



## 2020-2021 Annual Report

*Local people making local decisions to achieve conservation*

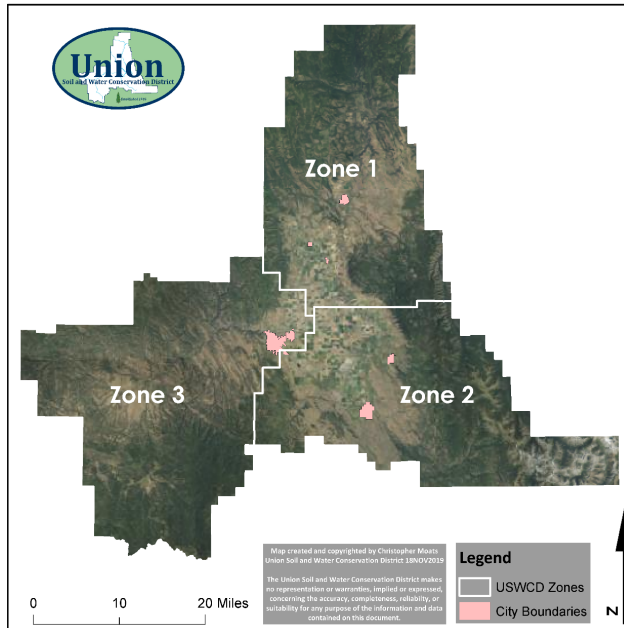
### **Our Mission**

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.



# 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 is made up of one Director from each zone and two at-large Directors.



### 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  
**Deric Carson**-Watershed Conservationist

<b>2019-2020 Union SWCD Financial Summary</b>		
	<u><b>2020</b></u>	<u><b>2021</b></u>
Cash and Investments	\$416,353	\$440,641
Capital Assets	<u>3,582</u>	<u>512</u>
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$419,935</b>	<b>\$441,153</b>
Total Liabilities	42,394	66,661
Net Position:		
Invested in Capital Assets	3,582	512
Restricted	42,394	66,661
Unrestricted	<u>331,565</u>	<u>307,319</u>
<b>Total Net Position</b>	<b>\$377,541</b>	<b>\$374,492</b>

## Manager's Corner



Growing up in Eastern Oregon, I understood and appreciated that agriculture is a primary economic and social driver influencing lifestyles and land conditions. Union County has a productive and viable agricultural community with a long history of success, which includes farming and ranching and extends to forestry and other working land management approaches. In fact, over half the private property in the County is operated as producing farms. The majority of the remaining acreage is working lands for range or forestry values. Conservation and protection of the soil and water resources supporting these lands promotes sustainable conditions for farming and ranching activities into the future.

The Union SWCD has a mission to assist the agricultural community in natural resources conservation by providing education and assistance with project development and implementation. One of my favorite birthday gifts as a young boy was a small Swiss Army knife because it was the first knife my mom would let me carry. I think she had an ulterior motive because it was also filled with tools that I could use to help her solve little problems around the house. Later I replaced this little toolkit with a new and improved multi-tool that I still carry today and is better suited for bigger projects. Similar to having that multi-tool in my pocket, the SWCD has access to a several tools to help address agricultural management issues and conserve natural resources. Our first multi-tool begins with the many partners in the Grande Ronde Subbasin that have expertise in many aspects of agricultural management and conservation. Another multi-tool is access to several funding programs to help finance the costs for improving farming infrastructure or implementing conservation projects. By collaborating with our partners and leveraging multiple funding sources, the SWCD continues to balance agricultural production with natural resources conservation.

The year of 2021 has been busy and productive for the Union SWCD. We faced many challenges with project planning and coordination, as it was the second year of navigating through changing rules and restrictions related to the pandemic. Although we are as frustrated about this situation as everyone else, our staff has stayed positive and productive. We developed ingenious ways to define remote working spaces and have become remote meeting experts. Some of the changes we made in our work methods turned out to be quite efficient and may remain as standard operating procedures in the future. We look forward to this next year with several good projects in the works as we continue to assist the agricultural community.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "James Webster". The signature is fluid and cursive.

