Gilliam County Soil & Water Conservation District 2023-2024 Annual Report

GILLIAM COUNTY
SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Our mission is to provide support for economic sustainability for the rural community and to educate and assist the community in conservation while maintaining soil and water resources for the future.

A few words from the Manager

I'm pleased to report that the District has experienced an exceptionally productive year marked by significant accomplishments across our conservation initiatives. Our dedicated staff has successfully completed numerous projects while simultaneously expanding our pursuit of new funding opportunities to support our mission.

Over the past five years, our Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) and Focused Investment Partnership (FIP) grants have been instrumental in advancing watershed restoration, improving habitat, and implementing sustainable land management practices throughout Gilliam County. As both programs conclude in 2025, we're now actively developing proposals to renew our RCPP for another five-year cycle and secure a new FIP grant. These efforts are critical to ensuring the continuity and expansion of our conservation work throughout the county.

As I begin my sixth year as District Manager, I'm both proud of our achievements and energized by the opportunities that lie ahead. The collaborative success we've enjoyed is a testament to the dedication of our staff, the guidance of our directors, and the strong partnerships we've built with cooperating agencies.

The Gilliam SWCD remains steadfastly committed to serving the people of Gilliam County through innovative conservation programs that protect our natural resources while supporting sustainable agricultural practices. I look forward to building on our momentum and expanding our positive impact in the years to come.

Herb Winters District Manager

GILLIAM COUNTY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
Condon, Oregon

MANAGEMENT'S DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

June 30, 2024

A condensed version of the statement of activities as follows:

	Governmental Activities	
	June 30, 2024	June 30, 2023
Program revenues		
Operating grants and contributions	$ 1,161,736	$ 1,144,073
General Revenues		
Interest income	4,714	2,761
Rent Income	98,613	98,613
Miscellaneous	1,195	3,272
Total revenues	1,266,258	1,248,719
Program expenditures		
Soil and water conservation	1,169,681	1,139,169
Interest expense	30,473	38,936
Total program expenditures	1,200,154	1,178,105
Change in net position	66,104	70,614
Net position beginning of year	1,033,857	963,243
Net position end of year	$ 1,099,961	$ 1,033,857

Financial Analysis of the Government's Funds

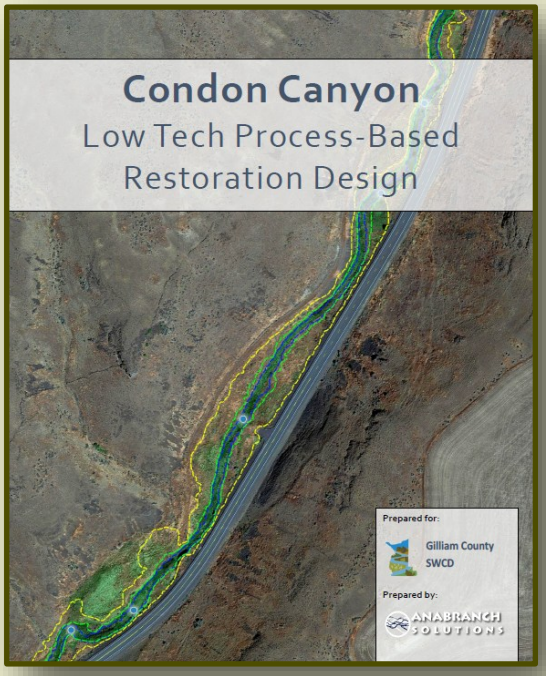
The focus of the District's governmental funds is to provide information on short term inflows, outflows, and balances of spendable resources. Such information is useful in assessing the District's financing requirements. In particular, unassigned fund balance serves as a useful measure of a government's net resources available for spending at the end of the fiscal year.

At June 30, 2024, the District's governmental funds reported an ending fund balance of $338,195, an increase of $225,106 in comparison with the prior year. Much of the decrease resulted from a greater proportion of receivables being collected more than 60 days after year-end. Receivables collected more than 60 days after year-end are deemed unavailable and are recorded as revenue in the following year. The ending fund balance included $57,016 restricted by grantors for soil and water conservation.

Our Team

- Herb Winters, who joined the team in November of 2017, holds the position of Gilliam County Soil and Water Conservation District, District Manager.
- Norie Wright joined the team in the summer of 2018 as a Conservation Technician I . Previously, Norie held the position of GEJDWC Coordinator. In December of 2018, Norie took the position of Office Manager.
- Jessica Gillen joined the team in early 2019 to fill the Conservation Technician I position.
- Roger Lathrop holds the Project Manager position and has been with the district for 17 years.
- Katie Garthwaite holds the position of Gilliam East John Day Watershed Council Coordinator. Katie joined the team in February of 2022.

