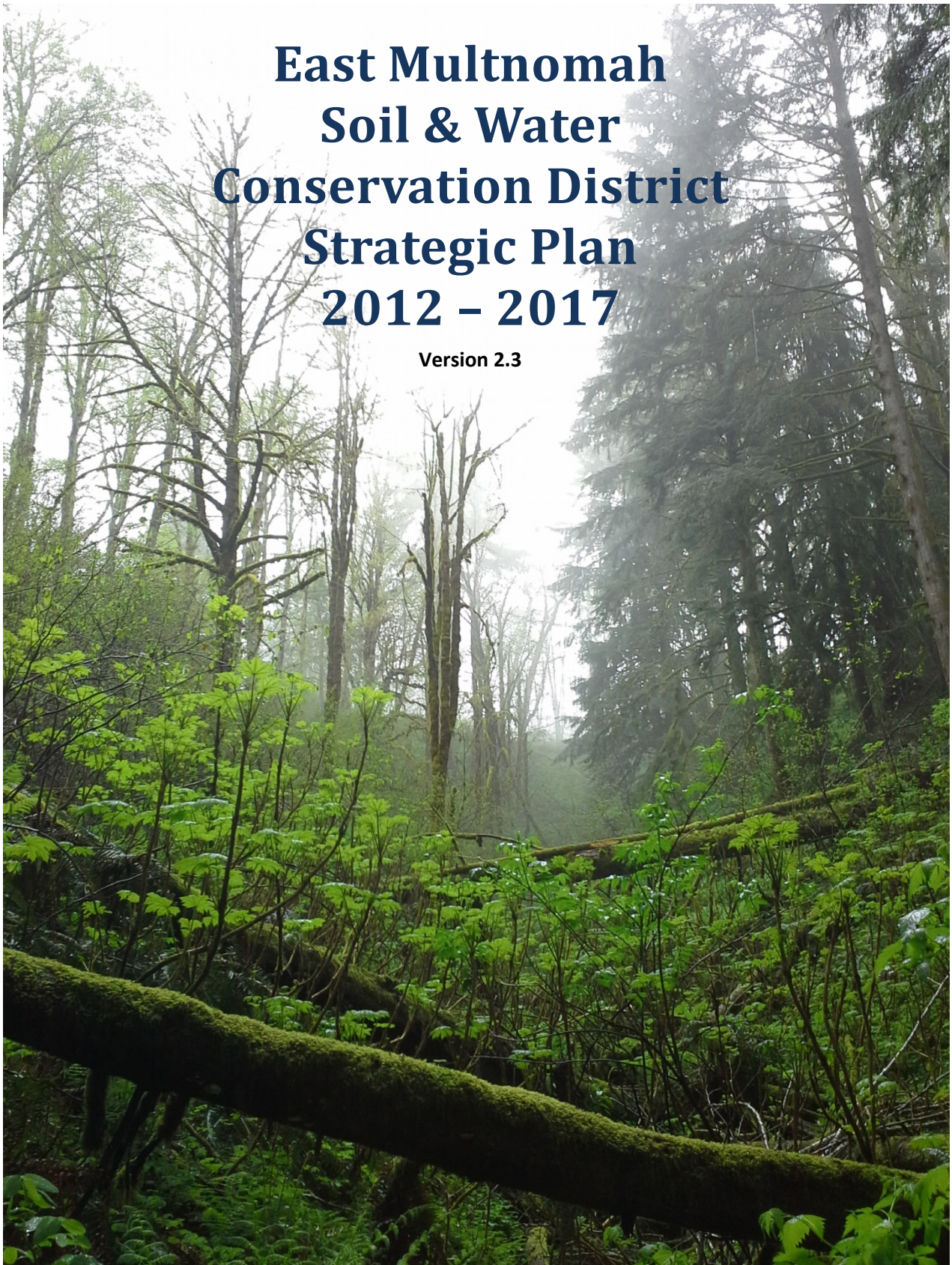




East Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District Strategic Plan 2012 – 2017

Version 2.3





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Cover photo: Aaron Guffey, 2014; Emerging Devil's Club (*Oplopanax horridus*) at Big Creek in foreground.

