, Special Districts Association of Oregon, ODA Soil and Water Conservation Commission, and others.

National Level

We work closely with and receive funding from the Bureau of Reclamation, Bureau of Land Management, Bonneville Power Administration, Fish and Wildlife Service, Farm Service Agency, Natural Resource Conservation Services, Forest Service, National Association of Conservation Districts, and others.

Tribes, Tribal Government and Inter-Tribal Organizations

As we approach partnerships with Native American tribes, we do so with the understanding that they are sovereign nations and acknowledge indigenous community members as the original inhabitants of the land the District now aims to serve. We understand that partnering with tribes, tribal organizations, and tribal individuals is instrumental to better serving all of our constituents and reaching our conservation and equity goals. We partner with the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation's work on their Pine Creek Conservation Area located within our service area, as well as on all other conservation efforts. Additionally, we partner with Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation through collaborative efforts in the John Day Basin.

Strategic Directions, Goals, and Strategies

Each strategic direction has a set of strategies that further details the areas of focus for the District's

work over the next seven years. Strategic directions are listed in priority order. Strategies provide specific actions that further illuminate the purpose of the strategic direction they belong to, as well as provide further direction for the District's annual work plans and corresponding budgets. Strategic direction descriptions detail what those look like while the need for the strategy is *italicized*. Some strategies may overlap with multiple strategic directions.

Some of the District's work is prioritized to occur within defined geographic focus areas (Appendix F). Geographic focus areas are a guide to help allocate staff time and financial resources to specific areas of the District to strategically address natural resource concerns. Geographic focus areas are determined through an analysis of resource concerns and conservation opportunities where District investment in conservation will have the greatest impact – whether ecologically, socially, or economically – and in some cases all three. The geographic focus areas in appendixes D and F pertain to: working lands, public recreational areas, priority watersheds, and priority habitats. However, geographic focus areas are not meant to be mutually exclusive or prohibitive of conducting work outside of these areas. The District strives to maintain balance between conducting outreach to interested parties, as a way to create conservation assistance in an area falling outside a geographic focus area.

Strategic Directions and Goals

Organizational Health | Maintain an effective public organization through best management practices and strong internal communication, while demonstrating a commitment to long-term sustainability. *Wheeler County being the least populated county in Oregon and extremely rural, has limited resources for potential workforce and transient candidates. These restrictions have led to limited growth and longevity for the District staff to efficiently aid stakeholders. Overall organization of the District and its operations*

has been a focus over the last two years despite limited capacity. Now being nearly full staffed, the health of the District is anticipated to improve substantially.

Partnerships | Nurture robust partnerships with diverse stakeholders to further our shared goals related to community health and natural resource conservation.

Due to previous workforce capacity, partnerships became strained as the Wheeler SWCD capacity was limited. Recent turnover in both Wheeler SWCD and partner agencies has brought new life to potential partnerships and allowed stronger communication to develop between partners, which the District aims to continue expanding.

Community Engagement and Education | Provide accessible, inclusive, and responsive education opportunities to motivate and empower residents to conserve natural resources.

Wheeler County is large in acreage but is the least populated county in Oregon with approximately 50% of the population, including the Wheeler SWCD facility, residing outside of the three incorporated towns. As the towns are fairly spread apart and the Wheeler SWCD facility is not easily happened upon, we aim to develop a more accessible and engaging facility that people, including those traveling, may utilize not only for conservation technical assistance and education but also community alliance.

Water Quality and Quantity | Promote, support and participate in efforts that ensure clean water is available for Wheeler County residents and wildlife use.

Wheeler County is primarily high steppe climate, characterized by rugged rimrocks and steep topography makes waters a scarcity. Creeks that drain into the larger John Day River system typically run dry by midsummer

and often flow at too high of rates for the landscape to retain any precipitation.

Working Lands and Forest | Foster agriculture and forestry to ensure viable and sustainable practices, working lands are conserved, and the next generation of farmers and foresters are educated and supported. *Over 50% of the private lands are working lands, with most of it being used for grazing and haying, and a small portion being irrigated.*

Vegetation | Foster robust plant communities that create resilient forests, support healthy crops, are protected from invasive species, sequester carbon, and provide for quality vegetation. *Existing native and perennial vegetation is being encroached by annual grass and invasive species (see appendix C).*

Habitat | Conserve diverse, resilient, and well-connected habitats that support healthy native populations of fish, wildlife, and beneficial insects. *Habitat throughout Wheeler County is highly diverse and at risk due to the micro-climates that exist due to the topography. Wheeler County was historically primarily grassland with pockets of high-timber mountains but now habitats are highly degraded due to long-term fire suppression throughout Oregon.*

Healthy Soil | Promote healthy soil practices to prevent erosion and to positively impact productivity, carbon sequestration, water infiltration and storage, and animal and plant use. *Soil health has primarily been addressed through indirect measures as the soil composition and structure is highly variable at the cubic inch level.*

