



Groundwork

November / December 2025 Volume 49 Number 6

Splinters from the Board

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September: The Board approved July and August Treasurer's Reports and six District Cost Share applications, including 3 haul roads, 1 rainwater harvesting, and 1 weed treatment. The Board adopted the Paid Leave Oregon Policy for full SDAO premium discount eligibility and reviewed the FY 2023-2024 Audit. Key updates included the 15Mile Managed Underground Storage grant application, Mosier groundwater well drilling, the Fifteenmile Creek Large Wood Enhancement project, ongoing Highline Ditch Elimination progress, and the Community Wildfire Defense Grant Defensible Space project with potential extension of MCFR seasonal staff through District employment

October: The board met on October 8th, beginning with review and approval of the September meeting minutes and the Treasurer's Report. Three District Cost Share applications were approved (two haul roads and one cross-fencing project). Additional Action Items included hiring seasonal MCFR staff to continue defensible space work under the CWDG program. The FY 23-24 Audit Deficiency Plan of Action, contracting John Runyon for the PSP Study, back lot expansion, and a District Health Insurance Rate increase were also discussed and received board approval. Regular district program updates were provided; however, due to the government shutdown, only one partner update was shared from WyEast RC&D.

watershed council updates

The watershed council action planning process is well under way, with each of the councils having held their action plan kickoff meeting. The watershed council action planning process is a chance for the councils to identify and prioritize new projects and areas for future restoration implementation. Each of the five councils has unique focus areas, such as Mosier's focus on groundwater, Bakeoven's dedication to rangeland restoration and uplift, and Fifteenmile's focus on improving surface water availability for native salmonids. Other priority areas were similar across councils, such as the need to implement wildfire mitigation strategies. The councils will continue to go through the action planning process with the help of John Runyon at future meetings.

Upcoming WC Meeting Dates

Fifteenmile: December, 2025 date TBD at the Dufur Ranger Station

White River & Bakeoven / Buck Hollow: TBD

Mosier: January 27th, Mosier Grange at 6:00pm

The Dalles: January 14th, at 5:00PM at the USDA Service Center

Coordinating Board: January 14th at 3:00PM following the SWCD Board meeting, at the USDA Service Center

Annual Tree & Shrub Sale - Don't Miss Out!

Order your trees and shrubs today from our annual plant sale.

Online ordering available

Order Deadline: January 16, 2026

Pick-up Day: Saturday, March 21, 2026 | 8AM - Noon

Choose from 28 native varieties perfect for your landscape!



Farm Service Agency

The Supplemental Disaster Relief Program (SDRP)

The Supplemental Disaster Relief Program will provide assistance to producers for necessary expenses due to losses of revenue, quality or production of crops due to weather related events in 2023 and 2024.

Stage 1: Producers with indemnified losses can apply during the first stage. Stage 1 will leverage existing Federal Crop Insurance or Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) data as the basis for calculating payments.

Stage 2: Producers with non-indemnified (including shallow losses), uncovered (uninsured), and quality losses can apply for Stage 2 assistance.

Important Dates:

- July 10, 2025: Stage 1 Sign-up began
- Nov. 24, 2025: Stage 2 Sign-up starts
- April 30, 2026: Deadline to apply for Stage 1 & 2

Contact the Farm Service Agency office for any questions at 541-298-8559

Wy'East RC&D

No updates at this time. Please visit the Wy'East RC&D website for the latest news and updates <https://www.wyeast-rcd.org/>

NRCS

NRCS will have a single sign-up deadline of January 15, 2026 for all programs. If you are interested in either the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) or Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), please submit an application by this date to be considered in our next funding cycle. If you have already submitted a new application or an application is on file from last year that was not selected for funding, you do not need to submit a new form.

NRCS is awaiting guidance on FY2026 program administration and will reach out to applicants for next steps.