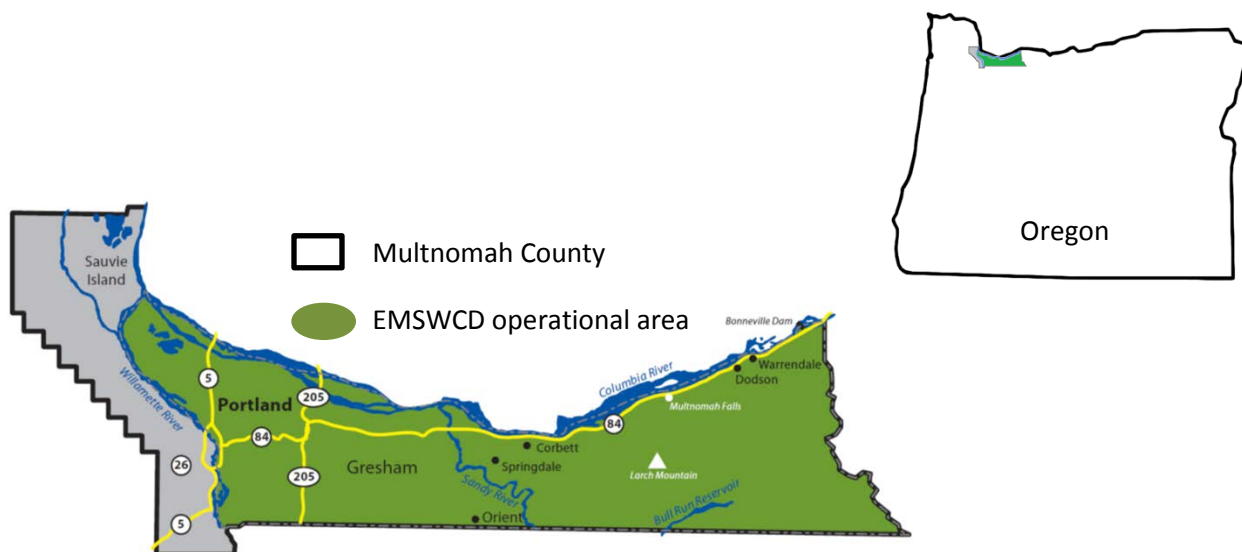
1.0 DISTRICT OVERVIEW

The “Dust Bowl” [during the 1930s] brought to the nation’s attention the need to conserve soil and other natural resources. In 1935, President Franklin D. Roosevelt addressed the problems of soil erosion in the nation by shepherding the passage of the Soil Conservation Act, which established the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) within the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The SCS was charged with developing a program to conserve and enhance the nation’s soil and water resources. At first, it was assumed the federal government could manage the whole program. However, during the first two years, it became apparent local leadership was needed to coordinate efforts of conservation agencies and tie their programs to local conditions and priorities. The SCS needed the assistance of local farmers, ranchers, and other land managers to put together and operate an effective program. In 1937, President Roosevelt asked all state governors to promote legislation to allow the formation of soil conservation districts.¹

Thus began the soil and water conservation districts in the United States.

There are now over 3,000 soil and water conservation districts throughout the United States. Established and governed by Oregon Revised Statutes 568.210 – 568.440, there are 45 soil and water conservation districts in Oregon. The East Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation District (EMSWCD), like all other soil and water conservation districts in Oregon, is a non-regulatory government agency known as a Special District (i.e., a municipal corporation). Located in northwestern Oregon, the EMSWCD serves approximately 700,000 residents who live and manage land east of the Willamette River in Multnomah County (see **Map 1** below). The EMSWCD encompasses an area of approximately 230,000 acres and includes portions of three major watersheds – the Sandy River, Columbia River, and Willamette River — all of which contribute to the Greater Columbia River Basin.