Low Tech Process Based Restoration Designs



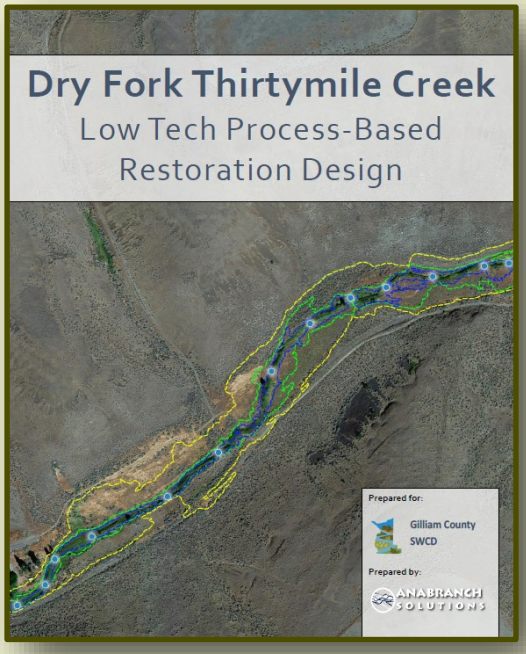
The GSWCD is currently engaged in aquatic and riparian habitat restoration planning for a watershed-scale restoration effort in the Thirtymile Creek Watershed.

This Low-Tech Process-Based (LTPBR) restoration plan has been designed to employ structural treatments to expedite the recovery and expansion of aquatic and wetland habitat around four major goals:

- Increase the proportion of the valley bottom composed of active channel and active floodplain.
- Increase pond abundance.
- Increase perennial surface flow extent during drought periods.
- Increase wetland and riparian vegetation extent, diversity, and abundance.

Condon Canyon:

This LTPBR plan has been designed to initiate fluvial processes to increase water residence times, attenuate high flow run-off, and increase wetland formation and persistence along a 4.6-mile section of Condon Canyon in the Thirtymile Creek Watershed through the installation of 29 beaver dam analogs (BDAs).



Dry Fork Thirtymile Creek

This LTPBR plan has been designed to initiate fluvial processes to increase pool frequency and depth, create fines deposition for riparian vegetation growth, and increase water residence times along a 4.2 mile section of Dry Fork Thirtymile creek in the Thirtymile Creek Watershed through installation of 114 beaver dam analogs (BDAs).

WET FORK OF HAY CREEK RESTORATION

RIVERSCAPE RESTORATION

Implementation of Low-Tech Process Based Restoration—

LTPBR Designs were created in 2023 for Wet Fork of Hay Creek Restoration. Implementation for Phase one was completed in the Summer 2024

The Wet Fork Restoration consists of an initial phase of installing 160 BDA in 6.6 miles of intermittent stream channel within the Hay Creek project area. The objective of the Wet Fork LTPBR project is to affect the hydrology and geomorphology of the project area through wetland creation and enhanced floodplain connectivity. This altered hydrology would attenuate high flow run off, and act as a storage bank for water, that would slowly percolate through the valley floor rather than leave the system quickly. Increasing the residency time of water would also mean a prolonged released through the system, equating to wetted instream conditions for longer into the dry summer months.

OREGON
Fish & Wildlife

District Conservation Programs– Partnerships With ODFW

Thirtymile Steelhead-Bass Interaction

The monitoring in Thirtymile Creek, a tributary to the John Day River, near Condon, Gilliam County, OR, aims to quantify the impact of nonnative small mouth bass invasion on ESA-listed Mid-C summer steelhead productivity under current environmental conditions, as well as quantify the strength of the interaction under altered thermal regimes and invasion scenarios, which are predicted to occur as a result of the proposed restoration activity.

Butte/Thirtymile Monitoring Phase II

This project is located in the Thirtymile and Butte Creek Watershed in the Lower John Day Basin. Specifically, we map the extent of summer surface flow in both streams and measure stream temperatures at basin-scale and at a project level scale to assess temperature heterogeneity created by the beaver dam analogs. We will conduct surveys for juvenile and adult steelhead abundance and distribution in Thirtymile Creek.

