



Groundwork

May / June 2026

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Splinters from the Board

April: The Board met on April 8th. They approved the March minutes and received the Treasurer's Report. An update was provided by the Wasco County Assessor on decreased tax revenue. Four District Cost Share applications were presented and all were approved, with conflicts of interest noted and managed. The Board approved several agreements supporting wildfire mitigation and weed management efforts, including a chipper lease and sub-loan agreements, an IGA with Wasco County, and an MOA with CTWS. They also authorized contracting with Northwind Aviation for aerial herbicide application in the Lower Deschutes. Updates included long-range planning, director elections, ongoing project work, as well as information from our partners.

May: The Board met on May 13th. They approved the April minutes and Treasurer's Report. Two District Cost Share applications were funded, with one tabled for the June meeting. The Board approved the updated Employee Handbook and authorized a contract with GSI for the Leon Well COBU. They also approved formation of the CWDG Roadside Fuels Advisory Group and adopted updates to the Financial Policy. Additional approvals included the Meals, Branded Materials, and Employee Recognition Policy. Updates covered the Weed Control program, long-range planning survey progress, Highline Ditch work, and ongoing grant and project implementation. Agency partners (NRCS, FSA, OSU Extension, and WyEast RC&D) provided program updates.

watershed council updates

The Fifteenmile Watershed Council has several water efficiency projects with major updates this summer. As always, the FAST program will begin in June and run for another year. Low snowpack and unseasonably low stream flows may lead to a more active FAST season than in previous years. Additionally, the recently submitted OWEB grant to fund a second round of pilot testing was recommended for funding, as was the Instream Leasing grant submitted by Washington Water Trust.

The Dalles Watershed Council held their action planning meeting in March, discussing council priorities and future projects. This, combined with a survey that was sent out to residents in Wasco County with many responses from residents of The Dalles led to a good discussion on council priorities moving forward. As always, Mill Creek E. coli monitoring will begin in June.

The Mosier Watershed Council held their action planning meeting at the end of April, identifying water and wildfire as two major areas of concern for the council. Additionally, spring well level data was presented; providing some insight on groundwater levels following the completion of the second round of Mosier Million commingling well replacements.



Featured Speakers:

Fire: **Melissa Napoli** - Wasco County Wildfire Coordinator
Water: **David Pilz** - Managing Partner Fluent Freshwater Insights

WASCO COUNTY SWCD ANNUAL MEETING

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 10TH
 BARGEWAY PUB
 3:30-5:30PM

Please RSVP by June 2nd to Dana Woods at dana.woods@wascoswcd.org or by calling 541-705-3639

DISTRICT HIGHLIGHTS:

The 2024-25 Audit and Annual Report will be presented as well as a "State of the District" showcase video.



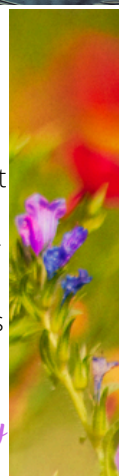
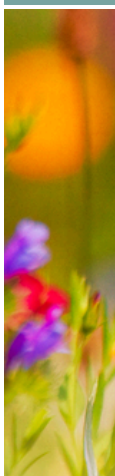
Earth Day Event

For Earth Day, the Conservation District held a tree seedling and wildflower seed give-away in partnership with North Central Public Health District and Sherman County SWCD.

Members of the public were invited to stop by their local Conservation District between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. to pick up a package of native wildflower seeds and a pine tree to plant.

All who came left with smiles on their faces.

A big "thank you!" goes to NCPHD and Lava Nursery for providing seeds and tree seedlings!



Farm Service Agency

Acres Reporting: Please remember to schedule an appointment to report your crops once they are planted.

- July 15, 2026 is the deadline to report spring planted crops, rangeland and CRP, to name a few.
- Please report any new land ownership or leases within 30 days of control to avoid any late file fees.
-

ASCF (Assistance for Specialty Crop Farmers): Updates coming soon!

SDRP (Supplemental Disaster Relief Program): Sign up began July 10, 2025, for disaster assistance to crops suffering losses in 2023 and/or 2024 from eligible weather disasters. Deadline for both Stage 1 & 2 has been extended to August 12, 2026.

