

# **Marion Soil & Water Conservation District**



## **5 Year**

# **Strategic Plan**

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**This plan was adopted on June 6, 2012 by the Marion SWCD Board of Directors and shall be reviewed no later than 5 years from date of adoption.**

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# Introduction

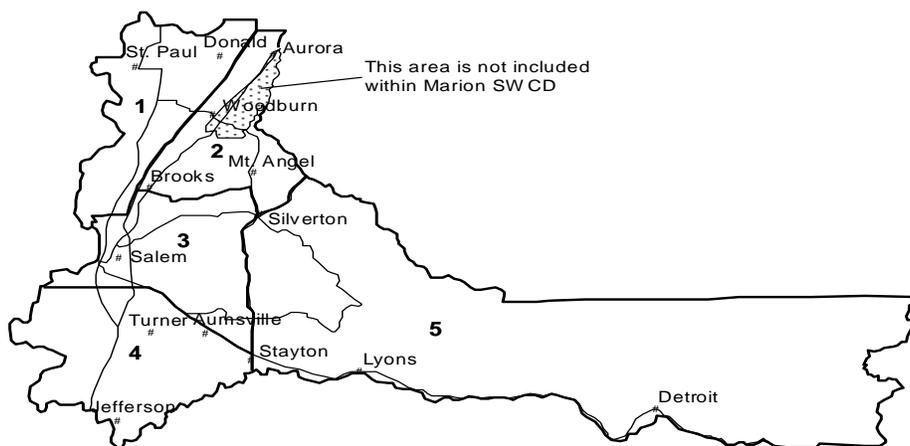
The purpose of the Marion Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) Five Year Strategic Plan (Plan) is to serve as a broad outline for the Marion Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) to follow when guiding its directors, employees, and partners in response to natural resource concerns, internal 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.

## Enabling Legislation

The Marion SWCD is defined by Oregon Revised Statutes as a political subdivision of state government under ORS 568.210 – 568.890. The District is not a state agency, rather it is classified as a municipal corporation, a form of local government that is required to follow five basic requirements under ORS 568 to remain legal and become eligible for funding from Oregon Department of Agriculture. ORS 568.554 contains two requirements stating that, “Each conservation district shall submit to the ODA its proposed long-range plan and annual work plan for review and comment.”

## History

The Marion SWCD, established in 1971 with the consolidation of the Santiam, Silver Creek, and Mt. Angel Soil and Water Conservation Districts, encompasses the majority of Marion County, Oregon and lies in the northern portion of the Willamette River Basin.



Map of Marion SWCD zones. A small portion of northern Marion County is not part of the District.

Comprising the western half of the District is the fertile Willamette Valley, while the eastern portion contains rolling foothills and the forested Cascade Mountains. Marion County has a population of 315,900 and encompasses 1,200 square miles (2012). Marion County 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. Detroit Reservoir, with a useable storage capacity of 321,000 acres/feet, is located in the eastern part of the county. More than 200 different agricultural cash crops on 183,229 acres (2011) are produced in Marion County.

In 2000 the electors of Marion County voted to fund the Marion SWCD to a permanent rate limit of \$0.05 per \$1,000 of land assessed value. The District uses its funds to meet the objectives and goals set forth in this plan related to the purchasing of equipment, the providing of training to employees, and the development of programs. The Board of Directors follows a calendar of events to monitor this Plan, the annual work plan, and the development of the yearly budget.

The Marion Soil and Water Conservation District takes the lead in soil and water conservation throughout Marion County by working with urban and rural property owners, operators, Public Officials, various state and federal agencies, and private organizations. This District believes in the protection, conservation, and improvement of soil and water through our directors' and employees' abilities to plan, assist, and educate. It is our belief that concerns about water quality, water quantity, wetlands, soil erosion, and weed management can be addressed while simultaneously respecting the private property rights of owners and operators. These concerns are addressed through the adoption of this Plan and by maintaining agreements with the various agencies that work with this District.

# Mission

*The mission of the Marion Soil and Water Conservation District is to protect, conserve and improve the quality of soil and water in Marion County through planning, technical assistance and education.*

In carrying out our mission, the Marion SWCD works, coordinates and cooperates with:

- property owners and operators
- public and private conservation organizations
- agricultural groups
- public agencies
- citizens of Marion County

# Vision

The vision of the Marion SWCD is to:

- be a leader in soil and water conservation efforts
- be a prominent resource in urban and rural areas
- be a repository for natural resource and conservation related information
- have a record of measurable and demonstrable results

# Values

The Marion SWCD:

