

## **Fiscal Years 2024-2029 5 Year Strategic Plan Outline DRAFT**

### **I: Introduction**

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The purpose of the Marion Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) Five Year Strategic Plan (Plan) is to serve as a broad outline for the Marion Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) to follow when guiding its directors, employees, and partners in response to natural resource concerns, internal and external practices, and other factors that influence courses of action. This Plan has been formatted so that it performs the functions and incorporates the concepts and contents associated with both broad long-range and specific short-term strategic goals. This plan provides benefits to the District, our cooperators, constituents, and the community we serve.

The District will update what its priority waterways and soil, and invasive/native species areas; update its desired impacts and measures for success on an annual basis; continue to build promotional activities that let the community know about the work that the District is doing and how the community can participate in the Districts' programs; and to build its capacity to deliver diverse, equitable and inclusive programming. The District will also work to improve communication and collaborative work between the Board and staff.

Marion SWCD is one of Oregon's 45 conservation districts, which are defined by Oregon Revised Statutes 568.210 – 568.890 as political subdivisions of state government. Classified as tax-exempt municipal corporations, conservation districts have no regulatory authority. Districts must follow five basic requirements to remain legal and therefore eligible for funding from the Oregon Department of Agriculture: submit a 1) proposed long-range program and 2) annual work plan for review and comment and call an 3) annual meeting of district landowners to present an 4) annual report and 5) audit.

### **II: History of the District**

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Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) have their origins in the Dust Bowl of the 1930s, a disaster that began with a six-year drought but was aggravated by agricultural practices that failed to prevent wind erosion and destruction of natural topsoil. In response, Congress in 1935 established the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) within the U.S. Department of Agriculture. At first, the federal government managed the nationwide program, but it soon became apparent that the SCS needed assistance from farmers, ranchers, and other land managers who understood local conditions and priorities. In 1937, President Roosevelt asked state governors to promote legislation allowing the formation of soil conservation districts.

Oregon created its Soil Conservation Committee (now called the Soil and Water Conservation Commission) in 1939 and formed its first Soil Conservation District (South Tillamook) the following year. In Marion County, three conservation districts were organized between 1947 and 1953, with offices in Stayton, Silverton, and Mt. Angel. In 1971 the three districts consolidated to form the Marion Soil and Water Conservation District. In 2000 Marion County voters approved a permanent property tax rate of \$0.05 per \$1,000 of land assessed value for the District, enabling it to increase staffing and

expand program offerings. The county tax levy currently provides 85% of Marion SWCD's annual budget.

Marion SWCD operates in most of Marion County, which is bordered on the south by the North Santiam and Santiam Rivers, on the west and north by the Willamette River, and on much of the east by the Pudding River and Butte Creek. The County's total area is 1,193 square miles (763,520 acres), of which 1,182 square miles (756,480 acres) is land and 10 square miles (6,400 acres) is water.

The earliest known inhabitants of the area were the Kalapuya and other native peoples, who maintained the land in their traditional ways to produce foods and maintain access to wildlife. The first recorded European visitors were trappers from the Pacific Fur Company in 1812. More former trappers, French Canadians seeking to start new lives with their Indian families, and Methodist missionaries soon followed. In the 1840s, people from the eastern United States began arriving by wagon train and ship. Later immigrants included families and fortune-seekers from Ireland, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, and Russia. As these settlers displaced native people, they significantly altered the landscape through their farming practices and resource extraction.

Today, Marion County has a population of 346,719<sup>1</sup>. With its 275,483 acres of farms, 95% of which are family owned or operated, Marion County leads all other Oregon counties in agricultural production.<sup>2</sup> Immigration continues to diversify the County, such that residents of Hispanic origin now compose 29% of the population and play an important role in area agriculture.

In the decades since the Dust Bowl, Marion County landowners have improved many practices to reduce soil erosion and water pollution. However, a growing population, warming climate, and other changes have brought new challenges, such as urban encroachment on farmland, increased municipal water needs, chemical runoff to streams and rivers, more frequent and intense floods and wildfires, and more harmful invasive species. Just as the early U.S. Soil Conservation Service adjusted its strategy to develop localized solutions to soil and water problems, so has Marion SWCD forged this Strategic Plan to work more effectively with urban and rural property owners and operators, public officials, state and federal agencies, and private organizations to conserve, protect and enhance our soil, water, and related natural resources.