County Committee Election Nominations will begin June 2026: Elections occur each year in certain Local Administrative Areas (LAA). LAAs are elective areas for FSA committees in a single county or multi-county jurisdiction.

LAA 1, North Wasco County is electing a new member to serve on the Wasco/Hood River County Committee this year. LAA 1 covers the area from the Columbia River northwest of Hwy 197 to Five Mile Rd, West to the Wasco/Hood River County line. LAA 4 encompasses the lower Hood River Valley. Please go to County Committee Elections for additional information and to download the nomination form, FSA-669A and return to FSA by August 1, 2026.

NRCS

Applications for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) are accepted on a continuous basis.

Please reach out to Emily Huth for an application. 541-705-3634 or Emily.Huth@usda.gov.

For Wasco County, priority funding areas have been identified for:

- Irrigation Upgrades for Dufur, Tygh Valley, and Juniper Flat areas
- Forest Health and fuels reduction on any non-industrial private forestland
- Rangeland Enhancement in South Wasco County
- Fish Screen replacement in the Fifteenmile Basin.

OSU Extension

Wasco & Sherman County Crop Tours - June 1 & 2 Join us for local crop tours featuring wheat variety trials, wheat liming research, drone imaging, and use of newer technologies informing fertilizer recommendations.

June 1 (Wasco): Starts 8:30 am at Dufur plots, ends with lunch at JTI (RSVP is not needed).

June 2 (Sherman): Starts at 8:30 am in Moro, ends with lunch in Wasco. Please RSVP to: <https://Bit.ly/2026FieldTour>

Sherman Field Day: June 10th from 8am - 1pm at the Sherman County Fairgrounds (Moro). Registration is required.

OWGL 100 Year Celebration: June 10th 2-6pm at Sherman Co. Fairgrounds (after Field Day), RSVP to info@owgl.org or call 541-276-7330

Public Service Announcement:

Drought is here - What can you do?

Wasco County is already seeing the signs of a severe drought year. Lower snowpack, reduced streamflows, and tightening irrigation supplies mean every drop counts—whether you're watering a backyard lawn or irrigating hay ground or orchards. Planning now can help stretch limited water further and protect your operation or landscape.

Simple steps that make a difference:

- Upgrade irrigation systems – Drip, micro-sprinklers, or improved scheduling can dramatically reduce water loss and improve efficiency.
- Avoid overwatering – Lawns and landscapes often receive more water than they need. Water early, adjust timers, and skip watering during cooler periods.
- Choose drought-tolerant plants – Native and low-water species thrive with less input and are better suited for our climate.
- Capture what you can – Rainwater harvesting with barrels or tanks can supplement outdoor watering needs.
- Think long-term with Xeriscaping – Designing landscapes around water efficiency reduces maintenance and water use year after year.

Drought conditions affect everyone differently, but proactive management can help reduce impacts. Small changes at home and smart investments on the farm, can add up to meaningful water savings across the county.

WILDFIRE PREPAREDNESS **When wildfire hits, one question matters: How fast will it spread and can we slow it down? That's where fuel breaks come in.**

Fuel breaks are managed strips of land where vegetation is reduced to interrupt fire behavior. Instead of continuous fuels carrying flames, they slow the fire, reduce intensity, and make suppression easier.

They don't usually stop wildfires, but they make a difference. Fuel breaks improve firefighter access, protect homes and infrastructure. They help "buy time". Even a short delay can mean successful evacuations or saving structures. They're also often misunderstood. Fuel breaks are not fireproof, can be crossed by wind-driven embers, and work best as part of a larger strategy, not on their own. Their effectiveness depends on location, maintenance, and active use during a fire.

Whether you manage 5 acres or 5,000, fuel breaks help create defensible space. Tools like grazing, mowing, crop selection, and landscaping can reduce fuels and slow fire movement, even in town.

Wildfire can't be eliminated - but it can be managed.