Map 1: Location and boundaries of the EMSWCD



¹ Oregon Department of Agriculture. 2015. Oregon Soil and Water Conservation District Guidebook. A Guide to Operations and Management. Salem, Oregon. 295 pp.



2.0 VISION

The EMSWCD's Vision is that:

Our lands and waters are healthy and sustain farms, forests, wildlife, and communities.

While the EMSWCD may only have a small role in achieving this over-arching vision within our District, we believe this vision helps connect us to the public we serve, the partners we collaborate with, and to each other as EMSWCD staff and board members.

3.0 MISSION

The EMSWCD's Mission:

We help people care for land and water.

Our mission sounds simple, but it drives all that we do. We work with landowners, land managers and other District residents on a voluntary basis to help them care for land and water resources.

4.0 BROAD STRATEGIC GOALS

The EMSWCD organizes and implements our work to achieve six broad strategic goals:

- 1. Protect and improve water quality and quantity.***
- 2. Protect and improve soil quality and quantity.***
- 3. Protect and improve natural habitats.***
- 4. Protect agricultural lands.***
- 5. Increase the sustainability of agriculture.***
- 6. Provide equitable access to nature.***

These broad strategic goals help center our efforts to assure we are always working towards the same end. Each program area described in **Section 6** of this document helps achieve one or more of the broad strategic goals. Within each program area, we have also identified program-specific goals that help us measure progress.



5.0 ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES

In addition to the broad strategic goals, the EMSWCD has established six organizational values that permeate everything we do:

- 1. Provide equitable access to services.***
- 2. Focus on under-served communities.***
- 3. Provide outstanding public service.***
- 4. Operate in transparency.***
- 5. Act with integrity.***
- 6. Utilize sound operations.***

By embracing our organizational values, we will ensure that we are holding ourselves to the highest standards possible at all times. In doing so, we will responsibly carry out the duties entrusted to us by the public.

6.0 ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND PROGRAM GOALS

The EMSWCD fulfills its mission by providing technical, capacity and financial assistance to landowners, managers and other residents in an effort to establish and maintain healthy ecosystems, with a particular focus on soil, water, and habitat conservation. With 8 Board members, 18 staff and an annual operating and capital budget of \$15 million, the EMSWCD implements its activities through four programs: 1) Finance and Operations; 2) Rural Lands; 3) Urban Lands; and 4) Land Legacy and Grants. An organizational chart can be found in **Appendix 1**.

6.1 FINANCE & OPERATIONS

The Finance and Operations Program focuses on the administrative aspects of the EMSWCD's work, including budgeting, contracting, human resources, office management, facilities management and marketing and media. Given this, the Finance and Operations Program plays a major role in ensuring EMSWCD's organizational values are upheld in all program activities. In addition, specific goals related to marketing and media have been established.

6.1.1 MARKETING & MEDIA

Marketing and media efforts at EMSWCD will further all strategic and program-specific goals by increasing and improving upon public awareness of, participation in, and perception of EMSWCD and its natural resources. All of the above goals will require EMSWCD to determine baseline conditions and track changes over time.

MARKETING & MEDIA PROGRAM GOALS

The District's media and marketing efforts will:

- 1. Increase the percentage of District residents who know about EMSWCD.***
- 2. Increase the percentage District residents who understand what EMSWCD does.***
- 3. Ensure that District residents know how to access our services.***
- 4. Ensure that District residents have a positive perception of EMSWCD.***



6.2 RURAL LANDS

The Rural Lands Program operates primarily east of the Urban Growth Boundary in Multnomah County. The program provides technical information, capacity, and financial assistance to help landowners improve their management practices and protect natural resources on their land. This work is divided into four areas: 1) Headwaters Incubator Program; 2) rural water quality improvement; 3) riparian re-vegetation (aka StreamCare); and 4) invasive weed control.