### **III: Vision and Role New!**

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We envision a future where natural resources are conserved, protected, and used in a manner that supports healthy habitats, resilient ecosystems, and productive working lands. From rural to urban communities, we all work together to support clean water, healthy soil, and thriving habitats. Everyone plays a role in conservation, ensuring the well-being of current and future generations.

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/marioncountyoregon/PST045222>

<sup>2</sup>[https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2022/Online\\_Resources/County\\_Profiles/Oregon/cp41047.pdf](https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2022/Online_Resources/County_Profiles/Oregon/cp41047.pdf)

## ***Our Role***

The Board of Directors and staff of the Marion Soil and Water Conservation District embrace our continued leadership role in helping people throughout our District move towards this vision.

With a strong foundation of shared commitment, partnership, and science, we promote sustainable practices and provide education and assistance to help everyone nurture the health and well-being of the land, soil, water, and habitat that are at the foundation of thriving, resilient, and sustainable natural and agricultural ecosystems.

## **IV: Mission *New!***

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***Our mission*** is to partner with people in support of thriving lands, clean water, and healthy habitats. We do this through planning, technical assistance, and education.

## **V: Values**

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- We value the interconnection of life and land.
- We value the cycle of adaptive change: planning, implementing, evaluating, and adjusting.
- We value deep and authentic collaboration: working together with a diverse range of partners to help each other accomplish more.
- We value integrity in what we say and do: when we commit, we follow through.
- We value the well-being of current and future generations: striving to improve conditions for all human and non-human residents.

## **VI: Areas of Conservation Priorities**

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Clean water</li><li>• Conserving water</li><li>• Soil health</li><li>• Healthy habitats</li><li>• Native plants and invasive species management</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Wetland and riparian areas</li><li>• Education and outreach</li><li>• Working lands</li><li>• Building conservation communities</li></ul> |
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## **VII: Goals**

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**Goal #1 Inspire Conservation:** People and communities conserve natural resources because they understand that their own wellbeing is connected to the environment.

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### **Why Inspiring Conservation Matters (Rationale):**

Conservation is most successful when people care about natural resources, value how these resources support their own well-being, and have the information and confidence

they need to take action. To reach our long-range vision, our communities need a wide range of opportunities to connect to nature and its benefits and be inspired. During this strategic plan period, we will work to better understand how our community members view natural resources; and we will tailor our messages and programs to effectively connect with a wide variety of communities and people.

**Strategy 1.1:** Get to know the District's demography better to deepen our work with all the diverse and multifaceted communities throughout the District.

- **Activity 1:** Conduct research to understand all the various communities within the District, learn how different communities and people use and relate to natural resources, and which communities our organization is serving well, which we could serve better and which additional communities we could begin to work with more
- **Activity 2:** Based on research, develop relationships with organizations to help us tailor our resources and services to engage, inspire, and support identified priority people and communities with their conservation needs and interests.
  - **Performance Measure:** Modify at least one program or service per year to better serve prioritized communities.
  - **Performance Measure:** Engage with at least 1,500 people per year at community events.

**Strategy 1.2** Help community members understand the big picture of natural resource conservation, from the benefits of streamside areas, forests, and working lands to clean water, healthy soils, clean air, and other natural amenities.

- **Activity 1:** Increase awareness of conservation issues and efforts and demonstrate effective and achievable conservation outcomes through tailored workshops and field tours.
- **Activity 2:** Celebrate the natural beauty of the District and conduct and participate in events that connect people to nature and natural areas.
  - **Task 1:** Support interpretive events and experiential learning.

**Strategy 1.3** Provide educational events, opportunities, and programs for young people that foster an awareness of conservation issues and positive conservation outcomes, while developing a sense of commitment to their community and local habitats.

- **Performance Measure:** Engage at least 500 students in educational events, opportunities, and programs per year.
- **Activity 1:** Develop, conduct and partner to implement educational activities such as Salmon Watch, Outdoor School, Envirothon, and Education Bins
- **Activity 2:** Award *Conservation Learning Education and Resource* Grants.
  - **Performance Measure:** Offer \$40,000 in education funding support in FY 24-25.