For any other questions contact your NRCS planner or District Conservationist, Emily Huth at 541-298-8559 ext. 111

OSU Extension

Columbia Gorge Pesticide Training, December 10th, The Dalles, 1 pm to 4 pm- Class starts at 1 pm at CGCC (400 E Scenic Dr.) in The Dalles, Building 2, third floor lecture hall. RSVP not required, contact Jacob Powell for any questions at 541-298-3581. Topics include updates on marestalk (horseweed) control & use of precision sprayers - Judit Barroso, annual grass control within a fire recovery framework - Skyler Palmer, and skeleton weed and Russian thistle control - Jacob Powell. 3 ODA pesticide credits anticipated.

Mid Columbia Wheat Meeting, December 17th, Moro, 1 pm to 4 pm - Class starts at 1 pm at the Sherman County Extension Office in Moro (66365 Lonerock Rd. Moro, OR). RSVP not required. Topics include metribuzin application to no-till fallow - Larry Lutchter, use of drones in wheat production for weed control - Jacob Powell, and annual grass control - Skyler Palmer. 3 ODA pesticide credits anticipated.

Farm Safety and First Aid - Farming is one of the most rewarding - but also one of the most dangerous professions in Oregon. In this self-paced online course, you'll gain life-saving knowledge and first aid skills tailored for the farm environment. This course is ideal for farmers, ranchers, farm employees, and anyone who works in agricultural or rural settings. Learn more about this free on demand class here: <https://beav.es/x8a>. Contact Jacob Powell at jacob.powell@oregonstate.edu or call 541-298-3581 for questions or accommodations. In person classes are also planned this winter (Jan.-Mar.) with American Red Cross Certification. Course was created with funding from USDA/NIFA under Award Number 2023-70027-40445.



OREGON
WATERSHED
ENHANCEMENT BOARD

Small Grant Program

Applications are open for OWEB's Small Grant Program! This competitive program funds quick, local restoration projects—primarily on private lands—to improve water quality, support fish and wildlife, and advance the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds.

If you would like to learn more about this funding opportunity or have a project that may be eligible contact Abbie Forrest at 541-705-3647 or visit OWEB's website at <https://www.oregon.gov/oweb/grants/small-grants/pages/small-grants.aspx>

Wildflower Talk

Black hawthorn

Crataegus douglasii

Hundreds of species of hawthorn exist worldwide, with, at last count, around 17 found in the greater Pacific Northwest. Most species growing in the PNW are native to the region, but about four are naturalized exotics. Hybridization between species and recently reported endemics makes identification and classification of this shrub to small tree difficult and worthy of more study. *C. douglasii* is the most widespread of our native hawthorns and its thorny thicket-forming habit, fruits, and ability to host and attract butterflies, moths, and beneficial insects makes it a great plant for bird habitat. Particularly useful in riparian and hedge plantings, it boasts clusters of white flowers in spring, burgundy-black fruits, and bright fall colors.

Article by Kristin Currin at Humble Roots Nursery



Community Wildfire Defense Grant (CWDG)

defensible space crew

The Wasco Co. SWCD hired four seasonal crew members from Mid-Columbia Fire and Rescue to perform defensible space work funded through the Community Wildfire Defense Grant. You may have seen this crew in Sportsman's Park, Pine Hollow, and Tygh Valley, clearing yard debris, limbing hazardous trees, and creating defensible space around homes.

Through the Survey 1, 2, 3 app, 93 homes have received defensible space assessments in coordination with Wasco County Planning and the Oregon State Fire Marshal, and 55 homes have completed the work identified during those assessments. We expect 20 additional homes to have their work finished by year's end.



Crew Members L-R: Bleu, Colby, Ian & Dakota





(ob)noxious weeds

Purple Loosestrife *Peganum harmala*

Purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*), introduced from Eurasia in the 1800s, has spread across North America and is now found in most Oregon counties. This tall, perennial plant with striking purple flower spikes was once prized as an ornamental, but its ability to form dense stands in wetlands makes it a serious ecological threat. It crowds out native plants, reduces habitat for waterfowl and songbirds, and endangers rare species.