6.2.1 HEADWATERS INCUBATOR PROGRAM

The EMSWCD works to maintain healthy agricultural lands by promoting a sustainable agricultural economy and fostering a stewardship ethic. To this end, the Headwaters Incubator Program (HIP) seeks to address the dwindling number of skilled, knowledgeable, and prepared beginning farmers and ensure that local farmland stays in production and is well-stewarded. To facilitate this, HIP leases land, equipment, infrastructure, and other agricultural resources—at affordable rates—to individuals who have farming experience and seek to establish a farm business. In addition to helping beginning farmers, HIP has proven a useful outreach and collaboration mechanism, assisting the District in disseminating information about conservation farming to a broad audience. HIP collaborates with Multnomah County, Friends of Family Farmers, Xerces Society, and the Clackamas County SWCD, among others, on various activities.

HIP GOALS

The HIP helps EMSWCD fulfill five of six broad strategic goals (see **Table 1** below). In addition, the HIP has three goals specific to its operations.

From 2015-2020, the HIP will:

- 1. Operate under an approved Farm Management Plan for conservation practices and other improvements while identifying concepts for additional services to reach a broad range of District constituents.**
- 2. Operate a thriving, dynamic farm incubator program that includes:**
 - A quality applicant pool of at least 10 per year;**
 - At least 12 program participants at all times; and**
 - Four program graduates per year starting in 2016, a majority of which remain in District.**
- 3. Increase the visibility and leverage of EMSWCD and USDA-NRCS conservation farming practices through tours and one-on-one interactions with farmers.**

Table 1: HIP Relationship to Broad Strategic Goals

Broad Strategic Goals	HIP Applicability
Protect and improve water quality and quantity	✓
Protect and improve soil quality and quantity	✓
Protect and improve natural habitats	✓
Protect agricultural lands	✓
Increase the sustainability of agriculture	✓
Provide equitable access to nature	✓



6.2.2 RURAL WATER QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

As a non-regulatory government agency working to improve water quality, the EMSWCD has developed targeted programs to address several specific water quality concerns and opportunities in both rural and urban areas. The Rural Water Quality Improvement Program works to improve water quality by providing agricultural and other rural landowners with technical assistance to help them identify and pursue opportunities for conservation on their land. This might include repair and remediation of ongoing erosion problems or the design and siting of less impacting practices for heavy use areas, runoff management surrounding barns and stables, manure sheds, livestock exclusion fencing, and off-stream watering systems. EMSWCD works in an entirely voluntary manner and does not report water quality violations to regulatory agencies. EMSWCD does, however, monitor water quality in some streams and collaborates with multiple entities to establish baseline conditions and monitor progress over time.

RURAL WATER QUALITY PROGRAM GOALS

The Rural Water Quality Program helps fulfill three of EMSWCD's broad strategic goals (see **Table 2** below). Five program-specific goals have also been established for these efforts.

From 2015-2020, the District will collaborate with partners in its Rural Water Quality Improvement efforts to:

- 1. Ensure that no additional waters become impaired (as determined by water quality listings) in rural areas of the District.**
- 2. Achieve a 25% improvement in water quality in upper Johnson Creek and upper Beaver Creek.**
- 3. Achieve and document improved water temperature in Big and Smith Creeks.**
- 4. Increase the percentage of landowners implementing 45 of the 90 applicable NRCS conservation practices.**
- 5. Develop and implement a plan to overcome the barriers to addressing water quality issues and implementing conservation practices among rural residents.**

All of the above goals will require EMSWCD to determine baseline conditions and track changes over time.

