

Wheeler Soil & Water Conservation

Annual Work Plan

Fiscal Year 2020-2021

MISSION STATEMENT

To maximize economic and environmental watershed values for Wheeler County

Goals

Improve health of the watersheds through holistic measures that enhance water quality and quantity for beneficial uses.

Improve soil conservation and health to ensure continued resource availability for future generations.

Provide education and outreach to the public and partner agencies/organizations.

Manage the business of the district in an efficient and effective manner.

For period: July 2020 – June 2021
Adopted 06.24.2020

Common Acronyms

AgWQMAP	Agricultural Water Quality Management Area Plan
APHIS	Animal Plant and Health Inspection Service
ARS	Agricultural Research Service
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
BPA	Bonneville Power Administration
CCRP	Continuous Conservation Reserve Program
CHaMP	Columbia Basin Habitat Monitoring Project (<i>techniques used by ODFW</i>)
CIS	Conservation Implementation Strategy
CREP	Conservation Resource Enhancement Program
CRMP	Conservation Resource Management Plan
CRP	Conservation Reserve Program
CSP	Conservation Stewardship Program
CTWS	Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs
DEQ	Department of Environmental Quality
DSL	Department of State Lands
EQIP	Environmental Quality Incentives Program
FIP / OWEB	Focused Investment Partnership (OWEB)
FSA	Farm Services Agency
LO	Landowner
LAC	Local Advisory Committee
LJDWG	Lower John Day Work Group
LMA	Local Management Agency
Mid-C Plan	Middle Columbia River Steelhead Recovery Plan
MJDBCWC	Mid John Day - Bridge Creek Watershed Council
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NOAA	National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration
NPS	Non-Point Source (pollution)
NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service
NWPCC	Northwest Power & Conservation Council
OACD	Oregon Association of Conservation Districts
ODA	Oregon Department of Agriculture
ODA NRD	Oregon Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Division
ODF	Oregon Department of Forestry
ODFW	Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife
ODOT	Oregon Department of Transportation
OCEAN	Oregon Conservation Education and Assistance Network
OPLI	Oregon Paleo Lands Institute
OSHA	Occupational Safety & Health Administration
OSU	Oregon State University
OSWB	Oregon State Weed Board
OWEB	Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board
OWRD	Oregon Water Resources Department
RCPP	Regional Conservation Partnership Program
SDAO	Special Districts Association of Oregon
SOW	Statement of Work
SWCC	Soil & Water Conservation Commission
SWCD	Soil & Water Conservation District
TMDL	Total maximum daily load
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USFS	United States Forest Service
USFWS	United States Fish & Wildlife Service
WQ	Water quality
WC	Watershed Council
WSWCD	Wheeler Soil & Water Conservation District
WTA	Watershed Technical Assistance