Climate Change | Assess, support, and educate at risk communities and restoration

efforts with climate change impacts in mind to ensure a sustainable and adaptive future. *Climate change considerations have been addressed indirectly through adaptive management practices but have not been an active focus when developing conservation plans or project development.*

Strategies Matrix

The following matrix expands on the strategic directions and goals by identifying associated strategies necessity. Strategic directions put in place organizational approaches while strategies set specific steps intended to accomplish the goals. The matrix is organized by strategic direction in priority order, followed by strategies. Each strategy is identified as a current or needed district program; a core or supporting function; whether it is needed in the community; and, technical assistance (TA), financial assistance (FA), and/or education/outreach (E/O). A current district program is already actively being implemented prior to the 2024-2030 LRBP, while a needed district program has either not began or needs further development contingent on additional resources being made available. A core function is defined or required by laws or regulations that SWCDs must adhere to, while a supporting function may not be required but assists SWCDs in meeting or surpassing core function goals. Strategies identified as needed in the community hold economic significance that would otherwise further disadvantage a historically underserved community. Each strategy was also evaluated to determine if implementation will be technical assistance (TA), financial assistance (FA), education and outreach (E/O), or a combination of these methods.

Matrix on next page

Strategic Directions Strategy	Current District Program	Needed District Program	Core Function	Support Function	Needed in Community	TA	FA	E/O
Organizational Health								
Retain highly skilled technical workforce	•	•		•	•		•	•
Support diversity, equity, and inclusion	•			•	•	•		
Guarantee proper and transparent financial management	•			•				
Adhere to all local, state, and federal applicable laws and regulations	•		•					
Maintain, support, and improve operational efficiency and effectiveness	•	•			•		•	
Seek funding opportunities	•		•		•		•	
Develop a skilled future workforce through volunteer/internship opportunities		•		•	•	•	•	•
Support and foster an effective board	•		•			•		•
Provide adequate internal resources and training	•	•		•			•	
Review and enhance strategic direction	•	•	•			•	•	•
Partnerships								
Strengthen existing partnerships	•	•		•	•	•	•	
Foster new partnerships with agencies sharing mutual goals	•	•		•	•	•	•	
Promote and participate in local events	•	•		•	•		•	•
Coordinate information and resources among conservation organizations	•	•		•		•		
Community Engagement and Education								
Develop education and outreach strategy plan		•	•		•	•		•
Prosper a public presence	•	•		•	•	•		•
Support diversity, equity, and inclusion	•			•	•	•		
Assist local schools with natural resource education and programs	•	•		•	•	•		•
Quantify the benefits and value of restoration	•	•	•		•	•		•

Strategic Directions Strategy	Current District Program	Needed District Program	Core Function	Support Function	Needed in Community	TA	FA	E/O
Community Engagement and Education continued								
Engage local communities in understanding climate change impacts	•	•		•	•	•		•
Establish community garden program		•			•	•		•
Develop/obtain inter-active education material	•	•		•	•	•		•
Water Quality and Quantity								
Protect water sources	•		•		•	•	•	•
Implement ODA Ag Water Quality Management Area Plan	•			•	•	•	•	•
Conduct water quality monitoring	•	•		•	•		•	
Administer watershed assessments	•			•	•		•	
Facilitate restoration efforts	•		•		•	•	•	•
Working Lands and Forests								
Promote regenerative agricultural practices	•		•		•	•	•	•
Hold conservation easements		•		•		•	•	•
Advance innovation in forest management	•	•		•	•	•	•	•
Increase forest health for sustainable harvest and wildlife	•			•	•	•	•	•
Cultivate sustainable grazing management practices	•			•	•	•	•	•
Vegetation								
Cultivate invasive species management	•		•		•	•	•	•
Nurish establishment of complex root systems	•			•	•	•	•	•
Encourage native and resilient desired species	•			•	•	•	•	•
Assist with vegetation assessments	•			•	•		•	
Habitat								
Protect and enhance rare and declining habitats	•		•		•	•	•	•
Nurture successional stages through adaptive management	•			•	•	•	•	•
Implement restoration and protection of riparian habitat	•		•		•	•	•	•
Elevate upland habitat and forage quality	•			•	•	•	•	•

Strategic Directions Strategy	Current District Program	Needed District Program	Core Function	Support Function	Needed in Community	TA	FA	E/O
Healthy Soil								
Foster soil health practices	•		•		•	•	•	•
Assist with soil health assessments	•			•	•		•	
Encourage methods that minimize soil disturbance	•			•	•	•	•	•
Promote maximizing soil cover year-round	•			•	•	•	•	•
Excogitate microbiome biodiversity	•			•	•	•	•	•
Climate Change								
Estimate Climate Changes and impacts	•		•		•	•	•	•
Evaluate restoration efforts in the context of climate	•			•	•	•	•	•
Encourage carbon sequestration efforts	•	•		•	•	•	•	•
Explore innovative strategies to address climate change	•	•		•	•	•	•	•
Execute fire resiliency practices	•			•	•	•	•	•

Implementation and Performance

This LRBP will be implemented through the District annual work planning and budget adoption process. Annual work plans determine which strategic directions and goals each staff member will be implementing through their programs of work. Not all goals will be implemented in any given year; especially those goals and tactics that the District needs to build capacity and better understanding in order to implement. Performance for implementing this LRBP will be based on an annual review of defined measures of success for each strategic direction. For each measure, performance will be rated as successful, in progress, or in need of improvement based on our level of accomplishment toward the measure.