Table 2: Rural Water Quality Program Relationship to Broad Strategic Goals

Broad Strategic Goals	Rural Water Quality Program Applicability
Protect and improve water quality and quantity	✓
Protect and improve soil quality and quantity	✓
Protect and improve natural habitats	
Protect agricultural lands	
Increase the sustainability of agriculture	✓
Provide equitable access to nature	



6.2.3 STREAMCARE

The EMSWCD established the StreamCare program in 2008. The program's purpose is to establish native riparian vegetation along streams that are quality limited according to the Department of Environmental Quality's 303(d) list, which serves to meet the requirements of the Environmental Protection Agency's Clean Water Act. Riparian vegetation provides increased shade, thereby preventing solar heating of the stream. Vegetation prevents surface and bank erosion, provides a source of woody debris for the stream system, and filters surface runoff entering the stream. By improving water quality, these benefits help meet the requirements of the Clean Water Act to protect and maintain the quality of Oregon's waters. There are many organizations that are restoring streams in this region, but the EMSWCD recognized the unfulfilled need for re-vegetation work on streams of concern that pass through private property in unincorporated Multnomah County. By filling this niche, we will help improve the water quality of the streams in our District in a quantifiable and sustainable manner.

STREAMCARE PROGRAM GOALS

The StreamCare Program helps EMSWCD achieve three of its broad strategic goals (see **Table 3** below). Five program-specific goals have also been established for StreamCare.

From 2015 – 2020, the StreamCare program will:

- 1. Complete and maintain all StreamCare sites in the four watersheds until weed pressure is low enough that plantings are free to grow; in addition, StreamCare will restore 10 additional acres of riparian buffer along one-mile of Pounder Creek (tributary to Big Creek) and Smith Creek.***
- 2. Determine and implement a long-term management and protection strategy for all StreamCare sites (i.e., enroll StreamCare sites in the ODFW Riparian Program and determine alternatives for sites that are not eligible for the ODFW program).***
- 3. Identify additional streams to be added to the program for weed control/habitat improvement.***
- 4. Model and monitor water temperatures in Beaver, Johnson, Big, and Smith Creeks; combined activities of District and partners will bring Beaver and Johnson Creeks 25% closer to the State standard; combined activities of District and partners will bring Big and Smith Creeks 10% closer to the State standard. (This goal will require EMSWCD to determine baseline conditions and track changes over time.)***
- 5. Assume responsibilities for post-grant re-vegetation of strategic partner restoration sites.***

Table 3: StreamCare Program Relationship to Broad Strategic Goals

Broad Strategic Goals	StreamCare Program Applicability
Protect and improve water quality and quantity	✓
Protect and improve soil quality and quantity	✓
Protect and improve natural habitats	✓
Protect agricultural lands	
Increase the sustainability of agriculture	
Provide equitable access to nature	



6.2.4 WEED CONTROL

The spread of invasive noxious weed species can cause serious and nearly irreparable harm to natural ecosystems. To help address this problem, the EMSWCD has created an award-winning invasive species eradication program. The EMSWCD works with a wide range of partners to create and implement geographically explicit strategies for targeted weedy species. The EMSWCD also offers workshops and provides grants to partners that address invasive species. Generally, the EMSWCD's approach to weed control has been to target the most damaging species in which there is a good probability of successful eradication.

WEED CONTROL PROGRAM GOALS

In addition to helping achieve two broad strategic goals (see **Table 4** below), the EMSWCD has established four program-specific goals for its weed control efforts. From 2015 – 2020, the EMSWCD will collaborate with and leverage the actions of partners in its weed control efforts to:

1. ***Verify, assess, and perform necessary control for all reported species from the Early Detection & Rapid Response list.***
2. ***Prevent increase in acreage of knotweed within the target area.²***
3. ***Prevent garlic mustard from establishing outside of containment zone.³***
4. ***Reduce coverage of false brome by 90%, English ivy by 50%, Clematis vitalba by 50%, and spurge laurel by 50% within respective target areas.⁴***

Table 4: Weed Control Program Relationship to Broad Strategic Goals

Broad Strategic Goals	Weed Control Program Applicability
Protect and improve water quality and quantity	✓
Protect and improve soil quality and quantity	
Protect and improve natural habitats	✓
Protect agricultural lands	
Increase the sustainability of agriculture	
Provide equitable access to nature	

² The Knotweed target area includes all riparian areas east of the UGB and upland areas east of the UGB where knotweed could easily spread into riparian areas. As of January 2015, current treatment areas included approximately 150 sites.