- values the stewardship of soil and water including any applicable science and research and the sustainable use of all natural resources
- values educating youth about conservation
- values the economic importance of agriculture and natural resources to our community
- values conservation on all types of production on agricultural and forestry lands
- values private property rights and respects the trust, confidence, confidentiality, decisions and knowledge of all property owners/operators
- values a voluntary, common-sense approach to problem solving rather than a bureaucratic or regulatory approach
- values all local, state and federal partnerships with similar interests
- values being accountable with their financial resources by having an active and informed board
- values a well-managed district office who effectively communicates and delivers quality customer service
- values effective employment practices and recognizes the capabilities and contributions of the Marion SWCD staff

# Concerns

## 1. Water Quality

- Water bodies classified on the DEQ 303(d) water quality limited list
- Discharge of pollutants into lakes, ponds, rivers and streams
- Contamination of surface and ground water caused by various activities and sources
- Impaired urban streams
- Storm water management
- Improper drainage systems
- Inappropriate use of fertilizers, pesticides, and other chemicals within urban and rural areas
- Lack of baseline water quality data in impacted areas within the District

## 2. Water Quantity

- Declining groundwater tables and slow groundwater recharge due to area geology
- Oregon Water Resources groundwater limited areas and surface water availability (Mt. Angel, Turner, Sublimity, South Salem, Jefferson, Silverton)
- Unappropriated waters withdrawn from further development from the Columbia River Basalt aquifer in the Victor Point area, Marion County. See ORS 536.410; OAR 690 Div. 80
- Negative impacts on fish and wildlife habitat

## 3. Wetlands/Riparian Areas

- Negative impacts to soil and water due to the loss of natural wetlands and riparian areas
- Potential of unintended effects on surrounding property due to restoration activities
- Potential of increased flooding

## 4. Soil Health

- Irrigation-induced erosion
- Bare soil during rainy seasons
- Construction sites that lack erosion control measures
- Lack of healthy riparian vegetation or buffers
- Improper application of management practices
- Urban/rural interface development

## 5. Plants and Vegetation, Invasive and Native Species

- Spread of noxious and invasive vegetation
- Contamination of crops
- Loss of native plants in the landscape
- Loss of fish and wildlife habitat
- Economic loss and decreased property values

## 6. Energy

- Lack of focus in gathering information and resources on funding and technical solutions
- Need for intermediate technology and small-scale solutions

## 7. Education

- Lack of education and outreach on soil and water conservation
- Need to inform citizens about conservation concerns in their area

## 8. District Operations

- The area in northern Marion County that is not included within the boundaries of the District

# Goals and Objectives

**Goal 1: Water Quality Address surface and ground water quality issues within the District by assisting individuals to help meet local, state and federal standards and laws.**

## Objectives:

- 1.1 Increase the total number of recommended, funded and installed Best Management Practices (BMPs) to help reduce DEQ 303(d) pollution criteria for: water temperature, bacteria, mercury, other toxins, pesticides, dissolved oxygen, habitat modification and suspended sediment in the District's priority areas.
- 1.2 Increase consultations and/or work with cooperating landowners/operators to recommend and fund the installation of BMPs to help reduce soil erosion and loss into targeted waterways.
- 1.3 Continue to act as the Local Management Agency on behalf of the Oregon Department of Agriculture to implement the Molalla/Pudding/French Prairie/North Santiam Agricultural Water Quality Management (AgWQM) Area Plan.
- 1.4 Increase functioning riparian areas along designated waterways within the District.
- 1.5 Increase the total number of agricultural landowners/operators who participate in the District's Landowner Assistance Program.
- 1.6 Participate in Stormwater Runoff Programs by providing educational or funding opportunities to individuals, cities or the County as it pertains to:
  - Reduction of contaminants and sediment
  - Implementing Best Management Practices
  - Low impact development approaches
  - Rain and stormwater management strategies
- 1.7 Where available utilize existing baseline water quality data for comparison or trends.
- 1.8 Research the development of a Backyard Conservation Program within the urban areas of the District.

**Goal 2: Water Quantity Address limited water quantity issues within the District.**

## Objectives:

- 2.1 Provide resources and educational opportunities addressing the importance of water conservation including the financial benefits of water conservation, especially in the groundwater limited and withdrawn areas.
- 2.2 Develop, support and partner with rural and urban entities and individuals on projects that benefit sufficient flow and volume and sustain fish and wildlife habitat.
- 2.3 Evaluate the District's Stream Flow Program for changes and improvements.
- 2.4 Partner with entities such as special districts and cities within Marion County to maximize and/or leverage efforts and to identify partnership opportunities. Explore ideas for projects relating to flood control, energy conservation, irrigation management, hydro power and water storage.

**Goal 3: Wetlands/Riparian Areas Support and inform the public within the District on the importance of proper functioning wetlands and riparian areas.**

**Objectives:**

- 3.1 Inform the general public as well as landowners/operators on the proper function and benefits of wetlands and riparian areas.
- 3.2 Educate landowners/operators on the potential benefits and effects of wetland creation on surrounding properties.
- 3.3 Educate landowners/operators on the potential increase of flooding due to lack of inefficient or minimal wetlands or riparian areas along water bodies.
- 3.4 Inform the public on how homeowners and small landowners can do small-scale projects to meet the goal of enhancing wetlands and riparian areas.
- 3.5 Provide technical assistance and project support for creating healthy and functioning riparian buffers through plantings, invasive plant control and other best management practices.

