



Strategic Plan

2024-
2029



STRATEGIC PLAN 2024-2029

Approved July 10, 2024

The Marion Soil and Water Conservation District 2024-2029 Strategic Plan Aligned with FY 2024-25 Annual Activities was created from a collaboration of the Marion SWCD Board of Directors, Associate Directors, partners, staff, and with guidance from Amy Stork Consulting. The District sincerely thanks all who engaged in the process of developing the plan.

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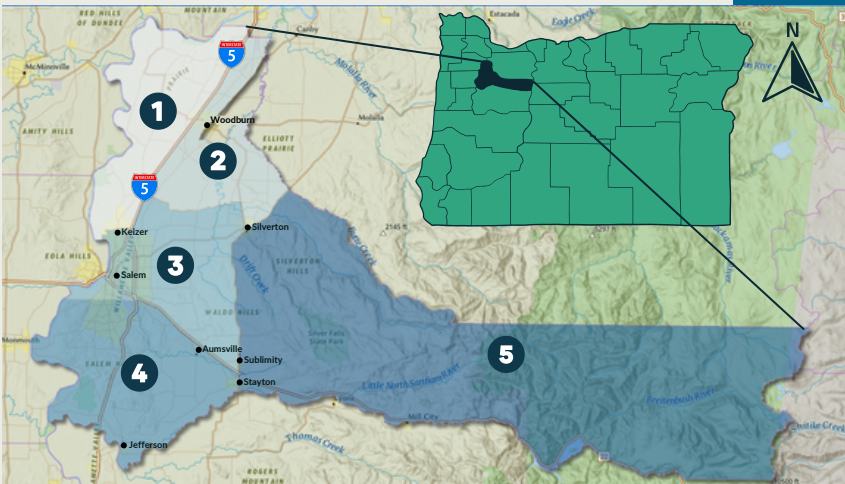
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FACILITATION

Amy Stork Consulting

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Map of Marion SWCD Boundaries and Zones.

VISION AND MISSION



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.

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.

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.

VALUES



We value...

- 1** The interconnection of life and land.
- 2** The cycle of adaptive change: planning, implementing, evaluating, and adjusting.
- 3** Deep and authentic collaboration: working together with a diverse range of partners to help each other accomplish more.
- 4** Integrity in what we say and do: when we commit, we follow through.
- 5** The well-being of current and future generations: striving to improve conditions for all human and non-human residents.

“To me it is about the needs of the community. We don't do conservation. We assist others. We can give advice to people, but it is the community deciding what their needs are so that can help us prioritize.”

--Staff Member



GOALS

for the next five years

1 Inspire Conservation

People and communities conserve natural resources because they understand that their own wellbeing is connected to the environment.

2 Healthy Soil and Clean Water

Soil resources are healthy, productive, and protected from erosion and deterioration. Water resources are conserved and managed to be clean and cool to support all beneficial uses.

3 Healthy Habitats

Healthy, connected, and diverse habitats support humans and wildlife of all kinds.

“The SWCD’s sweet spot is the intersection of people and place. It’s less on-the-ground restoration and conservation, vs. working with people to get the resources and information they need to do the work.”

--Staff Member



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.

5 Effective Partnerships

The District engages in strategic partnerships to align priorities, pool resources, and leverage strengths, creating a synergy that leads to innovation, enhanced productivity, strong performance, and lasting conservation impact.

6 Strong Organizational Health

Marion SWCD is a great place to work and volunteer and a responsible steward of public funds.

“The history of the SWCDs is a distinctive legacy of stewardship approaching 100 years. The quality of nature and healthy food is really in the hands of the people making these [stewardship] decisions, and the information they have and the options they learn about.” --MSWCD Partner

Shared Waters

07

The North Santiam River





GOAL INSPIRE CONSERVATION

#1

People and communities conserve natural resources because they understand that their own well-being is connected to the environment.



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

Familiarity with the demography will allow us to deepen our work with all the diverse and multifaceted communities throughout the District.

Strategy 1.2 | Help community members understand the big picture of conservation better.

Natural resource conservation ranges from the benefits of streamside areas, forests, and working lands to clean water, healthy soils, clean air, and other natural amenities.

Strategy 1.3 | Provide educational events, opportunities, and programs for young people.

Events will foster an awareness of conservation issues and positive conservation outcomes, while developing a sense of commitment to their community and local habitats.

Strategy 1.4 | Increase awareness of the District.

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.

Strategy 1.5 | Provide incentives and funding resources.

To help people successfully achieve our mutual conservation objectives, we will deliver financially responsible and publicly beneficial grant programs and incentives that afford the greatest conservation outcomes possible.