Measures for Success

Measurable objectives allow the District to better evaluate progress towards strategic directions and goals. The measurable objectives below are the long-term desired outcomes, while milestones (interim steps) are specific numeric targets. Milestones are documented in the annual work plans developed by the District. Together, the milestones define the timeline needed to achieve the measurable objective.

Organizational Health | Maintain an effective public organization through best management practices and strong internal communication, while demonstrating a commitment to long-term sustainability.

- Annual employee evaluations
- Project follow-ups
- Clean annual audits
- On-time reporting
- Completed Assessments

Partnerships | Nurture robust partnerships with diverse stakeholders to further our shared goals related to community health and natural resource conservation.

- Percentage of projects with multiple partners involved
- Number of collaboration meetings hosted/attended

Community Engagement and

Education | Provide accessible, inclusive, and responsive education opportunities to motivate and empower residents to conserve natural resources.

- Newsletters/outreach materials published
- Workshops and events held
- Technical assistance projects completed

Water Quality and Quantity | Promote, support and participate in efforts that ensure clean water is available for Wheeler County residents and wildlife use.

- Water projects implemented
- Stream miles improved
- Stream miles enrolled in CREP
- Monitoring sites and parameters

Working Lands and Forest | Foster agriculture and forestry to ensure viable and sustainable practices, working lands are conserved, and the next generation of farmers and foresters are educated and supported.

- Upland projects implemented
- Forested acres improved
- Rangeland acres improved
- Conservation plans written

Vegetation | Foster robust plant communities that create resilient forests, support healthy crops, are protected from invasive species, sequester carbon, and provide for quality vegetation.

- Acres planted (# of plants, if possible)
- Acres seeded
- Treated acres for invasive species
- Weed management plans written

Habitat | Conserve diverse, resilient, and well-connected habitats that support healthy native

populations of fish, wildlife, and beneficial insects.

- Acres of vegetation restored
- Acres enrolled in CREP
- R/D habitats protected (#/acres)

Healthy Soil | Promote healthy soil practices to prevent erosion and to positively impact productivity, carbon sequestration, water infiltration and storage, and animal and plant use.

- Cropland acres improved
- Grazing management plans written

Climate Change | Assess, support, and educate at risk communities and restoration efforts with climate change impacts in mind to ensure a sustainable and adaptive future.

- Education on climate change impacts
- Mitigation efforts implemented (#/type)

APPENDIX A

Acronyms Used in This Business Plan

3WP	Wheeler Weed Warriors Program	OAR	Oregon Administrative Rules
Ag	Agriculture	ODA	Oregon Department of Agriculture
BLM	Bureau of Land Management	ODF	Oregon Department of Forestry
CREP	Cons. Resource Enhancement Program	ODFW	Or. Department of Fish and Wildlife
CTWS	Confederate Tribes of Warm Springs	ODOT	Or. Department of Transportation
DEQ	Department of Environmental Quality	OPLI	Oregon Paleo Lands Institute
DSL	Department of State Lands	ORS	Oregon Revised Statutes
E/O	Education and Outreach	OSU	Oregon State University
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency	OSWB	Oregon State Weed Board
ESA	Endangered Species Act	OWEB	Or. Watershed Enhancement Board
FA	Financial assistance	OWRD	Or. Water Resources Department
FS	Forest Service	R/D	Rare and declining
FSA	Farm Service Agency	SDAO	Special Districts Assoc. of Oregon
FTE	Full Time Equivalent	SRS	Soil Conservation Service (NRCS)
HUC	Hydrological Unit Code	SWCC	Soil & Water Cons. Commission
LAC	Local Advisory Committee	SWCD	Soil & Water Conservation District
LJDWG	Lower John Day Work Group	TA	Technical assistance
LRBP	Long-Range Business Plan	USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
MJDWC	Mid John Day Watershed Council	USFS	United States Forest Service
NACD	National Assoc. of Conservation Districts	USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service	WQ	Water Quality
OACD	Or. Association of Conservation Districts	WCWB	Wheeler County Weed Board

APPENDIX B

Statutes, Administrative Rules, and Other Governing Documents

The district is specifically governed by Oregon Revised Statutes (ORS) 568.210 through 568.890. In addition, the district is subject, but not limited, to the conditions of several statutes and administrative rules as follows:

ORS 568.900 - 568.933 Agricultural Water Quality Management

ORS 561.395 Soil and Water Conservation Commission

ORS 561.400 Natural Resources Division

ORS 44.320 Oath of Office

ORS 190.003 - 190.110 Intergovernmental Cooperation

ORS 192.001 Public Records Policy

ORS 192.005 - 192.190 Custody and Maintenance of Records

ORS 192.310 Records and Reports

ORS 192.410 Inspection of Public Records

ORS 192.610 - 192.710 Public Meetings

ORS 198.010 - 198.955 Special Districts

ORS 198.330 - 198.365 Dissolution of Inactive Districts

ORS 198.410 - 192.440 Recall

ORS 240.379 - 240.394 Employment of Persons with Severe Disabilities

ORS 244.010 - 244.400 Conflict of Interest

ORS 247.035 Residency

ORS 297.005 - 297.712 Contracting

ORS 297.405 - 297.485 Municipal Audits

ORS 542.750 Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention

ORS 659.010 - 659.990 Employment Practices

ORS 659.405 State Policy/Employment of Disabled Persons

OAR 839-07-550 - 839-07-565 Sexual Harassment Prevention

Oregon Constitution, Article XV, Section 3 Oath of Office

Title VII, Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Federal) EOE/Sexual Harassment/Discrimination

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (Federal) Hiring Persons with Disabilities

APPENDIX C

Noxious Weeds of Concern in Wheeler County

“A” Designated Weed (Table I)

A weed of known economic importance which occurs in the county in small enough infestations to make eradication or containment possible; or is not known to occur, but its presence in neighboring counties make future occurrence in Wheeler County seem imminent.

Recommended action: Infestations are subject to eradication or intensive control when and where found.

“B” Designated Weed (Table II)

A weed of economic importance which is regionally abundant, but may have limited distribution in the county.

Recommended action: Limited to intensive control at the county or regional level as determined on a site specific, case-by-case basis. Where implementation of a fully integrated countywide management plan is not feasible, biological control (when available) shall be the primary control method.

“T” Designated Weed (T)