Combining Methods to Monitor John Day Steelhead Migration and Overshoot

Approximately 60% of adult steelhead returning to the John Day River "overshoot" the John Day River mouth and are detected 119 km upstream in the Columbia River at McNary Dam. This means that only half of the adult steelhead arriving at Bonneville Dam survive and return to their natal stream to spawn. In order to increase the probability of John Day steelhead returning to their natal stream, we propose a third phase of monitoring .

Thirtymile Creek Conference

The three-day Thirtymile Creek Conference, held in Condon, Oregon, provided a valuable forum for in-depth discussions, encompassing both broad-scale conservation challenges and specific recommendations for the Thirtymile Creek watershed. Participants engaged in informative presentations, insightful field tours, and productive breakout sessions, fostering collaborative solutions.

Partners included:

- Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Natural Resource Conservation Service
- Design and Monitoring Specialist (Anabranch
- Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs
- Oregon State University
-Eastern Oregon University
- Bureau of Land Management
- Western Beavers Cooperative

Active Projects in the Thirtymile Watershed

In 2023 GSWCD joined the Conservation Effectiveness Partnership for the Thirtymile Watershed. The Conservation Effectiveness Partnership has a mission to describe the effectiveness of cumulative conservation and restoration actions in achieving ecological outcomes through collaborative monitoring, evaluation, and reporting. CEP partners have agreed on goals and objectives for the partnership, with an emphasis on water quality and watershed health.

Current Projects include:

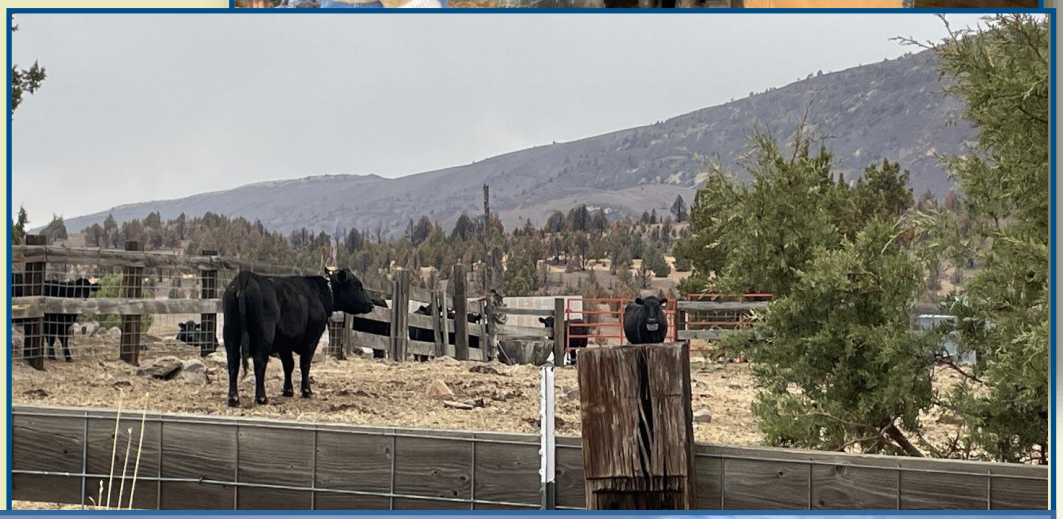
- Middle Thirtymile LTPBR
- Thirtymile Monitoring Phase 4
- Selby's Spring development
- Schott Juniper Treatment
- Big Mossy Water Improvement
- Thirtymile SIA
- Thirtymile Steelhead/Bass Interaction
- Thirtymile Hydrologic Assessment
- Lower Thirtymile Restoration Design and Implementation Phase 1
- Lower Thirtymile Restoration Implementation Phase 2
- Comstock Basin Riparian Fencing, Planting, and Livestock Distribution
- Lower Thirtymile Restoration Design
- 2024-2026 Thirtymile Phase III
- Wilson Low-Tech Process-Based Restoration
- Upper Thirtymile Low-Tech Process-Based Restoration
- Sniption Low-Tech Process-Based Restoration

Lonerock Fire Response Plan Virtual Fence

In July, Gilliam County landowners near the town of Lonerock experienced a large and devastating wildfire. The Lonerock Fire burned an estimated 137,222 acres. This fire consumed approximately 50,000 acres of grazed rangeland that supports approximately 2100 cow-calf pairs in Gillam County alone. In Gilliam County this fire occurred on 28 different entities, some of which lost nearly 100% of their grazed rangeland. An initial inventory conducted by the Gilliam SWCD identified approximately 300 miles of fence within the burn boundary in Gilliam County with an estimated replacement value of roughly $9.5 million dollars.

