

Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) Program

Staff: 5.08 FTE

(4 full time staff, 1 shared with 2 other districts, and 2 shared with other programs)

Julie DiLeone CTA program manager

Dave Bowman Conservation Technician with a focus on technical assistance to agricultural property owners, this position is shared with Clackamas and West Multnomah SWCDs

Aaron Guffey Conservation Technician, with a focus on Stream Care

Lucas Nipp Noxious Weed Control Technician, with a focus on weed control, EDRR, and Stream Care

Chris Aldassy Conservation Associate, assists with weed control and Stream Care

Andru Johnson Marketing (position is shared with SUL and DO)

Katie Meckes Outreach Coordinator (position is shared with SUL)

Program budget total FY 08-09: \$430,812

Program purpose

To protect natural resources by providing property owners/managers with technical assistance to help them identify opportunities for conservation and install conservation practices on their land. The focus is on improving water quality, restoring riparian areas, and protecting natural areas from invasive weeds.

How we work

- We are non-regulatory and use a voluntary approach so landowners are more likely to allow us onto their property. We help them voluntarily comply with water quality laws by implementing conservation practices on their land.
- We prioritize our work based on the Agricultural Water Quality Rules, 303d list (DEQ's list of water quality limited streams), and Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) as set by DEQ.
- While the program's focus is to get conservation practices installed, an important component of the work is developing relationships and building trust with landowners.
- Our partnerships with private landowners, public agencies, and non-profits allow us to provide the best technical guidance, take a 'big picture' look at restoration, and leverage our investment.

Our greatest impact

On the ground conservation is our greatest achievement. The conservation practices that were installed as a result of the districts work prevented tons of soil erosion, resulted in acres of weed removal, resulted in the establishment of thousands of native plants, prevented millions of pathogenic bacteria from polluting surface water, shaded streams, created buffers to protect streams from pollution, improved soil quality, conserved water through irrigation management, and reduced pesticide use.

CTA projects

Education: Last fiscal year, we reached over 500 landowners through outreach events

and direct mailings targeting both a specific, timely resource concern (seasonally appropriate to reflect the problems landowners face at each time of year – mud, weeds, manure etc.) and a geographic area. Topics included weed identification and control, pasture management, reducing mud, riparian restoration, horsekeeping, and manure composting. All of our workshops cover conservation practices that not only benefit the environment, but also benefit the landowner. The focus is on simple, cost effective techniques. In some cases, the attendees will leave the workshop and implement the recommended conservation practices on their own. If they need more information, they can request technical assistance and/or a site visit. This helps them save money by getting it right the first time.

Agricultural water quality: A core part of our work as a Soil and Water Conservation District is to provide technical assistance to help landowners voluntarily comply with the Agricultural Water Quality laws by implementing conservation practices on their land. We will continue to work with the Oregon Department of Agriculture, and are grateful to them for continued financial support of this work. Agricultural property owners may be having difficulty controlling erosion, conserving water, or managing mud and manure. Those difficulties can translate into significant water quality problems. Our technicians work with landowners in a non-regulatory, completely voluntary manner that gets results. We also assist the Oregon Department of Agriculture in the biennial review of the Agricultural Water Quality Rules for our area.

Technical Assistance: We continue to offer technical assistance to rural landowners with streamside property, livestock, and agricultural operations big and small. Livestock owners and other hobby farmers collectively manage a significant portion of the private land in the District and contribute to several resource issues. Happily, this population tends to be interested in practicing sound stewardship and eager for information on best practices. Our conservation technicians work closely with landowners to understand their goals for their property and provide them the appropriate support as they pursue their stewardship priorities. Last fiscal year, we provided technical assistance to over 500 landowners, conducting 356 site visits.

Conservation practice installation: Last fiscal year, we developed 27 practice specifications and assisted with 6 cost share applications. The landowners we worked with installed 74 conservation practices on their land. Our strong partnership with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) allows us to refer landowners interested in Farm Bill programs to our local District Conservationist, while NRCS in turn refers to EMSWCD landowners we are better able to serve.

Combating Invasive Weeds: Invasive species, especially those disrupting streamside vegetation and thereby creating erosion and water temperature/quality problems, are a major concern for the District. It is the topic we get the most landowner calls about. Left unchecked, species like knotweed and garlic mustard may do irreparable harm to ecosystem functions throughout the District. The problem, however, is overwhelming. The sheer number of parcels with infestations, the challenge of reaching and motivating all of those landowners, the rapid spread of existing populations, long viability of seed,

allelopathic effects of certain species, and constant threat of new species introductions makes a disciplined, strategic approach and extensive partnerships imperative. Our partners in this effort include The Nature Conservancy, Multnomah County, Oregon State Parks, US Forest Service, Oregon Dept. of Agriculture, Johnson Creek Watershed Council, Sandy River Basin Watershed Council, Oregon Dept. of Transportation, and SOLV. We also participate in the 4 County and Columbia Gorge Cooperative Weed Management Areas (a partnership of local agencies to address invasive weeds).

