



2018-2019 Annual Report



Organization of the Union Soil and Water Conservation District (USWCD)

The USWCD, one of 45 conservation districts in Oregon, is a form of local government governed under Oregon Revised Statute (ORS) 568.210-890 and ORS 568.900-933, the laws which govern state agencies and special districts. The USWCD was established in 1946 and is currently led by a five member, locally elected Board of Directors. The USWCD generally overlaps with the boundaries of the Upper Grande Ronde River Basin, and is divided into three zones. The Board of Directors is made up of one Director from each zone and two at-large Directors.

Mission

The Mission of the Union Soil and Water Conservation District is to assist and educate interested landowners in the development, protection, and conservation of natural resources.

Values

The following values guide our work:

- Wise use of natural resources to balance agricultural production with conservation.
 - Local people making local decisions to achieve conservation.
 - Voluntary initiatives over regulatory mandates.
 - Efficient and effective use of public resources.
- Projects are partnerships in which everyone contributes, everyone benefits.

2018-2019 Financial Summary		
	Year Ended June 30,	
	<u>2019</u>	<u>2018</u>
Cash and Investments	388,839	365,608
Capital Assets	<u>7,053</u>	<u>10,850</u>
Total Assets	\$395,892	\$365,053
Total Liabilities	---	4,518
Net Position:		
Invested in Capital Assets	7,053	10,850
Restricted	---	---
Unrestricted	<u>388,839</u>	<u>349,685</u>
Total Net Position	\$395,892	\$360,535

Board of Directors

- Jarod Teeter**-Chairman, Zone 1
- Paul Boehne**-Vice-Chairman, At-Large
- Curtis Ricker**-Treasurer, At-Large
- Doug Watts**-Secretary, Zone 3
- Fred Wallender**- Zone 2
- Gary Kiemnec**- Associate Director
- Dale Counsell**- Director Emeritus

Staff

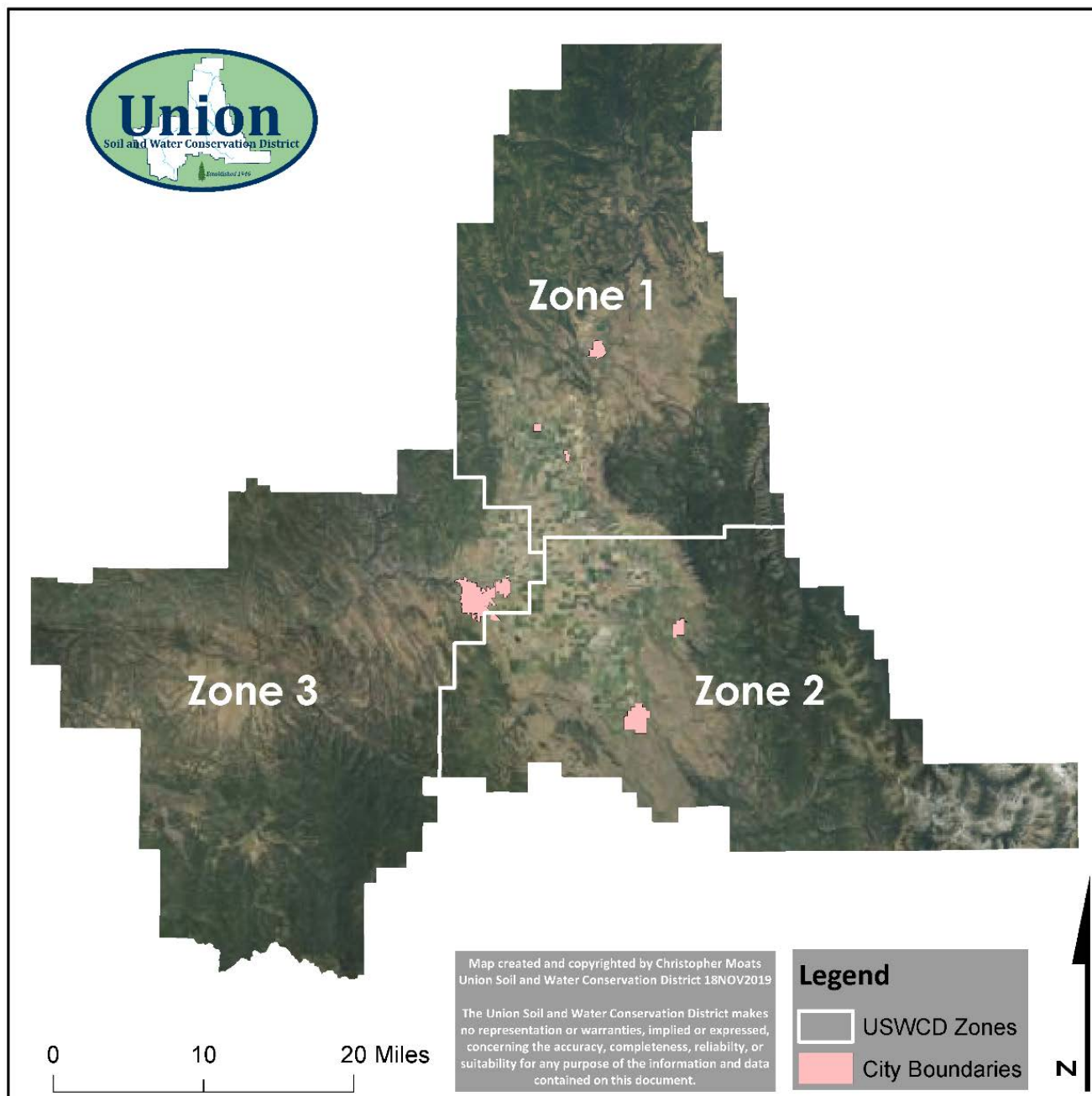
- Jim Webster**-District Manager
- Aaron Bliesner**-Project Manager
- Christopher Moats**-Conservationist
- Deric Carson**-Watershed Conservationist