Control Efforts

Seeds disperse easily through water and birds, allowing rapid colonization of marshes, stream banks, and pond edges. Heavy infestations have been linked to declines in bird populations and biodiversity. Fortunately, a successful biocontrol program using four insect species—two leaf beetles, a root weevil, and a seed weevil—has significantly reduced loosestrife populations in Oregon and nationwide.

STATE POSTER CONTEST WINNERS

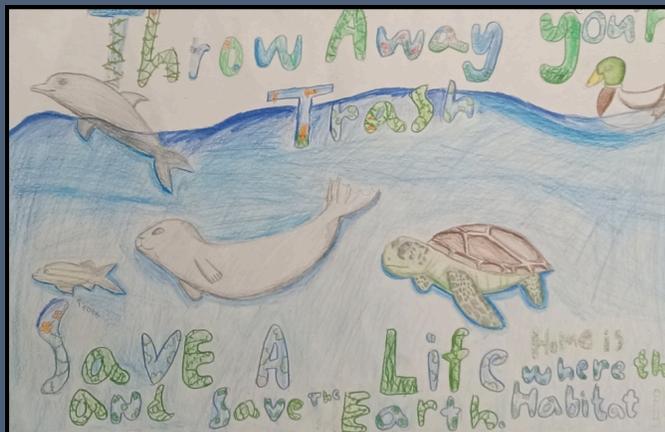
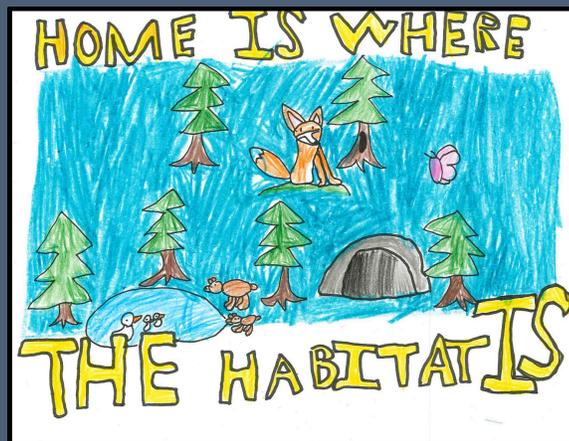
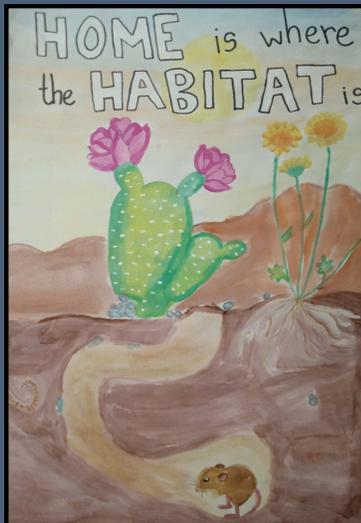
K-1: Mark Timothy Stuart, Sherman County SWCD