OBJECTIVE:	Improve health of the watersheds to enhance water quality and quantity and improve soil conservation and health for beneficial uses.	
ACTIVITIES	Task	Accomplishments
Assessments, Action Planning, Conservation Planning	Continue to work collaboratively with ODFW to update and map inventory list of fish passage barriers within the District.	The District works with ODFW on a regular and ongoing basis for removal and assessment of fish passage barriers within the District. The ODFW Screen Shop has worked on in-stream projects assisting with installation work and installing fish screens, helping us meet grant match requirements
	Assist landowners with Ag Water Quality and conservation planning.	Landowner contacts pertaining to AgWQ Q1: non-FA: 94 ; FA: 3 Q2: non-FA: 93 ; FA: 17 Q3: non-FA: 69 ; FA: 6 Q4: non-FA: 53 ; FA: 6 11 Conservation Plans were written.
	Work cooperatively with ODOT & ODFW to establish culvert replacement priority list within Butte Creek Watershed.	Due to other ongoing work commitments, this has not yet been accomplished.
	Continue outreach to acquire LO participation in Butte Creek and Kahler Creek Reach Evaluations.	Landowner outreach has occurred, but not in regard to the Reach Evaluations.
	Consider changing to new focus area or expanding Mountain Creek Focus Area. Discuss w/ ODA staff expanding the Mountain Creek Focus Area, and collect baseline data if FA is expanded.	
	Continue to participate in John Day Basin Partnership with setting priorities.	The District staff have continued to participate in the John Day Basin Partnership and attended all the meetings.
	Continue to participate in Lower John Day Work Group's place-based planning process.	The District staff have continued to participate in the place-based planning process with the Lower John Day Work Group. Staff has attended all meetings, contributed to discussions, reviewed and revised planning documents, participated in subcommittees and assisted with decisions.
Form and/or maintain partnerships with federal, state, local agencies, tribes and conservation organizations and foundations.	Work to define agencies' roles, working relationships and support of natural resource enhancement activities; supply technical, fiscal or other assistance.	The District works cooperatively with regional agencies/groups, including John Day Basin Partnership, Lower John Day Work Group, OACD, BLM, FSA, EcoTrust, OWEB, CTWS, BPA, NRCS, ODFW, USFWS, USFS, Oregon Land Trust, Blue Mountain Land Trust and others. Technical and financial assistance is provided as requested. The Watershed Coordinator and District Manager serve on the OWEB Small Grants Team.
	Assist and promote watershed council activity, provide technical advice, and continue capacity building for the watershed council.	Watershed council maintains a Facebook page to keep LOs informed of and interested in watershed council activities and uses it to help promote District activities, as well. The Facebook page had 21 posts reaching 606 people. One small grants submitted and awarded. Two large grants submitted, two review team tour made and one large grants were awarded. Was also awarded the capacity grant. Q1: TA provided 18 times, other LO contacts occurred 5 times. Q2: TA provided 13 times, other LO contacts occurred 9 times. Q3: TA provided 10 times, other LO contacts occurred 8 times. Q4: TA provided 19 times.
	Participate in John Day Basin Partnership and the Lower John Day Working Group.	Staff attended all meetings of John Day Basin Partnership and the Lower John Day Working Group.
	Continue to work with partner agencies developing coordinated weed management.	The District continues to work with adjacent districts and local landowners to note and map weed location. The Tri-County Weed Management grant included Crook and Jefferson SWCDs, as does the Central Oregon Coordinated Biocontrol Project. The District also participated in APHIS funding through the USDA. Field Technician II handles most tasks related to weed management, he continues to learn about weed management and make networking connections with landowners and partners.
	Continue to work w/ NRCS, NPS & CTWS in outreach activities.	The kiosk was installed at the Painted Hills in January 2021.
	Work with NRCS and Gilliam County SWCD on the implementation of the Lower John Day Canyons Restoration Initiative RCPP.	Staff developed a brochure and mailed to all landowners within the RCPP boundary. In addition, the District has participated in all RCPP meetings with Gilliam County SWCD and NRCS. Application and planning tasks have been a joint effort with Gilliam County SWCD, as well as NRCS.
	Work with ODA to develop proactive communication regarding potential enforcement issues, allowing Wheeler SWCD to work preemptively with local landowners.	Biennial review was held virtually in October 2020.
Set strategic priority work areas.	Establish strategic priorities based on identified needs and requirements within the District, with consideration to the John Day Sub-basin Plan, Oregon Plan, ODFW inventories, CTWS's John Day River Watershed Restoration Strategy, the Mid-Columbia River Steelhead Recovery Plan and the John Day Partnership Strategic Action Plan. Incorporate new plans as adopted.	No new plans were adopted. The District and Watershed Council use these plans to focus work in the high priority watersheds. The majority of Wheeler SWCD projects continue to be in Butte, Bridge, Mountain and Kahler creeks.
	Continue noxious weed inventory and mapping as staff time allows. Continue to gather and include in weed inventory existing data from partner agencies.	Weed Technician: Q1: LO contacts: 8, 3 site visits 16 acres weed treatment in Focus Area (Mountain Creek) Distributed 2 weed brochures NAISMA Certified Weed Free Forage, Gravel, & Mulch Program Workshop Weed meeting with Crook, Jefferson, Deschutes, and Wheeler Counties Q2: LO contacts: 6 PNW IPC's Aquatic Species EDRR Citizen Science Training Released biocontrols Oregon County Weed Control Association meeting Completed progress report Q3: LO contacts: 6 Released biocontrols NAISMA Science, Policy, and Solutions for Invasive Species Q4: Weed Technician resigned prior to providing tracking data for 4th quarter