Contact Us

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Phone Number: 541-963-1313



Buffalo Flats Floodplain Planning

The USWCD and Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) are working with Buffalo Peak Land & Livestock, LLC to explore ways to improve fish and wildlife habitat while maintaining a viable farming and ranching operation. The Buffalo Flats Floodplain project site is located east and adjacent to the city of Union, Oregon and includes over 300 acres of historic floodplain of Catherine Creek and Little Creek as they enter the Grande Ronde Valley. The project area is in private ownership and has been managed for farming for over a century. The Catherine Creek channel once occupied a larger portion of the valley floor with a set of complex, meandering channels within a lush riparian forest, but is now confined between State Highway 203 and the southern valley edge.

Catherine Creek supports Chinook salmon, steelhead, and bull trout populations that are listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. For Chinook salmon, 20 years of collected data indicates that spawning areas are focused in Catherine Creek from the city boundary of Union, Oregon upstream to the confluence of the North and South Forks, with the highest density of spawning within the Hall Ranch (ODFW Research). A majority of the creek surveyed upstream of Union in the 2011 was found to be in poor condition for fish because it is dominated by riffle habitat and lacking pools and cover. The lack of flow downstream of Union also limits salmon from spawning as discharge is reduced by as much as 76% for irrigation use. The Buffalo Flats project area is located in a portion of Catherine Creek deemed the most critical reach for fish habitat restoration (GRMW ATLAS Process).



Buffalo Flats Planning Area

Buffalo Flats (cont.)

In 2018 the USWCD and other conservation partners were asked to investigate opportunities to restore functional floodplain and stream channel conditions in a setting where active ranching will continue. Restoration activities in the project area would be designed to increase and improve salmonid spawning areas and summer/winter juvenile salmonid habitat conditions, but with consideration of farming and ranching operations. Restoring a more natural channel alignment with a series of meandering side channels across an active floodplain will provide a physical foundation to support a more productive meadow and improvements in fish and wildlife habitat. The addition of large woody material will improve aquatic habitat, increase instream cover, and protect floodplain surfaces where riparian vegetation can begin growing. The combination of restoration actions will be designed to specifically:

1. Improve fish habitat conditions by increasing large pools, areas of low velocity flow, and hiding cover,
2. Increase channel and habitat complexity with woody material and diverse channel forms,
3. Promote and enhance riparian and floodplain vegetation,
4. Improve irrigation delivery and efficiency,
5. Reduce damage and erosion from flooding and ice flows, and
6. Increase streambank and alluvial water storage to attenuate peakflows.

The USWCD and project partners are currently gathering information on the project site to determine the existing project opportunities and constraints. This has included communication with neighboring property owners and land managers to identify and understand the conditions. Project coordination, engineering designs, and environmental compliance will be the focus of work through at least 2021 as engineers and scientists with the BOR and other partner agencies assist the USWCD.