- **Activity 3:** Annually award the *Stan Visbca Scholarship* for high school students going to college to pursue a major in natural resources or other related field of study.
  - **Performance Measure:** Raise at a minimum \$9,000 in profit from the annual Native Plant and Bulb sales to fund the following year's scholarships.
- **Activity 4:** Research and develop conservation career pathways through District internships and apprenticeships.

**Strategy 1.4:** Increase awareness of the District's activities to establish the District as a go-to resource for conservation information, consultation, resources, and services, and to foster a reputation for effective and achievable conservation outcomes.

- **Activity 1:** Conduct an Annual Meeting and Annual Report to communicate transparently with the public and community leaders about our services and impacts; highlight people, communities, and their conservation work within the District.
- **Activity 2:** Encourage employees to develop their professional network, build relationships and partnerships, and expand their knowledge and skills in conservation and natural resource management.
- **Activity 3:** Manage the District's website as a hub for connecting people and communities to conservation information, resources, and services. through crafted webpages and a District blog.
  - **Performance Measure:** Increase website users by 100 users per year.
- **Activity 4:** Utilize digital and social media platforms to help build online communities, increase traffic to the District website, share information, and connect people to conservation activities, information, and resources.
  - **Performance Measure:** Increase social media followers by 50 people per year.
- **Activity 5:** Customize the District's monthly *E-News* (digital newsletter) to create engaging and relevant content that delivers focused messages and conservation news; deliver electronically to *E-News* subscribers.
  - **Performance Measure:** Increase *E-News* subscribers by 50 people per year.
- **Activity 6:** Maintain an up-to-date informational hub of conservation information and research and make it available to the public.
- **Task 1:** Conservation Club
- **Task 2:** Conservation Spotlight
- **Task 3:** First Fridays
  - **Performance Measure:** First Fridays receive at least 40 RSVPs each and at least 50 views each on YouTube channel.

**Strategy 1.5** Provide incentives and funding resources for people to achieve our mutual conservation objectives by delivering financially responsible and publicly beneficial grant programs and incentives that afford the greatest conservation outcomes possible.

- **Activity 1:** Provide incentives and grants to people, communities, and partners for the materials and services they need to achieve their conservation objectives through the District's range of conservation grant programs.
- **Activity 2:** Draft a District grant program policy manual to establish process and direction for the District's grant programs and to ensure that the District's grants are aligned with the District's mission.
- **Activity 3:** Assess District grant programs to identify inefficiencies and opportunities in the delivery of grant programs to the public. Ensuring grant funds are sustainable to maintain existing grant programs without putting future resources at risk.
- **Activity 4:** Leverage public funds by seeking additional resources through external grant programs and funding opportunities.
  - **Performance Measure:** Leverage levied tax funds received in fiscal year 2023-24 by fifteen percent (15%).
- **Activity 5:** Participate in the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board's Mid-Willamette East Small Grant Team and work within the region to administer the program and award \$100,000 in grant funds for conservation work in a biennium

**Goal #2 Healthy Soil and Clean Water:** Soil resources are healthy, productive, and are protected from erosion and deterioration. Water resources are conserved and managed to be clean and cool to support all the beneficial uses of District water resources.

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**Why Healthy Soil and Clean Water Matters:** We focus on healthy soil and clean water because these precious resources are critical to sustaining life. Healthy soils provide the foundation for our built infrastructure, they re-mineralize nutrients for use in the food web, store, and filter water, are habitat for many organisms, and are the source of most food production. If you look up "why clean water matters" online, the results are astonishing. In summary, clean water leads to vibrant ecosystems and economies. Without clean water we cannot achieve the well-being of current or future generations. Healthy soil and clean water go hand in hand.

**Strategy 2.1** Work with people to strengthen their knowledge and capacity to control soil erosion and implement soil health practices to protect, enhance, and restore the biological function, water infiltration and storage, and physical capabilities of soil resources.



- **Activity 1:** Provide technical assistance and resources to assist producers with supporting soil food webs, increasing soil stabilization, and improving soil health.
  - **Task 1:** Make funds available for the implementation of these activities through the *Cover Crop Assistance Grant*.
    - **Performance Measure:** Offer \$45,000 in cover crop funding support in FY 24-25.
  - **Task 2:** Assist people in accessing information and resources for carbon sequestration through organic matter on working lands.
- **Activity 2:** Conduct and participate in outreach events to promote soil health principles.