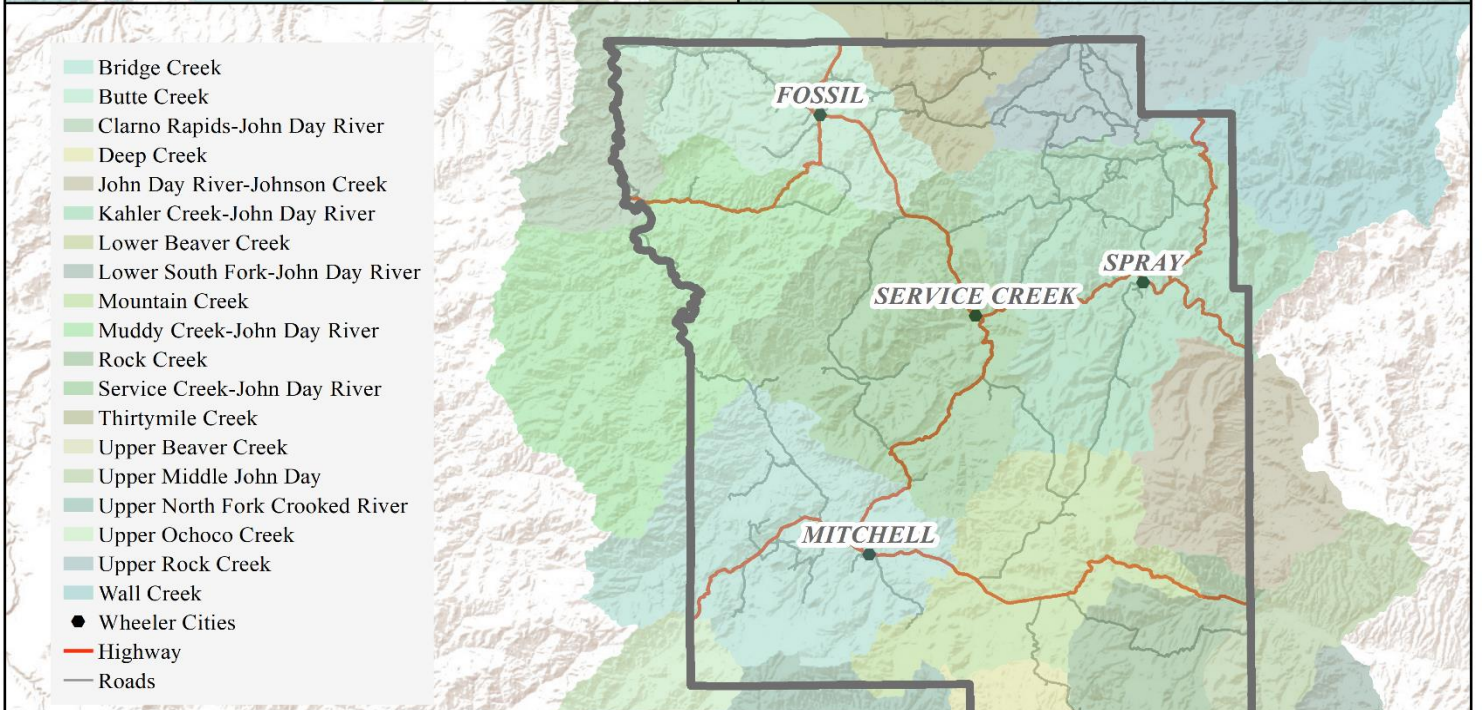
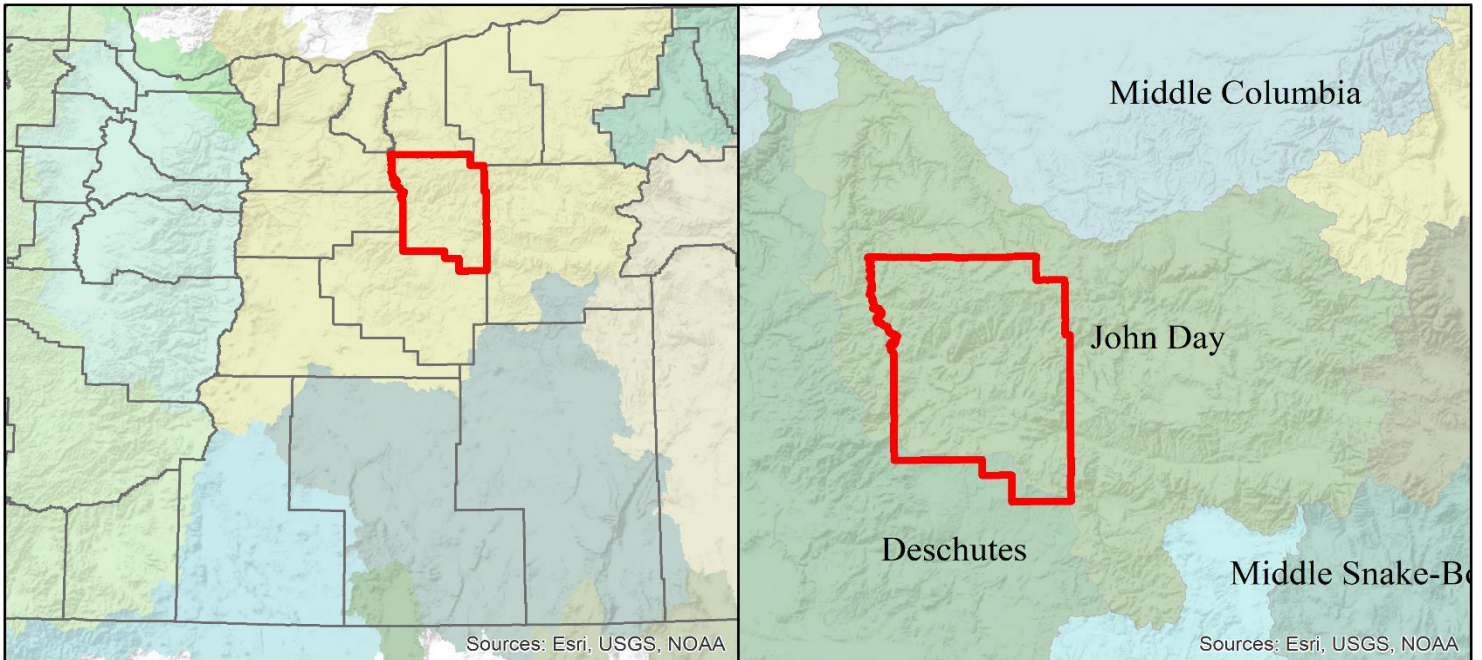
A designated group of weed species which is determined by the Oregon State Weed Board. This group consists of weeds from both A and B designated weed lists.

Recommended action: These noxious weeds are the focus for prevention and control by the WCWB. Action against these weeds will receive priority.

Table I	
Common Name	Scientific Name
Dalmation Toadflax (T)	Linaria dalmatica
Japanese dodder	Cuscuta japonica
Mediterranean Sage (T)	Salvia aethiopsis
Musk Thistle	Carduus nutans
Myrtle Spurge	Euphorbia myrsinites
Plumeless Thistle	Carduus acanthoides
Purple Loosestrife	Lythrum salicaria
Purple Starthistle (T)	Centaurea calcitrapa
Rush Skeletonweed	Chodrilla juncea
Russian-olive (Outside Domestication) (T)	Elaeagnus angustifolia
Salt Cedar (Outside Domestication) (T)	Tamarix ramosissima
Scotch Broom	Cytisus scoparius
Spike Weed	Hemizonia pungens
Spiny Cocklebur (T)	Xanthium spinosum
Squarrose Knapweed (T)	Centaurea virgata
St. Johnswart	Hypericum perforatum
Tansy Ragwort	Senecio jacobaea
Yellow Toadflax	Linaria vulgaris

