



Spring 2023 Newsletter

Oregon Conservation Education & Assistance Network

OCEAN's District Directory Update!



ABOUT ▾ EVENTS CONNECT CONFERENCE TRAINING & CERTIFICATION ▾ DISTRICT DIRECTORY 🔍

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Hello Conservation Colleagues!

OCEAN has been working with a developer the last year and half to upgrade and modernize its District Directory that we've used and maintained for the past 10 years.

The Directory helps us communicate with district employees and allows us to share news about CONNECT and other OCEAN activities. It also helps us track employee service time so that we can recognize folks for their longevity with districts at CONNECT.

As a volunteer organization with a small board and no employees (we have two part time contractors), we rely on Districts to keep us up to date on contact information through the directory. Because you can manage the data directly, we are able to focus our time and effort on the CONNECT conference and our grant with NRCS to help coordinate conservation planning certification.

In fact, the new directory will help us assess who needs access to NRCS tools and training and allow us to provide a more consistent way for NRCS to share news related to planning resources and training opportunities.

Because it has taken a while to get the new directory functioning correctly, data is out of date and in need of a reset. We are asking an employee from each district to go to the new directory and create an account to edit your district data.

We weren't able to carry forward accounts from our previous directory, but it should be very easy to set up a new one. Just go to: <https://portal.oceanconnect.org/login> and click on the "Register here" link to set up an account.

After your account is established, email me at programs@oceanconnect.org and I will assign you to your district and grant access to edit your district's data.

I am available by email for any issues or help you need. Thank you in advance for your assistance with the database, and we look forward to building new tools to help Districts get the training and information they need to be successful.

Thanks,
Jason

OCEAN's Annual Meeting

We welcome all of you to join us virtually for OCEAN's Annual Meeting on July 20th at 1:00 P.M. If you are interested in attending, please reach out to our Administrative Support Contractor, Alexandria Scott, at support@oceanconnect.org for the virtual meeting information and agenda.

Submitted District Stories

These quarterly newsletters are a fantastic way to share information with each other and acknowledge the great work that our Districts are doing. We reached out at the beginning of this month and asked if you for news that you wanted us to share in our spring newsletter. Below are the submissions

that our Administrative Support Contractor, Alexandria Scott, received at support@oceanconnect.org.

Clackamas Soil and Water Conservation District

CREP Program - The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) has been revived in Clackamas County after a 10-year hiatus! CREP is a voluntary program for agricultural landowners through the Farm Service Agency and provides financial and technical assistance to restore riparian areas.

Riparian areas are the interface between land and water, where specific vegetation grows adjacent to waterways. These areas not only provide critical habitat for wildlife and endangered salmon, but also cool water temperatures through shade, provide erosion control, filtration of sediment, pathogens, and chemicals, and much more.

Drew Donahue, Riparian Technician for the Clackamas Soil and Water Conservation District was hired in the summer of 2020 in order to revive this program. At the time, there were five actively managed CREP riparian projects in Clackamas County, but from 2020-2022 Drew enrolled seven new projects and re-enrolled three more to continue the benefits on existing CREP buffers. She expects another three new projects to enroll this year. This will equate to approximately 95 acres of protected riparian forest in Clackamas County through the CREP program. She only expects this number to rise as more landowners are expressing interest in restoring their streamside habitat.

Septic System Repair and Replacement Loan Program - Everywhere you look in Clackamas County you see new development, but there are plenty of long-term residents who are in older homes with older utilities. Old septic systems that are wearing out or leaking become a health and water quality concern. This is especially true when the home is along a river or stream that serves as a source of public drinking water, such as the Clackamas and Molalla Rivers.

Help to repair or replace those failing septic systems is available. The Clackamas Soil and Water Conservation District has a new septic repair grant. This grant program is a welcome addition to our existing zero-interest loan program that continues to be an option for all residents of Clackamas County.

With both programs in place, we can assist more people. Clackamas Soil and Water Conservation District received this grant to help lower-income residents of Clackamas County repair or replace their septic system or

connect to existing sewer lines. In the process, water quality is protected, even if the property does is not directly on a waterway. The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) awarded the grant to the District with funds from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021.

The septic system repair grant program is available while funding lasts or through June 30, 2024. Approved homeowners have until December 31, 2026, to complete construction of the project.

Eligibility is based on the property owner/household income compared to the Federal Poverty Line. A table showing qualification is available on our website (<https://bit.ly/42Lmjxj>) or by contacting us at 503-210-6000.

If this grant is something that would be helpful to you, and you are eligible, please complete an application that is available on our website. We will send an application by mail upon request. Then submit a bid from one of the pre-qualified contractors, that list is also on our website. If funding is available, the homeowners and District will sign a grant agreement and the project may begin.

This grant program covers required permits including a site evaluation, septic repair permit, an associated plumbing and/or electrical permits for the repair. The grant does not cover regular pumping for septic tanks or septic systems for new development.

The zero-interest loan program is available to the District through DEQ's Clean Water State Revolving Fund. This program has been helping Clackamas County residents since 2018, and is on-going. Septic systems can last a long time with care, but they do not last forever. Tanks will wear out or drain fields need repair or replacement. These programs are for all Clackamas County homeowners who are unsure of how to afford expensive repairs to old or failing septic systems. The action of repairing or replacing septic systems directly benefits property owners, but also has a positive impact on surface and groundwater. Clean water that moves downstream benefits everyone.

For information, please contact Heather Nielsen at 503-210-6000, or septicrepair@conservationdistrict.org, or by visiting our website: <https://bit.ly/42Lmjxj>

In Memorium

- Marganne Allen was strong natural resources advocate and most recently, the Water Quality Program Manager at the Oregon Department of Agriculture. Earlier she served at the Oregon Department of Forestry managing forest health. Marganne was a pleasure to work with and a key component of the water quality program working with SWCDs and we will miss her smile and her knowledge.

Retirements

- Judy Marsh, Tualatin SWCD, is retiring after being with the district for 15 years. Her last day was June 20th.

Job Opportunities

- West Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation District is excited to announce a new full-time staff position opening for an Outreach & Communications Coordinator. This person will be responsible for a wide range of outreach and communications projects and will be an important link between our District and the public. We hope you will share this announcement broadly with your networks. Deadline to apply is July 7. Find more information and how to apply at <https://wmswcd.org/2023/06/outreach-communications-coordinator/>.