**Strategy 2.2** Work with people to strengthen their knowledge and capacity to conserve water resources and protect water quality as a foundation for healthy habitats, productive working lands, and clean and accessible water supplies for all people now and into the future.

- **Activity 1:** Seek opportunities to partner with other local waterkeepers to help secure our water future, to understand current and future water supply, and to develop water plans (e.g., drought contingency plan, water management and conservation plan, etc.).
- **Activity 2:** Provide conservation planning and technical assistance related to the conservation of water resources and the protection of water quality through one-on-one consultations, working with communities and partners and conducting public outreach.
  - **Task 1:** Make funds available for the implementation of these activities through the *Conservation Assistance Grant* Program.
  - **Task 2:** Provide information and resources for the efficient use of irrigation water.
- **Activity 3:** Inform and connect people to streamside areas and wetlands and how they reflect the essential nexus between land conservation, the conservation of water, and the protection of water quality.
  - **Task 1:** Connect people to the *Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program* that works to address high-priority conservation issues such as impacts to water supplies, loss of critical habitat for threatened and endangered wildlife species, soil erosion, and reduced habitat for fish populations such as salmon.
- **Activity 4:** Provide technical assistance, educational opportunities, and resources on ways to improve stormwater management.
  - **Task 1:** Work with the Mid-Willamette Stormwater Outreach Group to conduct the annual Erosion Control and Stormwater Management Summit.

- **Activity 5:** Develop, promote, and conduct multi-media products, events or activities that work to increase awareness related to the conservation of water resources and the protection of water quality.
- **Activity 6:** Award *Special Projects Grants* to support projects that provide examples of practices, if widely adopted, could solve a local area resource concern through either new and innovative technologies or proven but under-represented technologies.
  - **Performance Measure:** Offer \$20,000 in special projects funding support per year.

**Strategy 2.3** Continue to work directly with the agricultural community to voluntarily implement practices that prevent and control water pollution from agricultural activities and soil erosion on agricultural and rural lands and to achieve and maintain water quality standards.

- **Activity 1:** Implement the Oregon Department of Agriculture's Molalla (FP-NS-PR) Agricultural Water Quality Management Area Workplan (Plan).
  - **Task 1:** Conduct outreach, provide technical assistance, build partnerships, and assist with biennial review of Plan.
  - **Task 2:** Lead the Headwaters of the Pudding River Focus Area Action Plan (FAAP), complete a pre-and post-assessment and analysis on bare ground, conduct focused outreach and provide technical assistance to implement conservation practices to prevent and control soil erosion.
    - **Performance Measure:** Outlined in FAAP.
- **Activity 2:** Lead the Howell Prairie Strategic Implementation Area (SIA) project.
  - **Task 1:** Conduct focused outreach and provide technical assistance to implement conservation practices that prevent and control soil erosion and protect water quality.
    - **Performance Measure:** Outlined in SIA Grant Agreement.
- **Activity 3:** Lead the Howell Prairie SIA Monitoring Project
  - **Task 1:** Seasonal water sampling and analysis for Total Suspended Solids in Howell Prairie Creek.
  - **Task 2:** Implement strategic outreach regarding soil health and the prevention and control of soil erosion from agricultural activities.
    - **Performance Measure:** Outlined in SIA Monitoring Plan.
- **Activity 4:** Lead the Pesticide Stewardship Partnership in Marion County.
  - **Task 1:** Seasonal water sampling and analysis for pesticides in Pudding River Sub-basin and Mill Creek.
  - **Task 2:** Implement strategic outreach regarding the responsible use of pesticides and fertilizers.
    - **Performance Measure:** Outlined in PSP Strategic Plan.



- **Activity 5:** Implement the Agricultural Conservation Education (ACE) – Manure Managed Project.
  - **Task 1:** Conduct outreach and education to youth and adults regarding the management of mud and manure in livestock management.