James Webster, District Manager USWCD

# Kinsley Campground Correction Project

In 2020, the Union SWCD began consulting with a landowner on Catherine Creek to further improve fish habitat and improve flow conditions through their property. This area was part of the CC-44 Fish Habitat Restoration Project in 2016. Those project actions were successful at protecting eroding stream banks but did not create and maintain desired pool habitat. The existing armored streambed and banks did not create good habitat for fish. The SWCD worked with the landowner to develop a restoration design to create more natural fish habitat and flow conditions while protecting the floodplain and addressing the landowners concerns with bank erosion.



The Union SWCD was successful in implementing the Kinsley Campground Correction Project during the in-water work window of 2021. The project elements included:

- 12 whole conifer trees added to the upstream gravel bar encouraging deposition.
- Removal of rip-rap material and planting of riparian trees and shrubs.
- Boulders placed during the CC-44 construction were repurposed as habitat boulders.
- One large wood structure was added to redirect flow away from the right bank at the campground location and encourage pool development.
- Gravel point bar construction along an eroding vertical streambank.



# Little Creek Fish Passage Project

The lower four miles of Little Creek includes six irrigation diversion structures in and near Union, Oregon that provide water to local farms and ranches. Historic records indicate that steelhead and salmon once occupied Little Creek, but recent sampling has shown that fish access is limited by these structures. The SWCD is pursuing a strategy to improve fish passage at all six diversions while investigating opportunities to improve water delivery operations and reduce maintenance. In partnership with the Bureau of Reclamation and Grande Ronde Model Watershed the SWCD has been able to garner funding from Bonneville Power Administration and Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board to provide engineering and construction services. With this funding the most downstream diversion structure was rebuilt in 2012 and additional investigations began on the other diversion structures.



In 2020 the SWCD reinitiated an effort with the Weaver and Israel-Ames Ditch groups to design updated diversion structures and intakes that will include new fish screens and fish passage channels around both structures. Although these are the most upstream barriers in system, the SWCD took advantage of earlier assessment work to move this project toward completion faster. The new structures are being designed to improve maintenance needs and make it easier to operate. Opportunities to lower the channel bed and possibly reduce flood risks through the town of Union are also being considered. The engineering and design work will result in construction plans anticipated by late fall of 2022 and construction taking place in 2023.

# Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board Small Grants

The Union SWCD can assist landowners as a local sponsor for OWEB Small Grants. These grants award up to \$15,000 per project to small, 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 matching contribution of 25% value from the landowner that 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**