³ As of January 2015, the EMSWCD treatment of garlic mustard focused on 233 properties/sites in the area of concern (~58,000 acres) outside of the "containment zone," (CZ) a (~5,800-acre area north of Bull Run. The CZ, centered in Corbett, was defined in 2008 based on previous garlic mustard mapping. The CZ is intended to create a barrier between large, well-established garlic mustard populations and smaller, newer, satellite populations. The CZ boundary does not follow a naturally occurring geographic boundary or political boundary. The CZ boundary generally runs south from the Columbia River at the eastern edge of the 1000-Acre Park to the intersection of the Historic Columbia River Highway (HCRH) and then southeast roughly following Hurlburt Road. The boundary line then turns north at the eastern end of Howard Road until it reaches the HCRH. The boundary line then turns east and runs to the south of the HCRH turning north just to the east of the town of Latourell until it reaches the Columbia River.

⁴ Target areas for False Brome (5 sites/infestations), English Ivy (571 infestations), *Clematis vitalba* (324 infestations) and spurge laurel (299 infestations) include all district lands east of the Sandy River.



6.3 URBAN LANDS

The Urban Lands Program primarily operates west of the Urban Growth Boundary and east of the Willamette River in Multnomah County. The program fosters a stewardship ethic in the urban landscape by encouraging a residential lifestyle that folds pollution prevention and resource conservation into everyday life. The EMSWCD works at the neighborhood level to give people the information, skills, and confidence needed to take action. To do this the Urban Lands Program operates under three major areas: 1) outreach and education through workshops, presentations, educational posters, brochures, and annual events (such as our yard tour and bare-root native plant sale); 2) transformative demonstration projects (in collaboration with partners); and 3) site-specific consultations on residential, commercial, and government properties. With these tools, the EMSWCD helps citizens make healthier, more informed choices for their families, neighborhoods, communities and watersheds.

URBAN LANDS PROGRAM GOALS

The Urban Lands Program helps EMSWCD achieve three of its broad strategic goals (see **Table 5** below). In addition, staff work closely with partners, including relevant jurisdictions, to realize three program-specific goals, including:

- 1. Achieve quantifiable improvements in water quality and quantity parameters adversely affected by urban landscapes (DO, temperature, turbidity, BOD, TSS, nutrients and metals).**
- 2. Reduce seasonal increases in outdoor water usage (water used to irrigate the urban landscape) within urban areas during summer months.**
- 3. Increase urban wildlife habitat.**

All of the above goals will require EMSWCD to determine baseline conditions and track changes over time.

Recognizing the general nature of the above program goals, three strategic actions have been identified to bring specificity to the program. Urban lands Program staff will work with partners to:

- Identify geographic priorities and contaminants of concern; reduce flashiness and pollution of streams by retaining storm water on-site; to reduce lawn and impervious surface; and help residents reduce/eliminate their use of synthetic chemicals in the landscape;
- Reduce irrigated lawn and replace with Naturescaping; holding graywater classes and demonstrations; and offering drip irrigation classes and/or demonstrations; and
- Reduce lawn and impervious surface and replace with trees and native plants; and develop citizen science that helps track urban wildlife.

Table 5: Urban Lands Program Relationship to Broad Strategic Goals

Broad Strategic Goals	Urban Lands Program Applicability
Protect and improve water quality and quantity	✓
Protect and improve soil quality and quantity	✓
Protect and improve natural habitats	✓
Protect agricultural lands	
Increase the sustainability of agriculture	
Provide equitable access to nature	



6.4 LAND LEGACY & GRANTS

The EMSWCD's Land Legacy and Grants Program represents a recent (in June 2014) convergence of the Land Conservation Legacy Program and the Grants Program. Both elements of the newly converged program operate throughout the entire District (all areas of Multnomah County lying east of the Willamette River).