**Goal #3 Healthy Habitats:** Healthy, connected, and diverse habitats support humans and wildlife of all kinds.

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### **Why Healthy Habitats Matter:**

Wildlife conservation promotes the sustainable management of natural resources. By preserving habitats and encouraging the responsible use of resources, conservation efforts help ensure that ecosystems remain productive and capable of supporting both wildlife and human populations. In turn, this ensures that the resources continue to be available for future generations. Wildlife conservation efforts focused on protecting vulnerable species and preserving their habitats can help ensure their survival and maintain ecosystem balance. This, in turn, benefits humans by safeguarding the essential ecosystem services that these species provide. Furthermore, protecting diverse plant and animal species enhances the overall resilience and adaptability of ecosystems, resulting in reduced vulnerability to the impacts of natural disasters and species extinction.

**Strategy 3.1** Continue to work with people from working lands to urban and rural lands to strengthen their knowledge and capacity to create and support healthy habitats for wildlife of all kinds.

- **Activity 1:** Provide technical assistance related to the conservation of healthy habitats through one-on-one consultations, public outreach, and working with partners, and communities.
- **Activity 2:** Make funds available for the implementation of these activities through the *Conservation Assistance Grant* Program.
- **Activity 3:** Implement the '*Litt@Habitat Project*' to foster community involvement in creating wildlife corridors in urban and suburban areas.
  - **Performance Measure:** Enroll 100 new participants in the program every year and certify 75 sites per year.
- **Activity 4:** Provide education and outreach related to the conservation of healthy habitats through developing, promoting, and conducting multi-media products, events and activities related to the conservation of healthy habitats.
- **Activity 5:** Award *Special Projects Grants* to support projects that provide examples of practices, if widely adopted, could solve a local area resource concern through either new and innovative technologies or proven but under-represented technologies.
  - **Performance Measure:** Offer \$20,000 in special projects funding support per year.

- **Activity 6:** Develop an oak woodland and savannah habitat conservation program plan that describes how the District will collaborate with people, organizations, and rural communities to connect and conserve declining oak woodlands and savannah habitats.
- **Activity 7:** Support greenscaping across urban and suburban regions and establish a model project at the district office.
  - **Task 1:** Redesign the district's grounds and introduce climate-resilient and ecologically friendly planting schemes as a model project. This will serve as an educational resource for others to learn how to create healthy habitats that support both people and wildlife in urban settings
  - Task 2:** Collaborate with cities, partners, and the community to support green-scaping projects that support people and wildlife species in urban areas. This can be achieved by offering technical assistance, educational opportunities, and financial support.

**Strategy 3.2** Work with people to restore and conserve the diversity and resilience of native plants.

- **Activity 1:** Conduct the *Annual Native Plant and Bulb Sale* to provide access to an affordable and diverse selection of native plants.
- **Activity 2:** Share methods and resources for people to learn about and manage native and invasive plants
- **Activity 3:** Reduce the presence and impact of invasive species through collaborative detection, containment, prevention, and management of infestations.
  - **Task 1:** Monitor and track changes in invasive species populations, by means of GIS and partnership communications.
  - **Task 2:** Partner with the communities and organizations to help con

**Goal #4 Productive Working Lands:** Farms, ranches, woodlands, and other working lands sustain healthy human and natural habitats while supporting regional food and fiber systems for current and future generations.

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#### **Why Working Lands Matter: urban working lands**

Working lands incorporate farms, forests, gardens, and ranches. They produce much-needed food and fiber while sustaining local economies. When well managed they also provide many conservation benefits, including clean water, wildlife habitat, and ecological diversity. These benefits often extend beyond property lines, serving the interests of both landowners and the public. -

**Strategy 4.1** Conservation planning is an important aspect of our work. We will work with people to strengthen their knowledge and capacity to locally lead and voluntarily conserve the productivity of working lands that contribute to resilient thriving communities.

- **Activity 1:** Provide conservation planning and technical assistance related to the conservation of healthy habitats, productive working lands, and establishing resilient thriving communities through one-on-one consultations, public outreach, and working with partners, and agricultural communities.
- **Activity 2:** Make materials and services available for the implementation of these activities through the *Conservation Assistance Grant* Program.
- **Activity 3:** Develop, promote, and conduct multi-media products, events and activities that work to increase awareness related to conservation on working lands.
- **Activity 4:** Conduct outreach to address air quality concerns from agricultural and backyard burning.
- **Activity 5:** Conduct outreach to provide information on how to increase on-farm renewable energy.
- **Activity 6:** Conduct outreach to provide information on how to improve energy efficiency

**Strategy 4.2** Work with people and communities to prepare for natural disasters, minimize loss of property, and allow for a more rapid and efficient recovery.