"Change only happens when people buy in...I think in the long-term education is the most important thing, the way the greatest impact can occur over the longest period of time." --Board Member

GOAL HEALTHY SOIL & CLEAN WATER

#2

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 their beneficial uses.



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 soil knowledge and capacity.

Increase residents’ 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.

Strategy 2.2 | Work with people to strengthen their water knowledge and capacity.

Increase residents' 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.

Strategy 2.3 | Continue to work directly with the agricultural community.

Facilitate voluntarily implementation of practices that prevent and control water pollution from agricultural activities and soil erosion on agricultural and rural lands; achievement and maintenance of water quality standards.

“Water quality is still [the] number one resource concern, and water quantity, and erosion is the third.” --MSWCD Partner



Conservation cover

Our Farmland

Hazelnut orchard





GOAL HEALTHY HABITATS

#3

Healthy, connected, and diverse habitats support humans and wildlife of all kinds.



The benefits that healthy habitats provide are known as ecosystem services that support our day-to-day lives. Healthy habitats help keep our drinking water clean, protect us from storms and flooding, and support resilient working, rural, and urban lands. Healthy habitats maintain biodiversity, regulate the climate, and support human well-being through economic benefits and cultural significance. With a fair amount of evidence, there are tangible, verified, and lasting connections between human health and healthy habitats. We depend on them as food supplies, pest control, pollinators, medicine, genetic resources, and appreciating natural areas and the habitats that depend on them.

Strategy 3.1 | Work with people to strengthen their habitat knowledge and capacity.

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 with particular emphasis on riparian, wetland, and oak woodlands and savannahs.

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

Conduct annual native plant sales, share resources for learning about native and invasive plants, and reduce the presence of invasive species.

“My top four priorities would be making a positive impact on soil, water, wildlife, and our community. For urban areas, ag, and natural areas.” --Staff Member



Oak habitat at Heritage Seedlings.

GOAL PRODUCTIVE WORKING LANDS

#4

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.



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 | Work with people to strengthen their knowledge and capacity for working lands conservation.

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.

Strategy 4.2 | Work with people and communities to prepare for natural disasters.

We will work with the people of Marion County to prepare for natural disasters, minimize loss of property, and allow for a more rapid and efficient recovery.

Strategy 4.3 | Support local food systems.

We will connect producers and consumers to develop more self-reliant and resilient food networks.

“Most farmers want to be good stewards; many have a tie to the land and want to preserve it for generations...Where we can help is expertise to implement the process and helping them through the grants programs.” --Board member