Buffalo Flats Planning Area

Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board Small Grants

OWEB Small Grants award up to \$15,000 per project to assist landowners with lower cost, on-farm projects that improve water quality and conserve natural resources. These projects may include spring developments, off-channel water developments, windbreaks, riparian exclusion fencing, and more. Grants require a contribution of 25% from the landowner, and can be in the form of either cash, in-kind services or materials. The USWCD can help landowners identify concerns, develop project solutions, and apply for funding. Please contact us about a project on your property.

Currently the District is working on a Spring Development and a Forest Thinning grant.



Proposed Trough Location



Proposed Thinning Area



Completed Trough



Completed Thinning

Upper Grande Ronde Initiative

Focused Investment Partnership

The Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) has developed the Focused Investment Partnership (FIP) funding opportunity to address natural resource issues of significance to the state. The Upper Grande Ronde Initiative (a partnership between the Grande Ronde Model Watershed, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, USDA Forest Service, and the USWCD) was awarded a FIP grant in 2016 to support habitat improvements for spring Chinook salmon and steelhead in the Upper Grande Ronde River Basin. The Upper Grande Ronde FIP is now entering the third and final biennium of the grant and will help this local partnership plan, develop, and implement coordinated restoration and conservation projects strategically with multi-year funding.

Outcomes for this FIP grant are intended to improve and increase habitat quantity, quality, and diversity for all life stages of spring Chinook salmon, summer steelhead, and other aquatic species in Catherine Creek and the Upper Grande Ronde River. Partners of the Upper Grande Ronde Initiative are committed to the restoration of aquatic habitat by protecting and restoring watershed processes, cold water refugia, and diverse instream and floodplain habitats. The results of this effort over the last four years have been positive and effective at meeting project goals.

The Union SWCD plays an important role in the partnership through established relationships with local landowners and agricultural producers. With knowledge of agricultural history, practices and technical programs in the basin, the USWCD strives to offer technical assistance to landowners and sponsor projects to facilitate initial project discussions, design, and implementation with partners and funding agencies. This is ultimately achieved through collaboration with landowners to develop conservation projects that have both ecological and land management merit while engaging in variety of habitat and upland restoration.

Union SWCD Partners

BOR-Bureau of Reclamation
BPA-Bonneville Power Administration
CTUIR-Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation
DEQ-Department of Environmental Quality
DSL-Department of State Lands
EPA-Environmental Protection Agency
FSA-Farm Service Agency
GRMW-Grande Ronde Model Watershed
NACD-National Association of Conservation Districts
NOAA-Fisheries-National Marine Fisheries Service

NRCS-Natural Resources Conservation Service
OACD-Oregon Association of Conservation Districts
ODA-Oregon Department of Agriculture
ODF-Oregon Department of Forestry
ODFW-Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
OSU Extension-Oregon State University Agriculture Extension Service
OTEC-Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative
OWEB-Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board

TCCWMA- Tri-County Cooperative Weed Management Area
Union County-Planning and Public Works
USACE-United States Army Corps of Engineers
USFS-United States Forest Service
USFWS-United States Fish and Wildlife Service
WRD-Water Resources Department

The District prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, age, color, national origin, gender, religion, political beliefs, disability, sexual orientation, and marital or family status. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means when working with the District should contact us.

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)



Conservation Funding for Ag Operators

Funding is now available to farmers, ranchers and forestland owners in Union County to help them save water, improve forest health and fish habitat, thanks to this watershed restoration project. The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is offering the funding under a five-year project called the **Grande Ronde Watershed Conservation Partnership**.

The Upper Grande Ronde is home to a number of federally-endangered species, including the spring Chinook salmon, summer steelhead and bull trout. NRCS and project partners are working together on instream habitat improvements.

Farmers and ranchers may receive funding to help them with projects such as:

- ▶▶ Prescribed grazing and fencing
- ▶▶ Off-channel water developments,
- ▶▶ Irrigation efficiency improvements
- ▶▶ Forest thinning and slash disposal

These types of projects will help farmers and ranchers improve the production efficiency of their farms and ranches and reduce soil erosion and run-off into streams to improve water quality.

In this fourth year of the program changes to the program include the addition of groundwater irrigation system improvements to the proposals eligible for funding and the increase of the maximum acres of forest thinning and slash disposal to 80 acres per contract.

For more information, contact USWCD at 541-963-1313 or NRCS at 541-624-3098.