- **Activity 1:** Create a plan that outlines how the District will work with people and communities to implement conservation practices that result in ecosystems that are more resilient to the hazards and impacts of catastrophic natural events and how to distribute District resources equitably and promptly during times of emergency response.
- **Activity 2:** Partner with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Sustainable Northwest, and other local partners to administer \$1.5 million in recovery funds awarded through the Western Oregon Cascadia Recovery Effort 2020 Labor Day Wildfire Regional Conservation Partnership Program.
- **Activity 3:** Expand employee skills related to climate resiliency and extreme weather-related events and how to adapt the District's strategies over time to address conservation impacts.
- **Activity 4:** Share resources and spread awareness about catastrophic events through education, outreach, and technical assistance."
  - **Performance Measure:** Engage in at least one outreach event or workshop per year focused on catastrophic events preparedness and recovery.

**Strategy 4.3** Support local food systems. Connect producers and consumers to develop more self-reliant and resilient food networks.

- **Activity 1:** Build meaningful relationships and partnerships with food systems networks at all scales to highlight conservation in food production such as participating with local farmers markets.
- **Activity 2:** Support events and outreach opportunities for successional planning to support new farmers and maintain the many benefits of working lands.
  - **Task 1** Explore the District as a potential sponsor for conservation easements for the potential preservation of conservation on working lands.
- **Activity 3:** Conduct tours that demonstrate successful conservation projects on working lands; promote tour opportunities to rural and urban communities.
- **Activity 4:** Provide technical assistance and resources to support school, home, and community urban gardens.

**Goal #5 Effective Partnerships:** The District is engaging in strategic partnerships to collaborate effectively, align priorities, pool resources, and leverage respective strengths creating a synergy that is leading to enhanced productivity, innovation, overall performance, and impact on conservation.

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**Why Partnerships Matter:** As a public-funded agency, Marion SWCD has a responsibility to deliver services efficiently and effectively. When we cultivate relationships, we gain understanding that enables us to be more effective in achieving our goals. As we collaborate, we become less siloed and more integrated with the communities we serve. Working together, all partners accomplish more. Each organization has a particular niche that, when combined, creates a synergy that allows us to do more together than we could ever attain on our own.

**Strategy 5.1** Connect the conservation community by strengthening partnerships and building key relationships with other public and private resource conservation associations, groups, and organizations to further our shared goals and resources.

- **Activity 1:** Call together partners to align conservation priorities and share knowledge, resources, and services to effectively accomplish conservation work in our District.
- **Activity 2:** Develop and deepen new, mutually beneficial relationships with groups to help us extend our reach.

**Strategy 5.2:** Invest in partner efforts that are working toward similar strategies and the District's long-term vision and mission.

- **Activity 1:** Offer *Partner Grants* to provide an opportunity for eligible entities to promote and implement the District's mission..
- **Activity 2:** Designate a watershed council liaison to attend council meetings and share information and updates.

**Goal #6 Strong Organizational Health:** Marion SWCD is a great place to work and volunteer, and a responsible steward of public funds.

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**Why Organizational Health Matters:**

Organizational health is the ability to align around a common vision, fulfil a mission to effectively meet the vision, and renew itself through innovation and creative thinking. Organizational health determines a company's ability to develop, communicate, and follow a common business strategy by maintaining a highly engaged workforce. Organizational health is not only how the District's teams work towards a common goal, but also how they can cope with organizational change.

**Strategy 6.1** Support and foster an effective Board of Directors.

- **Performance Measure:** Achieve a full seven-member Board of Directors.
- **Activity 1:** Ensure governance and compliance expectations are met.
- **Activity 2:** Complete annual ethics law training for Directors, employees, and volunteers.
- **Activity 3:** Provide Director election information and notify the public on election years of the opportunity to serve on the Board of Directors.
- **Activity 4:** Maintain good ongoing communication between employees and members of the Board of Directors.