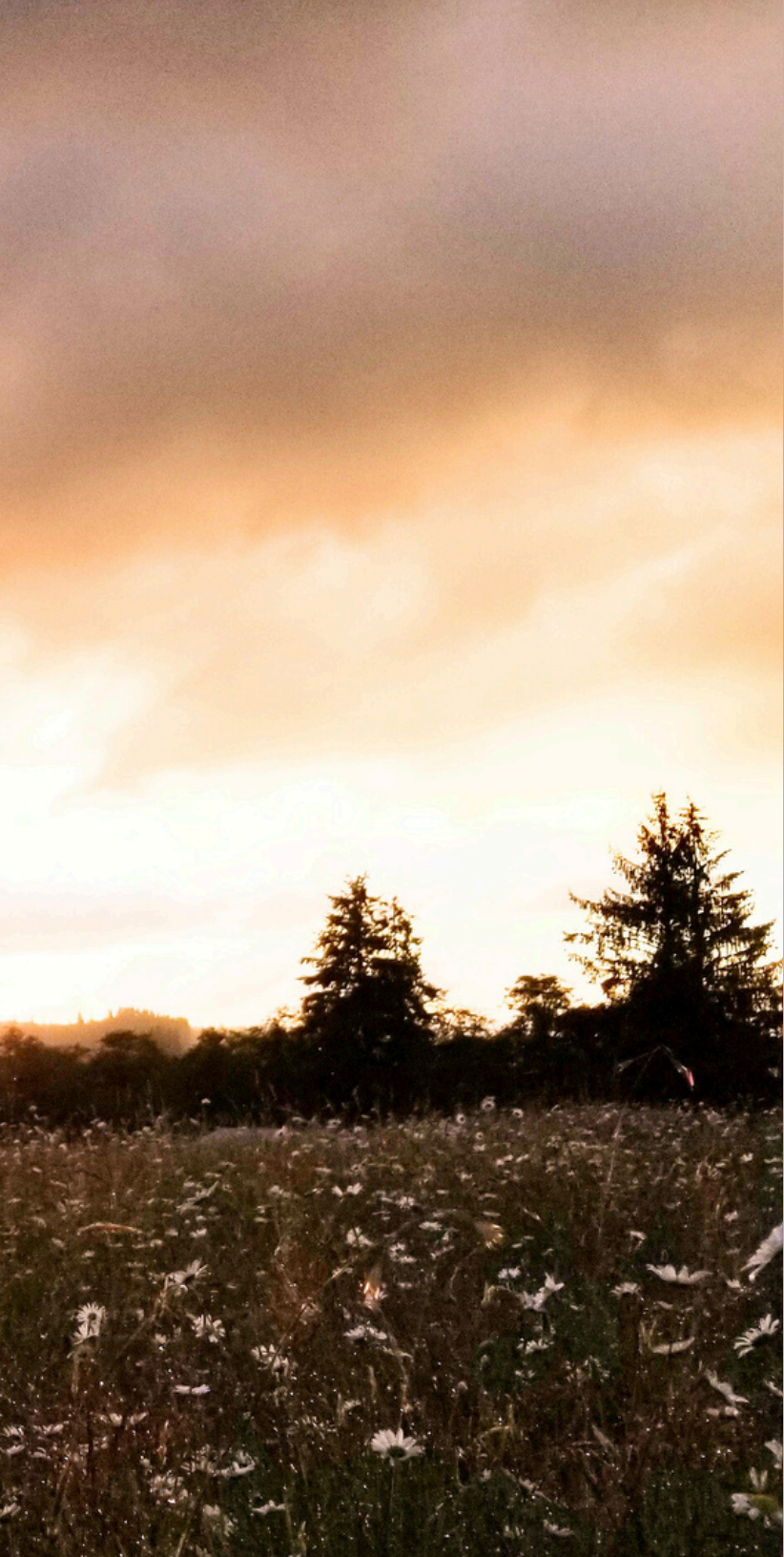


Covered multi-bin compost facility.



Healthy Pasture

Willamette Valley



GOAL EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS

#5

The District is engaging in strategic partnerships to align priorities, pool resources, and leverage respective strengths creating a synergy that is leading to enhanced productivity, innovation, overall performance, and impact on conservation.



Staff from MSWCD, NRCS, City of Keizer, and a Master Naturalist volunteer partner at Keizer Rapids Park for Salem Outdoor School.

As a publicly-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 relationships.

We will strengthen partnerships and build key relationships with other public and private resource conservation associations, groups, and organizations to further our shared goals and resources.

Strategy 5.2 | Invest in partner efforts.

We will invest in the efforts of partners who are working toward similar strategies and the District's long-term vision and mission, by providing Partner Grants and watershed council liaisons.

“They (Marion SWCD) are great at making partnerships. We have a whole group and multiple different groups of agencies that meet on a regular basis.” --MSWCD Partner



Partners from government agencies and nonprofits convene to tour County properties affected by the 2020 wildfires.

GOAL STRONG ORGANIZATIONAL HEALTH

#6

Marion SWCD is a great place to work and volunteer, and a responsible steward of public funds.



Organizational health is the ability to align around a common vision, fulfill 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.

"Things are getting done and done well." --Board member

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

An effective Board will meet governance and compliance expectations and complete ethics law trainings annually. Ongoing communications are critical: the public will be notified of Director elections and Director-employee communications will be maintained.

Strategy 6.2 | Optimize job security and employee stability.

From benefits to professional development, we will foster a work environment where people feel encouraged, respected, supported, and valued.

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

Highlights of this strategy include: conducting a risk assessment, developing an operational manual, reviewing and prioritizing policy work, revising the records retention policy, and evaluating our services to ensure we are meeting our goals.

Strategy 6.4 | Demonstrate strong fiscal management.

We will develop a 5-year strategic budget to manage our capital. We will consistently meet audit standards, and draft financial procedures to include with the Operational Manual.



District Manager and Financial Administrator process Native Plant Sale purchases.