6.4.1 LAND LEGACY

In June 2013 the Board of Directors passed Resolution #2013-06-02, "Approval of the Recommendations of the Land Conservation Committee to Establish and Implement a Land Conservation Legacy Program." This program has since been revised and renamed the Land Legacy Program. The program is funded by annual allocations to the EMSWCD's Land Conservation Fund. The focus of the Land Legacy Program is to strategically and permanently protect: 1) high value agricultural lands in order to maintain a viable agricultural economy and improve watershed health and function; and 2) high value natural resource lands in order to improve watershed health and function and increase access to nature.

LAND LEGACY PROGRAM GOALS

The Land Legacy Program helps the EMSWCD achieve all six of its broad strategic goals (see **Table 6** below). The EMSWCD has also established three specific goals for the Land Legacy Program.

From 2015-2020, the District's Land Legacy Program will:

- 1. Protect agricultural land and improve agricultural practices on approximately 20 parcels covering approximately 400 acres lying between the Sandy River and the Urban Growth Boundary (excluding the Urban Reserve).**
- 2. Protect priority habitats in the District by helping partners protect areas identified in conservation-related plans (to include, but not limited to, acquisition, protection and restoration plans).**
- 3. Help partners establish new parks and natural areas in underserved communities within the District.**

Table 6: Land Legacy Program Relationship to Broad Strategic Goals

Broad Strategic Goals	Land Legacy Program Applicability
Protect and improve water quality and quantity	✓
Protect and improve soil quality and quantity	✓
Protect and improve natural habitats	✓
Protect agricultural lands	✓
Increase the sustainability of agriculture	✓
Provide equitable access to nature	✓



6.4.2 GRANTS

Wise use of the EMSWCD's natural resources involves the efforts of many private organizations, public agencies and community groups. Sometimes an effective way to advance EMSWCD goals is to help support other entities in carrying out conservation efforts. The EMSWCD thus established several grant opportunities to provide external entities with the financial resources necessary to tackle diverse conservation and environmental education projects. The EMSWCD provides external funding through six grants:

- Partners in Conservation (PIC and PIC Plus)
- Small Projects and Community Events (SPACE)
- Strategic Conservation Investments (SCI)
- Conservation Landowner Implementation Program (CLIP)
- Urban Lands (i.e., Rain Garden) Incentives
- Land Legacy Program (LLP)

The EMSWCD's Grants Program provides general direction for all six of the grants and administers the PIC, PIC Plus, SPACE and SCI grants directly. The CLIP, Rain Garden Incentives and LLP grants are administered through the Rural Water Quality Program, Urban Lands Program, and Land Legacy Program, respectively. Collectively, the grants help achieve all of the EMSWCD broad strategic goals (see **Table 7** below). Together, these funding opportunities serve to strengthen and enhance the conservation impact of the EMSWCD.

GRANTS PROGRAM GOALS

As described above, the EMSWCD's Grant Program helps achieve all four broad strategic goals (see table below). To strengthen the Grants Program and provide greater direction to grant-making, the EMSWCD has established four program-specific goals for the Grants Program. The first program-specific goal below reflects the complementary nature of EMSWCD grant-making while the three other program goals address areas that EMSWCD typically does not work on directly. The Grants Program will:

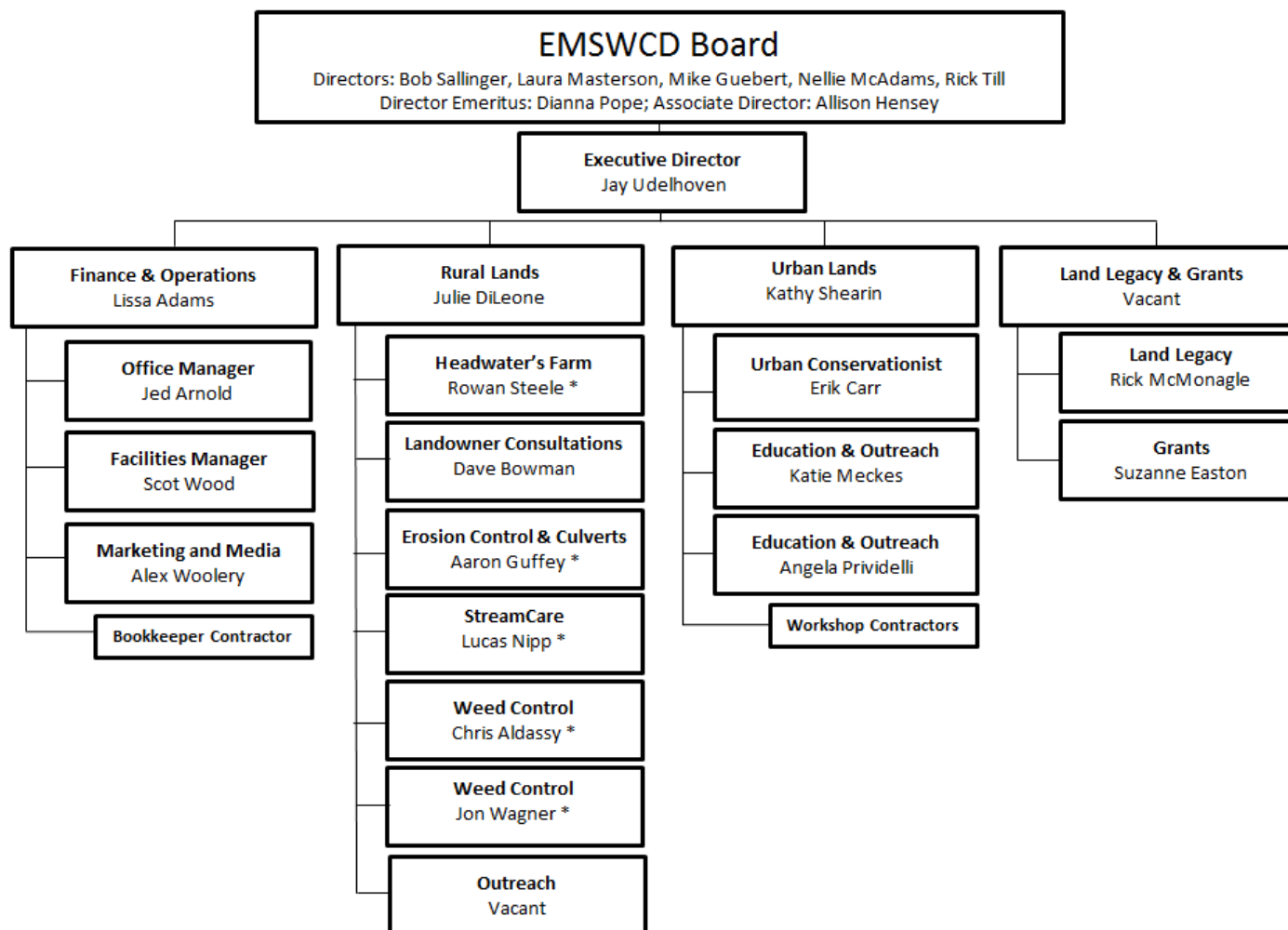
- 1. Complement other District program efforts by providing grants to partners that will improve surface water quality, decrease soil erosion, enhance and protect natural habitats, and promote sustainable agriculture.***
- 2. Reach a broad cross-section of school age children in the District with profound experiential education regarding soil and water conservation-related issues.***
- 3. Establish an equitable distribution of sustainable community and school gardens throughout the urban areas of the District.***
- 4. Equitably build conservation capacity in community-based organizations throughout the District.***

Table 7: Grants Program Relationship to Broad Strategic Goals

Broad Strategic Goals	Grants Program Applicability
Protect and improve water quality and quantity	✓
Protect and improve soil quality and quantity	✓
Protect and improve natural habitats	✓
Protect agricultural lands	✓
Increase the sustainability of agriculture	✓
Provide equitable access to nature	✓



Appendix 1: EMSWCD Organizational Chart



* Responsible for some contractor oversight.

May 19, 2015