	Craft the District's Long Range Strategic Business Plan for 2020-2025.	The District's 2021-2023 Long Range Business Plan was approved and adopted by the Board of Directors in January 2021. The Plan was revised to a 2 year plan due to forecasted staff transitions.
Implementation of projects and practices.	Contact landowners and conduct evaluations of project sites.	The staff continues to contact landowners and conduct evaluations of project sites regularly. District Management began drafting a Landowner Follow-up Policy for adoption early fiscal year 2021-2022.
	Provide technical assistance, engineering designs and project installation specifications.	The staff continues to provide technical assistance, engineering designs and project installation specifications.
	Facilitate necessary project permitting and consultations.	The staff continues to facilitate necessary project permitting and consultations.
	Promote and implement USDA programs, and continue to support implementation of CREP in Wheeler County.	The District continues to promote and implement USDA programs. CREP is still being implemented in Wheeler County and it is an integral part of District function. RCPP is also being implemented.
	Implement and promote OWEB and FIP projects.	13 OWEB projects were in the implementation phase during the fiscal year: 8 Restoration 3 Technical Assistance 6 OWEB projects were completed during the fiscal year: 5 Restoration, now in monitoring 1 Technical Assistance 9 OWEB restoration projects were monitored during the fiscal year. 2 FIP projects were in the implementation phase during the fiscal year.
	Implement and promote Small Grant projects.	The District did not implement any small grants during the fiscal year, but staff will be promoting the program more during the next biennium. The Watershed Council had 1 small grant awarded, 1 completed, and 1 in the implementation stage during the fiscal year.
	Implement and promote CTWS/BPA projects, and monitor funding packages.	144 acres of juniper was removed and 60 acres of noxious weeds were treated through CTWS contract T-19115-20 Consultation with SHPO & THPO determined that additional archaeological research was not anticipated for the work through CTWS contract T-19486-21. Work will be implemented in 2021-22 fiscal year. 1 renewed contract and 7 new contracts were supported through Riparian Buffer BPA contract #85575, which covered approximately 276 acres and an estimated 15.37 miles of stream.
	Seek and implement other funding agency projects.	No new project funding sources were implemented despite staff seeking new sources.
	Ensure project implementation meets NRCS compliance standards.	Each project application funded is compared against NRCS compliance standards. The District Manager was a certified NRCS planner and helped monitor project work for NRCS standards. He resigned in April of 2021. Both District Field Technicians continued training to become a certified NRCS planner. Due to COVID restrictions, the required in-person training was difficult to schedule.
	Implement NRCS RCPP and other programs.	Landowner contact and Technical Assistance numbers are included in totals reported elsewhere in this work plan. Cultural resource surveys have been completed on all needed contracts.
	Implement and promote Federal and State Weed grant projects.	1 OSWB grants were completed within the fiscal year. 2 OSWB grant were submitted, funded, and are being implemented.
	Implement and document accomplishments for the Mountain Creek Focus Area.	Accomplishments are reported in the FAAP report submitted to ODA quarterly. Q1 LO Contacts: 3 Q1 Site Visits: 9 Q1 Work: Wheeler County Noxious Weed project was implemented. RCPP contracts were completed for 1 landowner. Q2 LO Contacts: 17 Q2 Site Visits: 8 Q2 Work: Completion report drafted for 218-6000. Q3 LO Contacts: 6 Q3 Site Visits: 4 Q3 Work: Q4 LO Contacts: 6 Q4 Site Visits: 6 Q4 Work: Project designs were completed and compliance requirements were met. Final inspections and photo monitoring were started and project completion reports were drafted. Research and preparation for interim assessment was started. **Work accomplishments are not reported until the completion report is submitted, so there may be work that was done during the fiscal year, but not yet reported.
	Project Monitoring	Complete photo points and effectiveness monitoring and submit agency monitoring reports.
Document post project conditions for reach evaluations/ action plan database. Update database to document project effectiveness.		This task is currently still in progress.
Conduct Mountain Creek Reach Evaluation focus area monitoring: buffer vegetation shade, and erosion.		Mountain Creek Reach Evaluation FA monitoring is continuing and ongoing regarding water temperature, percentage of shade totals, erosion and reach improvement. Data is periodically benchmarked in the FAAP.
Assist JDBP as needed with FIP monitoring.		Staff is implementing use of the JDBP Project Tracker for FIP projects

