



## East Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation District Headwaters Incubator Program Lowers Barriers to Beginning Farmers

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### Headwaters Farm Incubator Program Lowers Barriers to Beginning Farmers

**East Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation District (EMSWCD) will be accepting applications for the Headwaters Farm Incubator Program from October 1<sup>st</sup> through the 31<sup>st</sup>.** The Headwaters Farm Incubator Program (HIP) provides agricultural resources to motivated, experienced individuals seeking to establish their own farm businesses. Headwaters Farm is also a demonstration site for agricultural and riparian conservation practices, and is a working illustration of how vibrant, viable farms can sustainably manage natural resources. The farm incubator program offers a supportive and affordable production environment where participants can learn good stewardship techniques and sound business practices. The focus of the program is to lower the barriers to beginning farmers and fledgling farm businesses.

Many new farmers face a daunting labyrinth of financial, institutional and cultural barriers to starting their own farm business. Farmers that lack sufficient access to capital, training, farm networks or market outlets often don't have the resources to successfully launch a farm business. In Oregon and across the nation, these issues are further compounded by a farmer demographic that is growing older. The Headwaters Farm Incubator Program seeks to help new farmers overcome these barriers by providing low-cost land, infrastructure and equipment, while also assisting with business development, training opportunities, and a resource network. The 14 farms now enrolled in the program produce a wide variety of outputs. This year, in addition to mixed vegetable production, HIP is inviting a wider variety of operations to apply for the 2019 growing season, including for example berries, livestock, herbs, flowers, and seeds. Interested individuals with farming experience are encouraged to apply, and all applicants will receive detailed feedback and additional suggested resources which may help them achieve their farm goals.



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Headwaters Farm is a 60-acre property just to the east of Gresham that is owned and managed by EMSWCD. Since the program's launch in 2013, EMSWCD staff and incubator farmers have worked continuously on improving the fields and on addressing soil quality, erosion and invasive weed problems. This work has included projects ranging from soil building practices and providing pollinator habitat to taking measures to improve stream health in the North Fork of Johnson Creek, which passes through the property.

As farmers prepare to transition off Headwaters Farm and into their new business ventures, EMSWCD staff will continue to seek ways to further improve the program and help sustain local farms, forests, wildlife and communities.

**The East Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation District (EMSWCD)** is a unit of local government whose mission is to help people care for land and water. The EMSWCD is led by an elected board of five directors and works entirely on a voluntary, non-regulatory basis with landowners, land managers, and other residents east of the Willamette River centerline in Multnomah County. All of the EMSWCD's work is geared toward keeping water clean, conserving water and keeping soil healthy.

Contact Rowan Steele, our Farm Incubator Program Manager, with any questions about Headwaters Farm or the Farm Incubator Program at [Rowan@emswcd.org](mailto:Rowan@emswcd.org) or (503) 939-0314. Learn more about the program at <http://emswcd.org/farm-incubator/>, or read about our progress at Headwaters at <http://emswcd.org/updates-from-headwaters/>.



*The EMSWCD service area includes all Multnomah County east of the Willamette River. The location of Headwaters Farm is also shown here.*

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