In an effort to prevent new invasive weeds from gaining a foothold in the District, we are developing an Early Detection Rapid Response (EDRR) project. We will train hikers and amateur botanists to identify weeds that are not yet present in great numbers. They will be our eyes on the ground. Once they report an infestation of a new weed to us, we will quickly contact the landowner/manager and offer control services. By addressing new weeds before they are found in large numbers, we will reduce the cost associated with invasive weed control from the landscape scale to small, easy to control patches.

We continue to partner with Multnomah County, Oregon State Parks, The Nature Conservancy, Oregon Department of Agriculture, Oregon Department of Transportation, and the US Forest Service to map garlic mustard infestations. We provide financial assistance to Multnomah County and Oregon State Parks to help pay for control efforts. Since the garlic mustard infestation is very large in parts of the Columbia River Gorge, our staff worked with The Nature Conservancy staff to identify the outer edge of the infested area. This is where we focus our control efforts with the goal of protecting the Mt. Hood National Forest and other un-infested areas from infestation. For private landowners, we provide a dumpster in Corbett to make it easier to dispose of bags of pulled garlic mustard, and offer control assistance for infestations on the outer edge. Twenty-three and a half acres of garlic mustard was treated across 108 properties. Eighty three of these were private properties. Nine days each of herbicide and manual treatment were carried out between April 16 and June 3, 2008. As garlic mustard infestations often begin in roadside right-of-ways, nearly 20 miles of roadsides were walked in order to treat the acreage addressed this year. One hundred forty three 30 gallon trash bags were filled with manually removed garlic mustard during this project. Fifty nine of these bags were pulled as follow-up treatments at sites that had been sprayed. The other 84 bags were pulled at sites discovered after it was too late spray garlic mustard.

The good news is that garlic mustard for the most part has not spread far from the roadside vector along the outer edge. One unsettling finding is that the extent of garlic mustard on the lower Sandy River is more widespread than was previously thought. Detailed garlic mustard patch size and percent cover data were collected at each parcel where control was performed. Repeated, annual collection of this information will allow us to monitor the efficacy of treatments over time.

Number of Outreach Packets Mailed	251
Number of Properties Surveyed	200

Number of Properties with garlic mustard	108
Number of Properties with Treated in 2008	108
Acreage Treated in 2008	23.5
Acreage Covered with Garlic Mustard	1.9

A knotweed control project was initiated in 2007 in the Beaver Creek watershed, a tributary to the Sandy River, and in 2008 in Latourell Creek. The goal of both projects was to gain permission from landowners to survey the riparian area on every property for the presence of knotweed and to treat any knotweed found. After obtaining permission from the property owners, it took 26 days to survey 322 properties in the Beaver Creek watershed for knotweed. Knotweed was found on 27 properties in this watershed. Permission was obtained to perform treatments on all properties where knotweed was found in the riparian zone except one. The survey and control effort came just in time; the infestation is of a size where control is still possible. Our treatments in 2007 resulted in a 96% reduction in knotweed in the Beaver Creek watershed. Fourteen more infestations were found and treated in 2008. The knotweed infestation in Latourell Creek is also of a controllable size. Knotweed was found in only four patches on three properties. Although all patches were on, or very near, properties that Latourell Creek or a tributary flows through, knotweed had not invaded the creek bank where it could be dislodged and spread by high waters. One patch was found just in time, a 680 square meter patch was growing just over ten meters from a headwater spring.

Stream Care: We are undertaking an ambitious program to restore the vegetation and function of riparian areas in the District. This investment will help us create buffers along streams in order to improve and protect water quality. The program to do this has been dubbed "Stream Care". Stream Care follows in many ways the successful local model of the City of Portland's Watershed Re-vegetation program. We will ask landowners in key stream reaches to enter into agreements with us to control invasive species, plant, and maintain healthy riparian vegetation over a five year establishment period. We plan to contract with the private sector for both the weed control and planting work, with District staff conducting outreach, designing the buffers, overseeing contractors, and coordinating with landowners. Costs will be covered by us initially to create interest in the program, with the future goal of sharing the cost with future participants.