Table II	
Common Name	Scientific Name
Tree of Heaven	Ailanthus altissima
Bull thistle	Cirsium vulgare
Bur Buttercup	Ranunculus testiculatus
Canada Thistle (T)	Cirsium arvense
Cheatgrass (T)	Bromus tectorum
Chicory (T)	Cichorium intybus
Coast Fiddleneck	Amsinckia intermedia
Diffuse Knapweed (T)	Centaurea diffusa
Field Bindweed (Morning Glory)	Convolvulus arvensis
Foxtail Barley	Hordeum jubatum
Houndstounge (T)	Cynoglossum officinale
Jointed Goatgrass	Aegilops cylindrical
Kochia	Kochia scoparia
Leafy Spurge (T)	Euphorbia esula
Medusahead Rye (T)	Taeniatherum caput-medusae
Mullein	Verbascum thapsus
Perennial Pepperweed (T)	Lepidium latifolium
Poison Hemlock	Conium maculatum
Prickly Lettuce (milk thistle)	Silybum marianum
Puncturevine	Tribulus terrestris
Russian Knapweed (T)	Centaurea repens
Russian thistle	Salsola iberica
Scotch Thistle (T)	Onopordum acanthium
Spotted Knapweed (T)	Centaurea maculosa
Sulfur Cinquefoil	Potentilla recta
Teasel	Dipsacus fullonum
Ventenata (T)	Ventenata dubia
White Top (Hoary Cress) (T)	Cardaria draba
Yellow Starthistle (T)	Centaurea solstitialis
Yellow Sweet Clover	Melilotus officinalis