OBJECTIVE:	Provide education and outreach	
ACTIVITIES	Task	Accomplishments
Provide education and outreach to the public and partner agencies/organizations.	Provide AgWQMAP information and fact sheets for distribution, and participate in local community events.	Due to Coronavirus pandemic, all events were cancelled, so displays and distributions were unable to be done.
	Provide information about USDA Farm Bill programs and activities.	Due to Coronavirus pandemic, events were cancelled. These programs were highlighted in the District newsletter and Annual Report, and RCPP outreach.
	Publish an annual report, periodic newsletters and press releases of District functions.	Annual Reports distributed: 527; Newsletters distributed: Fall-534
	Conduct workshops annually, as beneficial.	Due to Coronavirus pandemic, workshops were conducted.
	Conduct county-wide project tours or day fairs.	Due to Coronavirus pandemic, no county-wide project tours or day fairs were conducted.
	Participate in community activities with county fair exhibit, annual presentation to county public entities and annual meeting presentations.	Due to Coronavirus pandemic, events were cancelled.
	Assist OSU Extension Service with workshops.	No workshops were conducted.
	Provide opportunity for school age children to participate in a poster contest pertaining to conservation.	No poster contest was held.
	Assist Wheeler County Stock Growers with workshops pertinent to natural resources.	No workshops pertinent to natural resources conducted for the Wheeler County Stock Growers.
Provide work and project information to legislative agencies and natural resource organizations.	Newsletters and annual reports are sent to local elected officials, state and federal legislators	

OBJECTIVE: Manage the business of the District		
ACTIVITIES	Task	Accomplishments
Seek funding	Seek funding to support staff positions.	With no taxing authority, the staff positions are funded along with technical assistance and project work through grant funding from OWEB, BPA, ODA, CTWS, USDA/NRCS, USFS Title II, APHIS and OSWB.
	Seek funding for project implementation.	10 funding applications were submitted for landowner projects. Sources include OWEB, OSWB, CTWS, BPA, USDA, APHIS, and CRWMA.
	Seek alternative funding opportunities.	Staff continually seeks alternative funding opportunities.
	Seek funding for Action Plans and Reach Evaluations.	This activity is ongoing.
	Continue to seek completion of NRCS county soil survey and acquire program status information.	<p>Per NRCS Soil Survey Office Leader on December 16, 2021, "There have not been many changes to the Wheeler side of the RAIL Dataset in 2021. The most recent draft data we have for you is currently on the Condon NRCS Server. The spatial layer has a date of July 2020, and the tabular database has a date of March 2021. If you don't have these files, DelRae should be able to get them off the server for you.</p> <p>Nearly all of the spatial mapping in Wheeler is complete save for a few polygons we have marked for further QC. If you run into any problem areas or have questions please let me know.</p> <p>Much of our 2021 workload was focused on developing Provisional Ecological Sites across all of the MLRA's our office covers. In addition, we also assisted with database work on the Malheur Survey. In 2022, we are planning on completing the RAIL database and hope to have it published in 2023. The draft data available on the server should cover your needs until then and I don't expect major changes to the data for Wheeler."</p>
	Prepare statements of work for ODA, BPA and Watershed Council grant projects.	Statement of work for ODA, BPA, and Watershed Council projects are drafted as needed and required.
	Maintain and update the District website and Facebook page.	<p>The District's website is managed and updated regularly with Board meeting information, as well as program and staffing changes.</p> <p>The Facebook page is used for sharing information and news articles of interest, as well as advertising for job openings and pertinent District information.</p>
	Continue to use Oregon Purchasing and website for distributing District bid information, along with other advertising agencies.	This District website was not used for distributing District bid information. The District utilized the newspaper of record for all advertising needs.
	Attend work related workshops, conventions and training sessions.	<p>Q1: Field Tech II attended a NAISMA's Certified Weed Free Forage, Gravel, and Mulch Program Workshop. Both Field Techs attended an AgLearn training Apprentice Conservation Planner Role and a Grant Writing Workshop 101. The District Manager attended the USDA/NRCS Security & Awareness training and the Blue Mountain Land Trust Conservation Easement Webinar.</p> <p>Q2: Staff attended a training for the state mandated COVID policies and provided feedback for the District assessment and plan. Staff continued progress on AgLearn training, and a PNW-IPC training.</p> <p>Q3: Staff attended OWEB's Grant Monitoring Training and continued progress on AgLearn training. Staff also attended The Columbia Basin Riparian Planting Partnership's "Eastern Washington Riparian Planting Symposium"; NAIMA's "Science, Policy, and Solutions for Invasive Species"; and, California Fire Science's "Smokey the Beaver: Can Beaver Dams Keep Riparian Corridors Green During Wildfire?"</p> <p>Q4: Staff attended the virtual 2021 CONNECT Conference, USDA Conservation Desktop Training, and the Avenza Conference.</p> <p>Field Technician I became a certified drone pilot Staff completed monthly SafePersonnel trainings. Office Manager attended SDAO First Thursday trainings and management trainings</p>