2-3: Sterling Jefferies, Sherman County SWCD

4-6: LILIANA SALAZAR, WASCO COUNTY SWCD

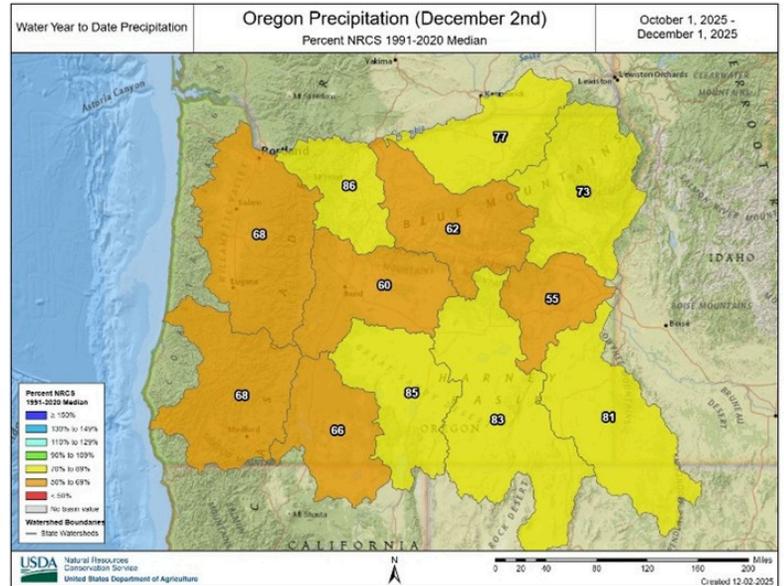
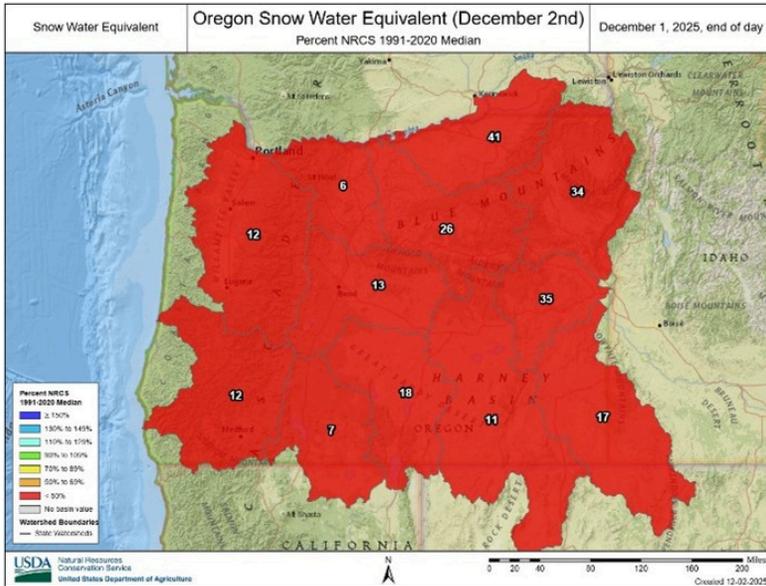
7-9: Daisy Proctor, Wasco County SWCD

10-12: Maddie Cranston, Sherman County SWCD



SNOTEL Report and Precipitation Predictions

Oregon statewide precipitation is lagging behind the 1991-2020 median so far this winter, with the Hood-Sandy-Lower Deschutes basin receiving 86% of its precipitation when compared to the median. Central Oregon and the Willamette Valley are lagging further behind, with basins in those regions receiving between 60%-70% of their median snowpack. Relatively warm temperatures up through this point in the year have also slowed snowpack accumulation, with the Hood-Sandy-Lower Deschutes basin receiving only 6% of the median value. It is important to note however that this is still very early in the snow accumulation season, and major storm impacts can drastically improve these conditions. The NOAA Climate Prediction Center shows an increased likelihood for above normal precipitation over the next 8-14 days, as well as an increased likelihood for temperatures higher than normal. That being said, for the month of December they've predicted an equal chance of above or below normal temperatures and precipitation for our region.



IMPORTANT UPDATE:

NEW USDA PHONE SYSTEM!

Our Service Center has upgraded to a new phone system!

Staff members now have **direct phone lines** and updated extensions for easier communication.

Keep an eye out for updated contact details in upcoming correspondence.

SWCD & NRCS: 541-705-3663

FSA: 541-705-3662

announcements & important dates

- The next regularly scheduled board meeting will be held on December 10th, 2025 and January 14th, at 1:00pm at the USDA Service Center in The Dalles.
- Listen for SWCD & Partner updates on the KODL Coffee Break the first Monday of each month at 10:07 AM on 1440 AM Radio, 100.7 FM or streaming online at kodl.com.
- Upcoming office closures: December 25th, Christmas, January 1st, 2026 New Years Day, and January 19th for Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- If you would like to receive this newsletter digitally please email wasco@wascoswcd.org.

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