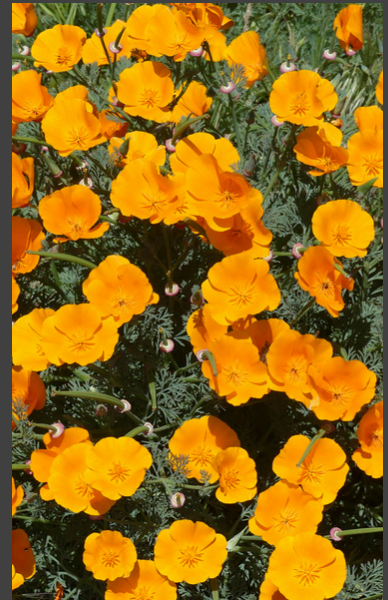
Fuel breaks are one of our most practical tools to reduce risk, protect communities, and give responders time to act.



Wildflower Talk

California Poppy *Eschscholzia californica*

California poppy is a well-known and easily recognized wildflower. It is widely used in cultivation and a common component in wildflower seed mixes. Its native status in the PNW is divided with it being considered native from the Columbia Gorge south through Oregon into California, but introduced in Washington and British Columbia. Having escaped cultivation in many areas, it is often found in disturbed sites and soils. With cultivars that come in a variety of colors, its large, flamboyant flowers are typically orange and a favorite forage for bumble bees and other native bees. Plants are annual or perennial and have seed pods that explosively release and distribute seeds.



Article by Kristin Currin at Humble Roots Nursery

SWCD Long Range Plan Survey

IT'S NOT TOO LATE
YOUR INPUT MATTERS!

The SWCD has received over 280 responses to our Long Range Plan survey, but with more than 11,000 postcards distributed countywide, we need to hear from more of you. If you still have your postcard, please take a few minutes to complete the survey—your input is critical.

Survey responses directly shape the District's Long Range Plan and guide how we prioritize natural resource concerns and invest our time and funding. We want to ensure our work reflects the real needs of Wasco County landowners and residents. Early results highlight top concerns like water supply and wildfire risk and recovery, along with emerging issues such as renewable energy impacts, urban growth, and groundwater sustainability.

Your voice matters in this process. Please scan the QR code and complete the survey today to help define the future priorities for conservation in Wasco County.



RANGLANDS LANDOWNER WORKSHOP

Wasco SWCD, in collaboration with Jefferson County SWCD, hosted a Ranchlands Workshop on May 6 at the Antelope Community Center. The event drew strong participation, with representation from more than 12 ranches, 21 landowners, and a total of 48 attendees.

Presenters included virtual fencing vendors Vence and Halter, who shared information about their technologies and applications. Jerry Ellis, field representative with Envu, provided an overview of Rejuvra, including best management practices for rangeland health and its use in creating fire fuel breaks.

Additional partners — including American Farmland Trust, OSU Extension, Sustainable Northwest, the U.S. Forest Service, Sherman County SWCD, NRCS, and Big Muddy Ranch — were also on hand to offer perspectives on these tools and highlight available funding opportunities.

Overall, it was a great turnout and a valuable opportunity for landowners to learn and connect. We look forward to hosting similar workshops in the future.



(ob)noxious weeds

Coltsfoot *Tussilago farfara*

Coltsfoot is originally native to Europe and Asia. Coltsfoot historically was used by herbalists for treating respiratory difficulties however, many experts warn that alkaloids found in the plant can be dangerous and the herb should not be used at all. In Oregon there are no known sites other than one confirmed find that was eradicated in Hood River County. Coltsfoot grows 4 to 8 inches high with bright yellow, dandelion-like flowers that appear in early spring. Leaf stems and larger lead veins are purple. It is competitive in corn fields and other vegetable crops where there are very few herbicides. It spreads by windblown seeds or by underground rhizomes, chopped and dispersed in agricultural fields by tillage equipment.

Information & photos provided by ODA: Noxious Oregon Weed Profile, and Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board



announcements & important dates

- The next regularly scheduled board meetings will be held on June 10th & July 8th, 2026 at 1:00pm at the USDA Service Center in The Dalles. The SWCD's budget hearing will be held during the June 10th meeting immediately followed by the Annual Meeting & No-Host Social at the Bargeway Pub.
- Upcoming Events: OSU Extension Wasco and Sherman County Crop Tours on June 1st and 2nd, 2026
- Office Closures: Friday June 19th, for Juneteenth, and July 3rd, in observation of Independence Day.
- SWCD updates air on KODL the first Monday each month at 10:07 AM on 1440 AM, 100.7 FM, or kodl.com.

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