FY 2024-2025

PROGRAMS, PROJECTS, & SERVICES

EDUCATION & OUTREACH

- CLEAR Grants
- Community Events
- Conservation Club
- Conservation Spotlight
- District Communications
- First Fridays
- Marketing
- Program Bin Loans
- Salmon Watch Field Trips
- Stan Vistica Scholarships
- Volunteer Program

NATURAL RESOURCES

- Agricultural Water Quality & Focus Area
- City of Salem Knotweed Control
- Conservation Assistance Grants
- Agriculture Conservation Education (ACE)
- Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)
- Cover Crop Assistance Program
- Invasive Plant Survey and Treatment
- Little Habitat Project Program
- Native Plant Sales
- Partner Grants
- Pesticide Stewardship Partnership
- Special Projects Grants
- Strategic Implementation Area
- Technical Assistance and Planning Services
- Watershed Council Liaison
- OWEB Small Grant Team

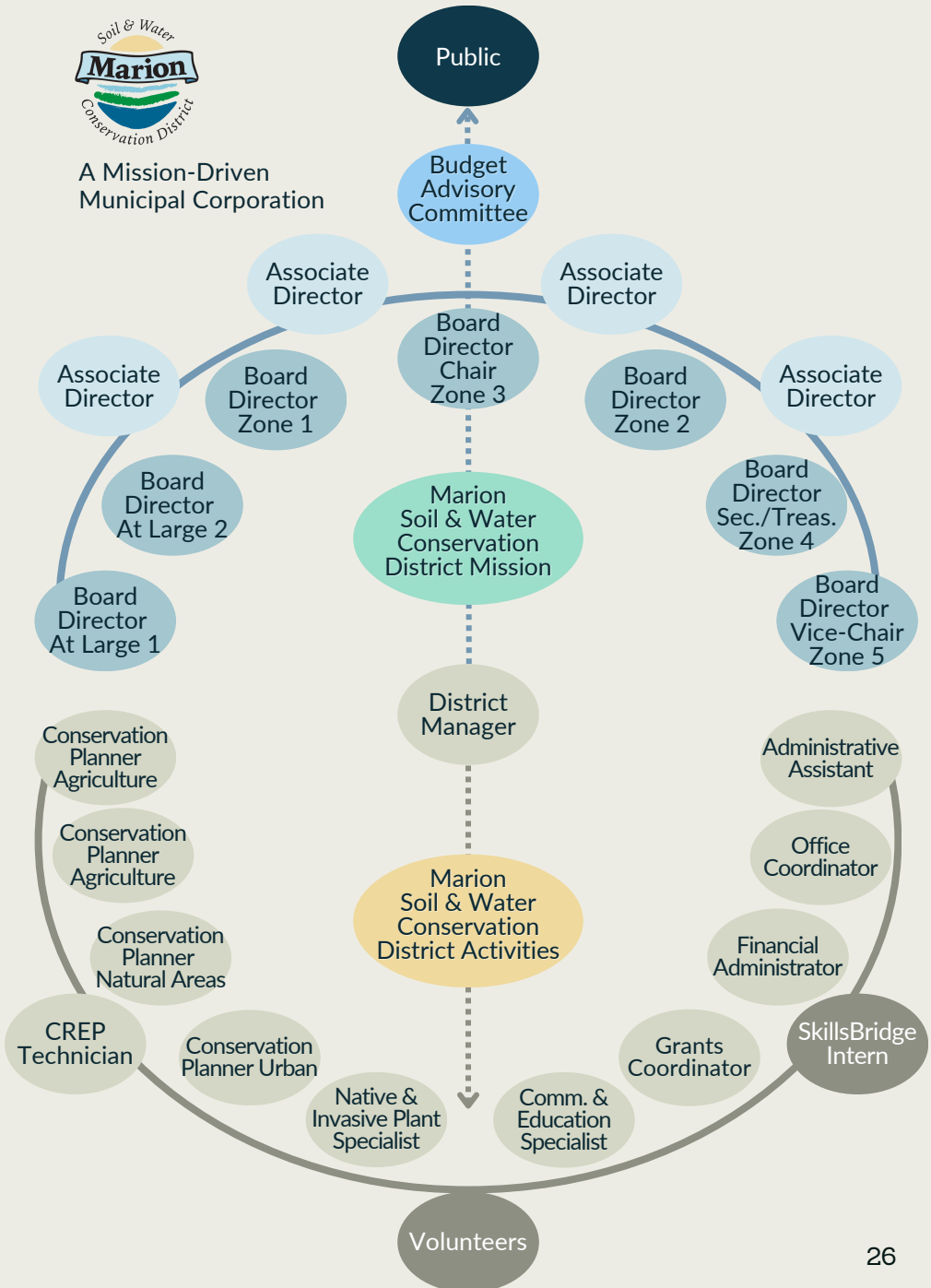
IN DEVELOPMENT

- Catastrophic Natural Events Preparedness/Prevention
- Conservation Landownership/Easements, Consideration of
- Small Woodlands - Oak Woodlands

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



A Mission-Driven
Municipal Corporation



Contact Us

The full 2024-2029 Strategic Plan
is available upon request.

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