APPENDIX D



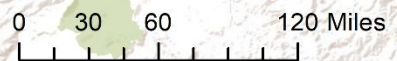
Wheeler

Soil and Water Conservation District

THE PLAN 2024-2030

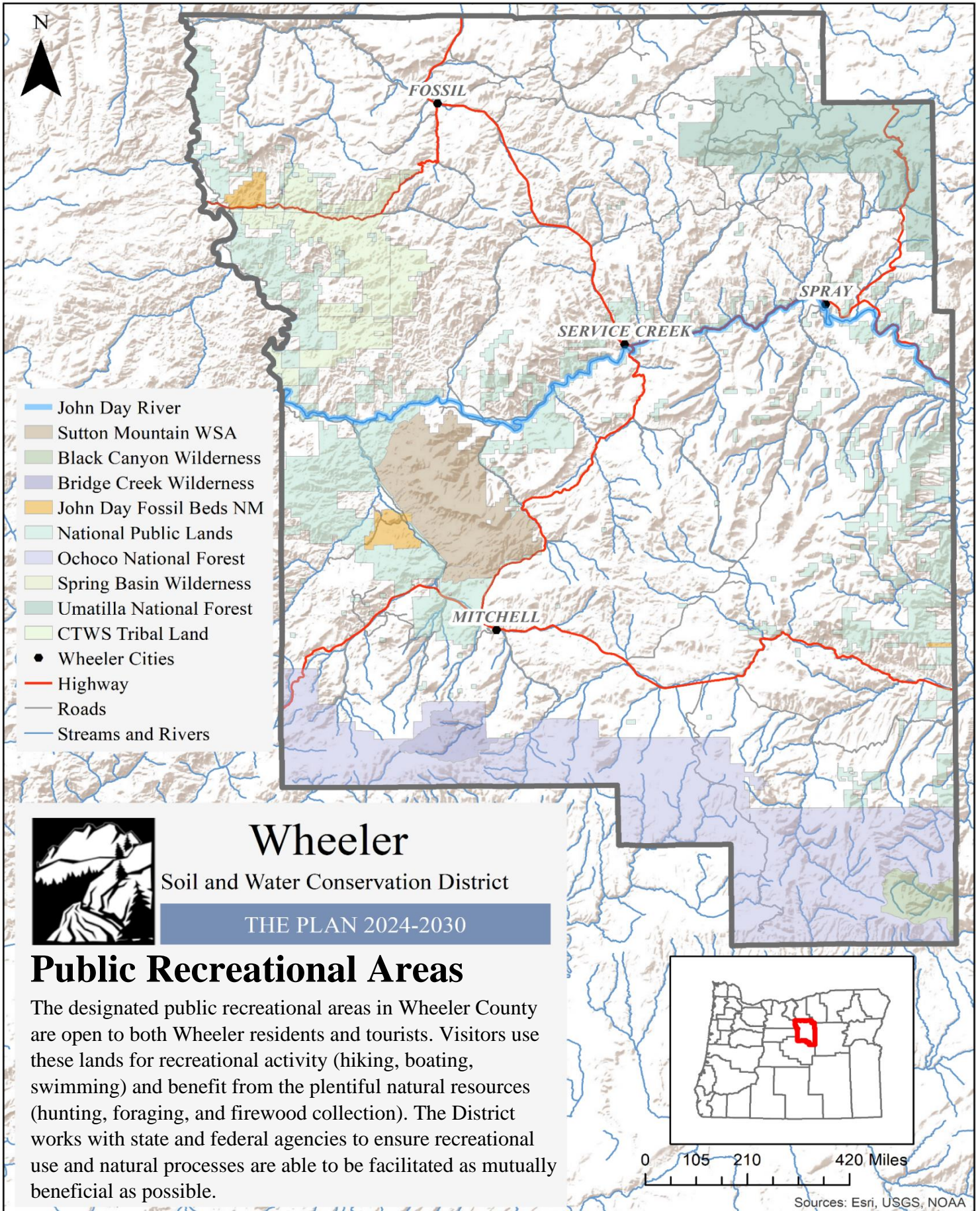
Watershed Topography

Wheeler SWCD service area is influenced by watershed boundaries: Mid-Columbia Basin (*Top Left*, HUC 4) and John Day Basin (*Top Right*, HUC 6), while project locations are categorized within distinct watersheds (*Bottom*, HUC 10).



Sources: Esri, USGS, NOAA

APPENDIX E



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Public Recreational Areas

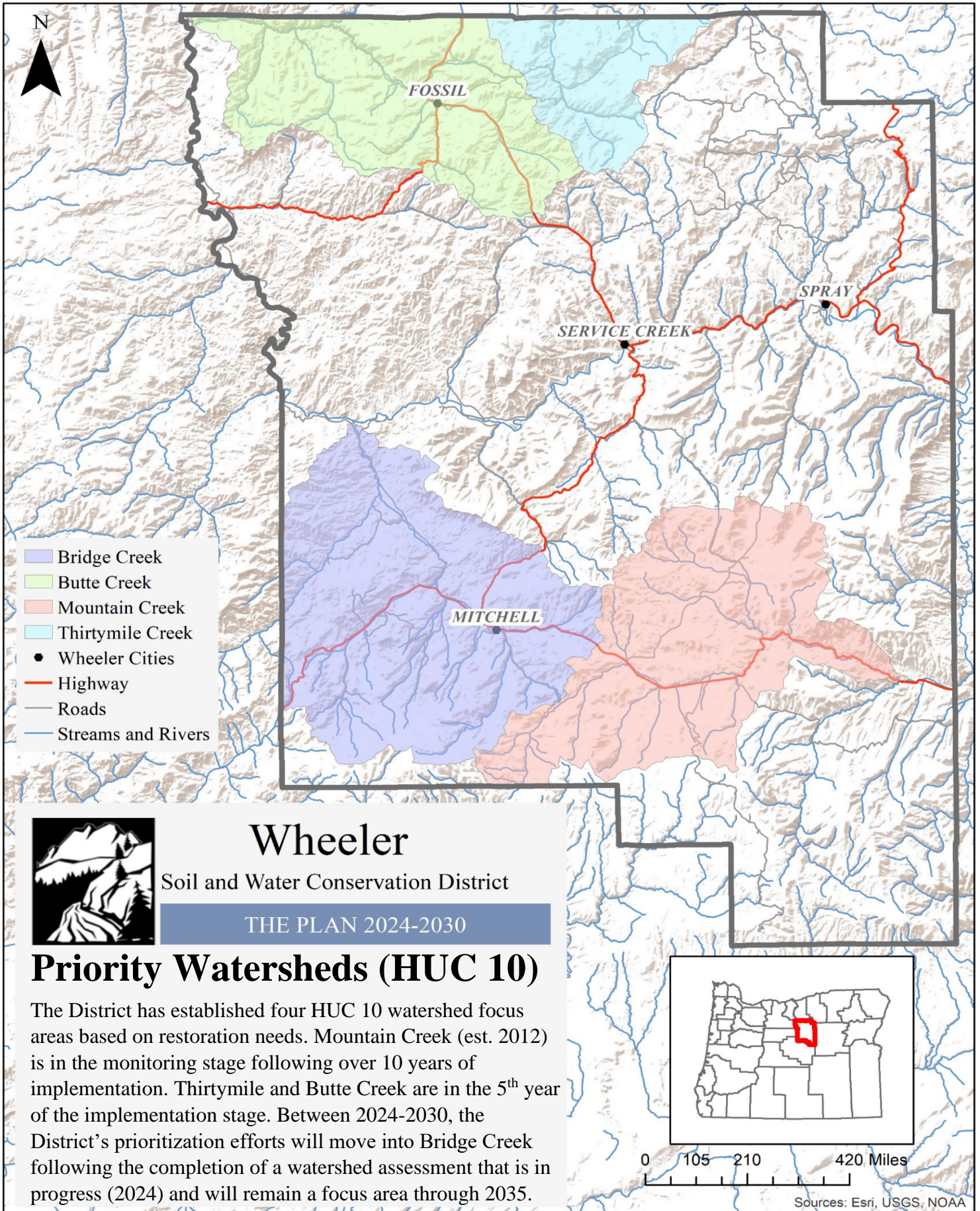
The designated public recreational areas in Wheeler County are open to both Wheeler residents and tourists. Visitors use these lands for recreational activity (hiking, boating, swimming) and benefit from the plentiful natural resources (hunting, foraging, and firewood collection). The District works with state and federal agencies to ensure recreational use and natural processes are able to be facilitated as mutually beneficial as possible.