# Conservation Implementation Strategy (CIS)

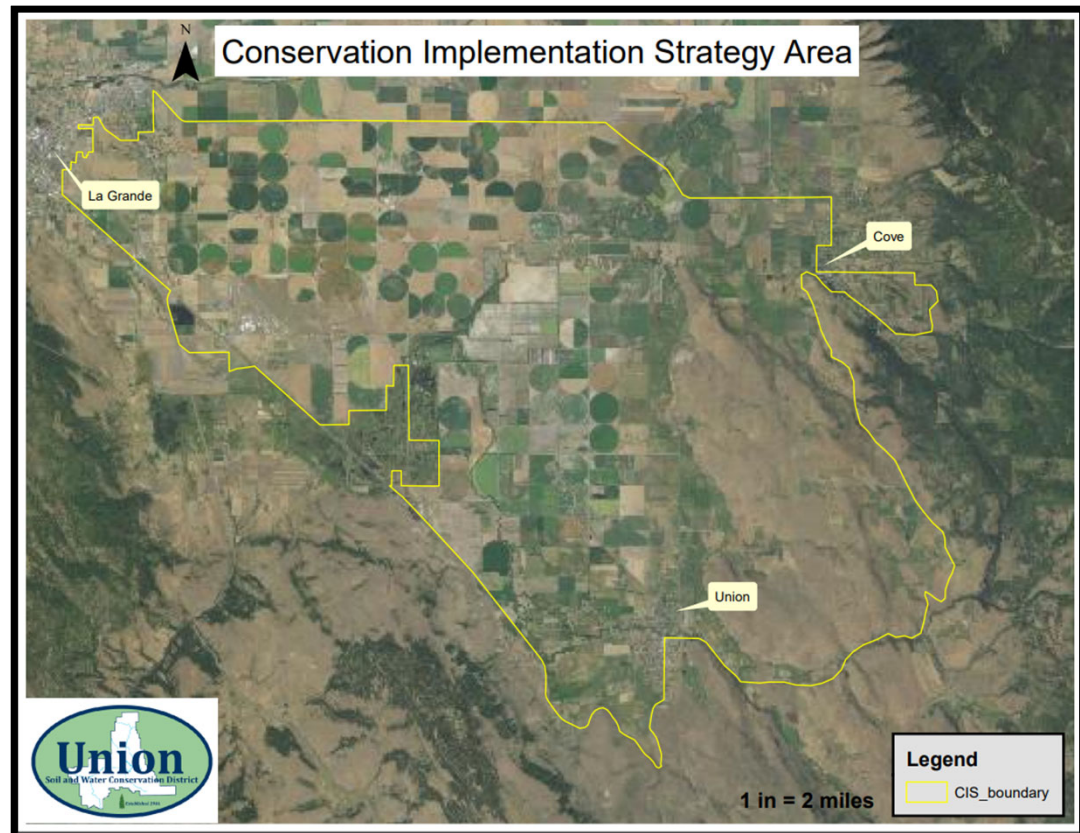
The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Oregon uses a strategic approach to conservation planning to administer Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funds. This strategic approach is a process where NRCS works with local communities, partners and landowners to determine county-level resource concerns and priorities and focuses its EQIP investments in those areas. These priorities are addressed in a local Conservation Implementation Strategy, or CIS.

## Catherine Creek Mid Elevation Irrigation Efficiency

The NRCS collaborated with the SWCD to develop a proposal for the Catherine Creek CIS area with the primary goal to improve irrigation efficiency by 20 percent on 1,300 acres that are irrigated using Catherine Creek water. A secondary goal is to reduce nonpoint source pollution to surface waters from agricultural sources through implementation of conservation plans on 5,500 acres. Landowners and agricultural operators within the boundary identified in the map below and interested in improving irrigation efficiency and water quality can contact the Union SWCD or our local NRCS office.

### Conservation Practices Offered

- Irrigation Pipeline
- Pumping Plant
- Sprinkler System
- Irrigation System, Micro irrigation
- Irrigation Water Management
- Spring Development
- Livestock Pipeline
- Watering Facility
- Fencing
- Tree/Shrub Establishment
- Prescribed Grazing
- Water Well



# Union SWCD Partners

The Union SWCD would like to thank our partners and colleagues for their assistance and support.

**BOR** – U.S. Bureau of Reclamation

**BPA** – Bonneville Power Administration

**CTUIR** – Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation

**FSA** – Farm Service Agency

**GRMW** – Grande Ronde Model Watershed

**NRCS** – USDA 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

**ODSL** – Oregon Department of State Lands

**OSU Extension** – Oregon State University

**OWEB** – Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board

**OWRD** – Oregon Water Resources Department

**TCCWMA** – Tri-County Cooperative Weed Management

**TU** – Trout Unlimited

**Union County** – Planning and Public Works

**USACE** – U.S. Army Corps. of Engineers

**USFWS** – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

**USFS** – U.S. Forest Service

## Contact Us

10507 North McAlister Road, Room 7, La Grande, OR 97850

**Website:** [www.unionswcd.org](http://www.unionswcd.org)

**Phone Number:** 541-963-1313

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.