District Activities

Recruit as needed to fill vacant Board of Director positions: recruit Associate Directors for training to fill Board positions.	Zone 2 was recruited for and filled in June 2021. No Associate Directors were recruited.
Prepare budgets, conduct audits and complete reports as required.	Monthly budget reports are prepared for each Board meeting. All documents were prepared for the annual audit. Audit files were taken to and recovered from auditor, Barnett & Moro. Budgets and quarterly reports were prepared for all grants. SDIS-SDAO Best Practices Survey was submitted.
Hold monthly Board meetings and an annual meeting.	August 26th September 30th October 28th November 17th December 28th January 28th February 25th March 25th April 29th, virtual Annual Meeting May 27th June 24th
Hold committee meetings as needed.	Personnel Committee meetings were held to conduct interviews for vacant District Manager position.
Hold monthly staff and safety meetings, or complete online SDAO Safety Trainings.	August 12th September 10th October 12th October 19th November 23rd December 16th February 11th March 11th April 8th Beginning May 3, 2021, the District staff held weekly staff meetings every Monday at 7am. The Board Chair attended these meetings due to the District Manager position being vacant
Review and update District policies, and develop new policies as needed.	The following policies were revised and adopted: The following addition to the Personnel Policy Handbook was adopted: The Office Manager is working on revising all District policies into a uniform format.
Update county weed list and submit to County Court for approval as needed.	The revised county weed list was approved by the Wheeler County Weed Board on October 28th and adopted by the Wheeler County Court on November 4th.
Update Weed Board Member appointments.	Wheeler County Weed Board appointments did not change during the year.
Continue to work with Ag WQ Planner on next AgWQMA Plan biennial review, documenting accomplishments, compiling information for the Board of Agriculture report, and updating plan as needed.	District staff worked with the AgWQ Planner to hold an AgWQMA Plan lite-review on October 21, 2020. District assisted with recruiting for and updating the LAC member list, preparing and mailing meeting materials, setting up the virtual meeting, and taking and preparing minutes.
Participate in NRCS work group.	Wheeler SWCD participated in the NRCS Local Workgroup Meeting on February 10, 2021.
Review District's Annual Work Plan, as needed.	District staff reviewed the Annual Work Plan as needed.
Conduct SDAO or OSHA site inspection and complete self-insured annual evaluation.	A virtual Risk Management Review with SDIS occurred on July 28, 2021 and District
Transition planning and development of new job description, as needed.	The District Manager resigned April 30, 2021. Transition planning for the District Manager position occurred and the position description was revised. A new District Manager was hired June 14, 2021. The Board and new District Manager decided to revise all position descriptions during the 2021-2022 fiscal year.

Conduct employee evaluations, develop new written employee training policy.

Employee evaluation policy was revised and new evaluation forms established. Starting in the 2021-22 fiscal year, employee evaluations will be conducted each January with any salary adjustments taking effect July 1st. District staff are revising the Employee Handbook using the state template. Staff intend to have the Handbook fully revised by the end of the 2022-23 fiscal year.