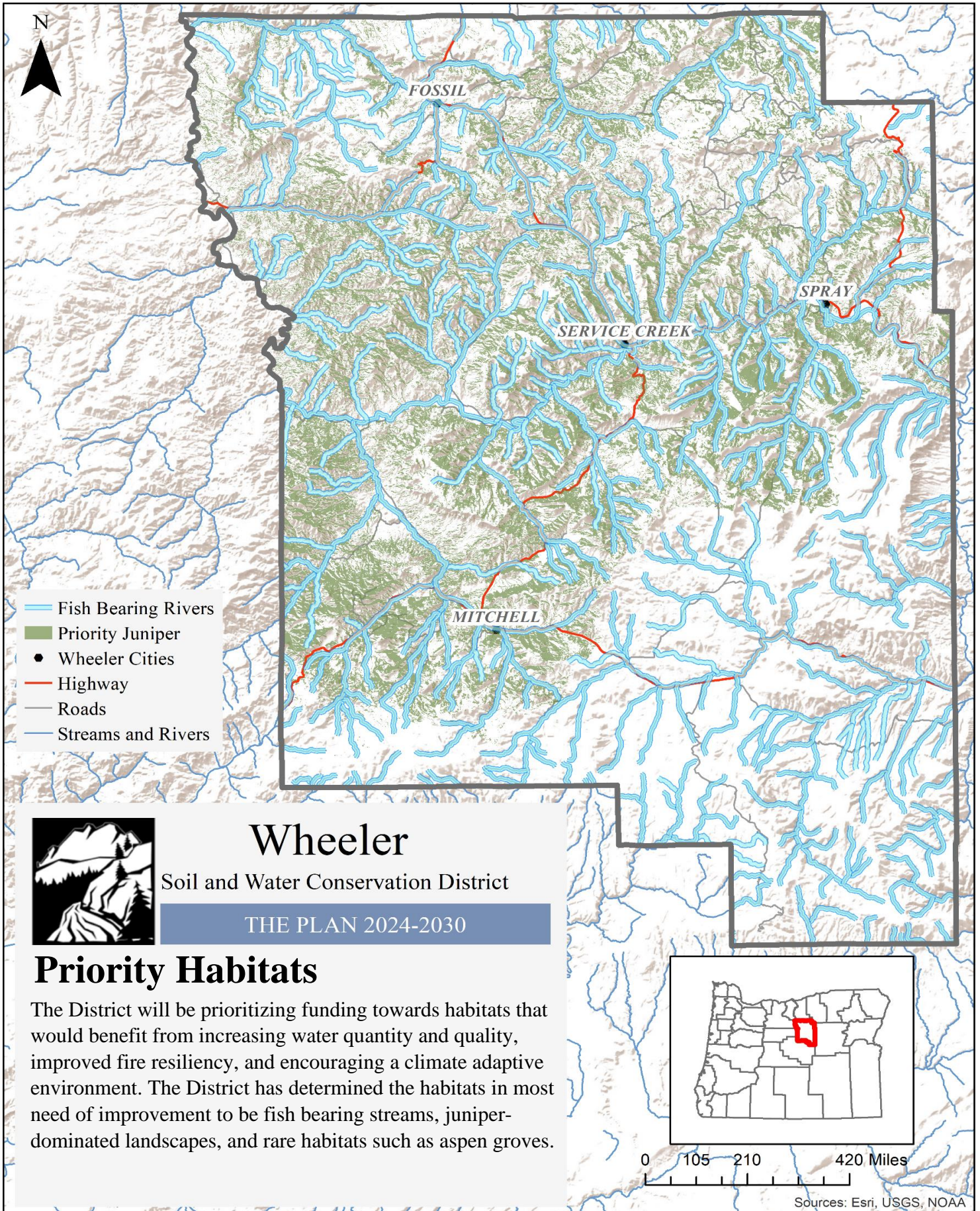
0 105 210 420 Miles

Sources: Esri, USGS, NOAA

APPENDIX F



APPENDIX G



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Priority Habitats

The District will be prioritizing funding towards habitats that would benefit from increasing water quantity and quality, improved fire resiliency, and encouraging a climate adaptive environment. The District has determined the habitats in most need of improvement to be fish bearing streams, juniper-dominated landscapes, and rare habitats such as aspen groves.