**Goal 4: Soil Address soil erosion and soil health issues on lands within the District.**

**Objectives:**

- 4.1 Reduce the occurrence of soil erosion by implementing appropriate best management practices to help alleviate potential causes from:
  - Irrigation-induced erosion
  - Bare soil during rainy seasons
  - Construction sites lacking erosion control measures
  - Improper application of best management practices
  - The incorporation and then development of rural properties within the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) which could create additional bare ground.
- 4.2 Reduce soil erosion along waterways by increasing riparian vegetation or buffer plantings/establishments.
- 4.3 Increase soil health through education and the use of appropriate best management practices.

**Goal 5: Invasive and Native Plant Species Management Address areas within the District where there is a lack of invasive plant species control and promote the use of native plants.**

**Objectives:**

- 5.1 Educate, identify, and when appropriate, recommend actions on controlling invasive plant species to landowners/operators.
- 5.2 Assess and evaluate existing invasive vegetation data prior to moving to new project area.
- 5.3 Prioritize areas to be inventoried for invasive vegetation.
- 5.4 Work with partners to develop and promote cooperative programs for invasive plant species control.
- 5.5 Research and education on "right plant, right place" and the appropriate use of native plants as well as avoidance of invasive and noxious plants.
- 5.6 Educate, encourage and recommend the use of native plants to landowners/operators by focusing on:
  - Urban Areas
  - Benefits of using native plants
  - Participate in or organize events, i.e. SWCD Native Plant Sale, Farmers Markets, plant workshops.
  - Improving and establishing fish, wildlife and pollinator habitat.

**Goal 6: Energy Address the need for awareness of conserving various forms of energy within the District.**

**Objectives:**

- 6.1 Focus the District's efforts to gather and disseminate reliable information and resources on funding and technical expertise from outside sources on both renewable energy and energy related conservation practices.
- 6.2 Work with a water control district on a demonstration hydro power project.

**Goal 7: Customer Service Provide technical assistance, support and available resources to customers within the District.**

**Objectives:**

- 7.1 Provide the best available assistance to customers to achieve the District's Goals 1 thru 6.
- 7.2 Utilize Best Management Practices (BMPs) by encouraging customers to implement them.
- 7.3 Provide and allocate funding to customers through appropriate District grant programs.
- 7.4 Research and obtain additional funding from outside sources such as grants from other available sources.
- 7.5 Create and foster partnerships with other agencies, entities and groups.

**Goal 8: Education and Outreach Increase the awareness, knowledge, skills, aspirations and application to conserve soil, water and other natural resources within the District.**

**Objectives:**

- 8.1 Create an education and outreach work plan to focus on:
  - Defining the audiences for outreach and education activities
  - Marketing the District to various audiences on who we are, what we do
  - Researching, gathering or developing new educational resources and programs
  - Evaluating existing District education and outreach programs including workshops, internet resources and educational materials
  - Finding effective ways of measuring accomplishments and successes
  - Creating demonstration projects
  - Tying education components into other District projects
- 8.2 Gather and disseminate reliable information and resources on the conservation of soil, water and other natural resources to the public.
- 8.3 Research the feasibility of integrating natural resource information into District school curriculums, the Envirothon program, poster contest materials etc.
- 8.4 Provide a variety of conservation education materials and activities with a particular emphasis on youth.
- 8.5 Support Oregon Envirothon program by assisting in development of a strong, independent non-profit organization.
- 8.6 Work with partners such as OSU Extension, small woodland owners, watershed councils, Marion County schools and government entities, Oregon Association of Nurseries etc. on education and outreach opportunities.

**Goal 9: District Operations Ensure transparency and accountability to the public in all of the District's programs and operations.**

**Objectives:**

- 9.1 Provide training and educational opportunities on board governance and leadership.
- 9.2 Define purpose and responsibilities for all District committees and periodically review their structure and membership.
- 9.3 Provide guidance and direction to board members and staff participating on District Committees, with external groups and volunteering at events.
- 9.4 Prioritize District projects, funding and available staff time through the budgeting process and at board meetings to ensure maximum efficiency and effectiveness.
- 9.5 Provide direction for the appropriate division of board and staff roles and responsibilities, including interactions with the public and other entities by establishing policies and procedures.
- 9.6 Continue to support District staff by providing proper training and education, recognition, encouragement and establishing clear direction of District priorities without micromanaging, purchasing proper equipment, approving personnel policies to include an effective evaluation process and competitive pay scales.