**Strategy 6.2** Optimize job security and employee stability.

- **Performance Measure:** Increase average annual tenure rate from 5.3 years to 6.3 years.
- **Activity 1:** Update the SAP annually annual Salary Administration Plan to establish competitive and equitable pay rates and benefits to all employees.
- **Activity 2:** Align employees benefits and create an employee benefits plan that is relevant to employee demographics, developed with employee feedback, is data-driven, allows for flexibility, and is communicated clearly for full advantage of benefits.
  - **Performance Measure:** Create one Employee Benefits Plan by May 2025.
- **Activity 3:** Assist employees in charting their own flexible paths for growth, continuous learning, and career advancement.
  - **Performance Measure:** Each employee commits at least five percent [5%] of annual work hours for professional growth.

- **Activity 4:** Foster a work environment where people feel encouraged, respected, supported, and valued.
  - **Task 1:** Conduct annual employee Performance Evaluations.
  - **Task 2:** Assign annual training regarding professional conduct.
  - **Task 3:** Make available employee and volunteer recognition opportunities that acknowledges hard work, achievements, and efforts.
  - **Task 4:** Conduct weekly staff meetings to engage all employees in District work, process discussions, and bringing about innovation and latest ideas to programs and services.
  - **Task 5:** Management conducts monthly and quarterly check-in meetings with each employee to establish a constructive culture where employees can voice their opinions on internal or customer-facing processes.
  - **Task 6:** Conduct four quarterly in-person team meetings where employees develop a three-hour agenda to cultivate cross-functional collaboration, workplace community, positive culture, and bring innovation and ideas to the team.
  - **Task 7:** Hold two employee retreats.

**Strategy 6.3** Optimize administrative functions, reduce risk, and deliver operational stability.

- **Activity 1:** Conduct a risk assessment to identify critical business functions, potential SWOT internal and external threats to and weaknesses of District operations, delineate existing preventive measures, develop procedures and protocols to reduce risk, and identify the location of critical data and assets.
- **Activity 2:** Develop an Operational Manual that describes the District's operational procedures and processes to ensure efficiency, continuity of procedures, compliance, and successional direction.
- **Activity 3:** Review all District policies to date and abolish or update superannuated policies, identify policy liabilities, and prioritize policy work.
- **Activity 4:** Revise the District's Records Retention policy to establish and describe how District employees are expected to manage District data from creation to destruction that meets or exceeds Oregon State records retention scheduling.
- **Activity 5:** Make health and safety activities an integral part of the organization's operating procedures, culture, and programs by conducting quarterly safety meetings, providing safe fleet vehicles and equipment, and annually updating and distributing the Safety Handbook.
  - **Performance Measure:** Zero safety incidences in FY 24-25
- **Activity 6:** Research and develop a digital transformation strategy to leverage technology for use in workflow automation, access to real-time data and



information, to optimize, mitigate and analyze risk, and improve operational efficiency.

- **Activity 7:** Assign annual training to all employees regarding workplace safety, workplace harassment, defensive driving, wildfire smoke safety, and other applicable training.
- **Activity 8:** Maintain a safe and functional work facility through routine building maintenance and upkeep.
- **Activity 9:** Annually (January) review the District's Strategic Plan and adapt strategies and activities as needed.
- **Activity 10:** Set science-based program targets and regularly evaluate our services to ensure we are meeting goals and using public resources responsibly.

**Strategy 6.4** Demonstrate strong fiscal management of capital.

- **Activity 1:** Develop a 5-year strategic budget for FYs 2024-2029 that aligns with the District's FY 2024-2029 Strategic Plan to ensure the District's mission is unified with financial decisions.
  - **Performance Measure:** One Strategic Budget for FYs 2024-2029 by March 2025.
- **Activity 2:** Ensure all financial systems, functions, and controls meet audit standards and are consistently performed.
  - **Performance Measure:** Fiscal year 2023-2024 audit meets state standards.
- **Activity 3:** Draft financial processes and procedures and include them in the District's Operational Manual. Update as often as needed.
  - **Task 1:** Draft cash, check, and credit card management procedures, banking and fraud protection guidelines, and bookkeeping processes and procedures. Include in the District's Operational Manual and Personnel Policy Manual.
  - **Task 2:** Automate financial and accounts payable tasks for consistency and timely payments of District financial commitments.
  - **Task 3:** Ensure local sourcing of materials, services, and supplies as much as possible.
- **Activity 4:** Assess which sustainability issues are most important to the District, identify priority actions toward a more sustainable business, and implement actions.