Lonerock Fire Response Plan Virtual Fence continued...

The Gilliam SWCD has worked to provide immediate assistance to these producers by implementing virtual fence systems to assist these community members until infrastructure can be rebuilt. Additionally, these virtual fence systems will be used to respond to future fires and assist this agricultural community as well.



Funding was secured through the Ford Family Foundation, Gilliam County, landowners, and GSWCD to purchase ten virtual fence systems. To date, two systems are in place, providing available grazing to 2 producers affected by fire, with more implementation planned in 2025.

Lonerock Wildfire Mitigation Project: Building Resilience After Devastation

Following the devastating Lonerock Fire of July 2024, which burned approximately 137,222 acres and destroyed an estimated 300 miles of fencing in Gilliam County, the SWCD has taken proactive steps to enhance our community's wildfire resilience. We're excited to announce our application for a $1.73 million FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) grant to implement comprehensive wildfire risk reduction measures.

FEMA-Funded Hazard Mitigation

The Lonerock Wildfire Mitigation Project, submitted under FEMA's Post-Fire Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP-PF), represents a significant opportunity to reduce future wildfire risks while supporting sustainable land management practices. If approved, FEMA funding will cover 75% of project costs, with the remaining 25% provided through Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board matching funds.

Comprehensive Approach to Wildfire Mitigation

The FEMA-funded project integrates several proven strategies:

- Mechanical treatment of western juniper across 2,215 acres
- Chemical treatment of invasive grasses on 1,000 acres
- Biomass removal on 301 acres
- Expansion of our virtual fencing program for strategic grazing management

This ridge-top-to-ridge-top approach aligns with our district's conservation focus areas, particularly the management of invasive species, which increase wildfire risk while degrading rangeland health.

Benefits Beyond Fire Prevention

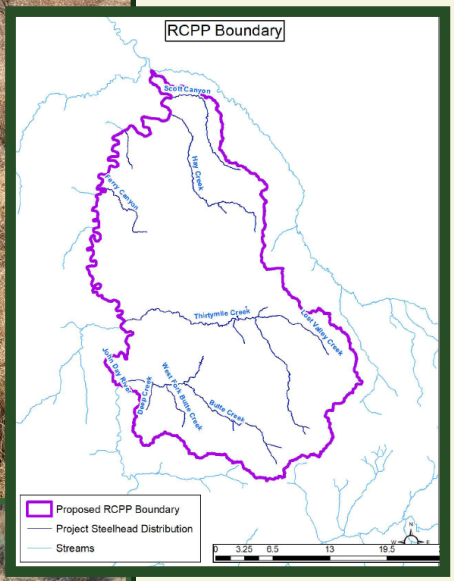
Beyond reducing wildfire hazards, this FEMA project supports our mission of promoting economic sustainability through conservation. By controlling invasive species, improving grazing management, and restoring native ecosystems, we're enhancing the resilience of both our natural resources and agricultural operations.

RCPP

John Day Canyons Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

RCPP is an innovative program, that has, as its critical features a co-investment approach through which NRCS and partners collaborate to implement natural resource conservation activities. This will bring an estimated $4 million to our basin over the 5 Years.

- In 2020 the Gillam SWCD wrote a successful proposal for Regional Conservation Partnership Program. The goal of the Lower John Day Canyons Restoration Initiative (LJDCRI) is to protect and enhance over 40 miles of critical Mid-Columbia Steelhead habitat in the Lower John Day Basin. The project area is located in Gilliam and Wheeler Counties and is approximately 518,000 acres. This project seeks to use partner capital and NRCS RCPP funds to perform a ridge-top to ridge-top landscape-scale restoration effort. The objectives are to install use exclusion fencing, Beaver Dam Analog structures, and riparian plantings to improve native fish habitat. Additionally, upland objectives will also be pursued to reduce sediment inputs into the river. These include forest stand improvement, brush management, spring developments, expired CRP reseeding, sediment control basins, and firebreaks.



Summary of 2024 Obligations

Livestock Pipeline: 17,639 Feet
Troughs: 11
Brush Mgt: 964 Acres
BDA's: 2,329 feet
Cistern: 1
Spring Developments: 8
Access Road: 3,700 Feet

Partnership/Planning
John Day Basin Partnership OWEB FIP

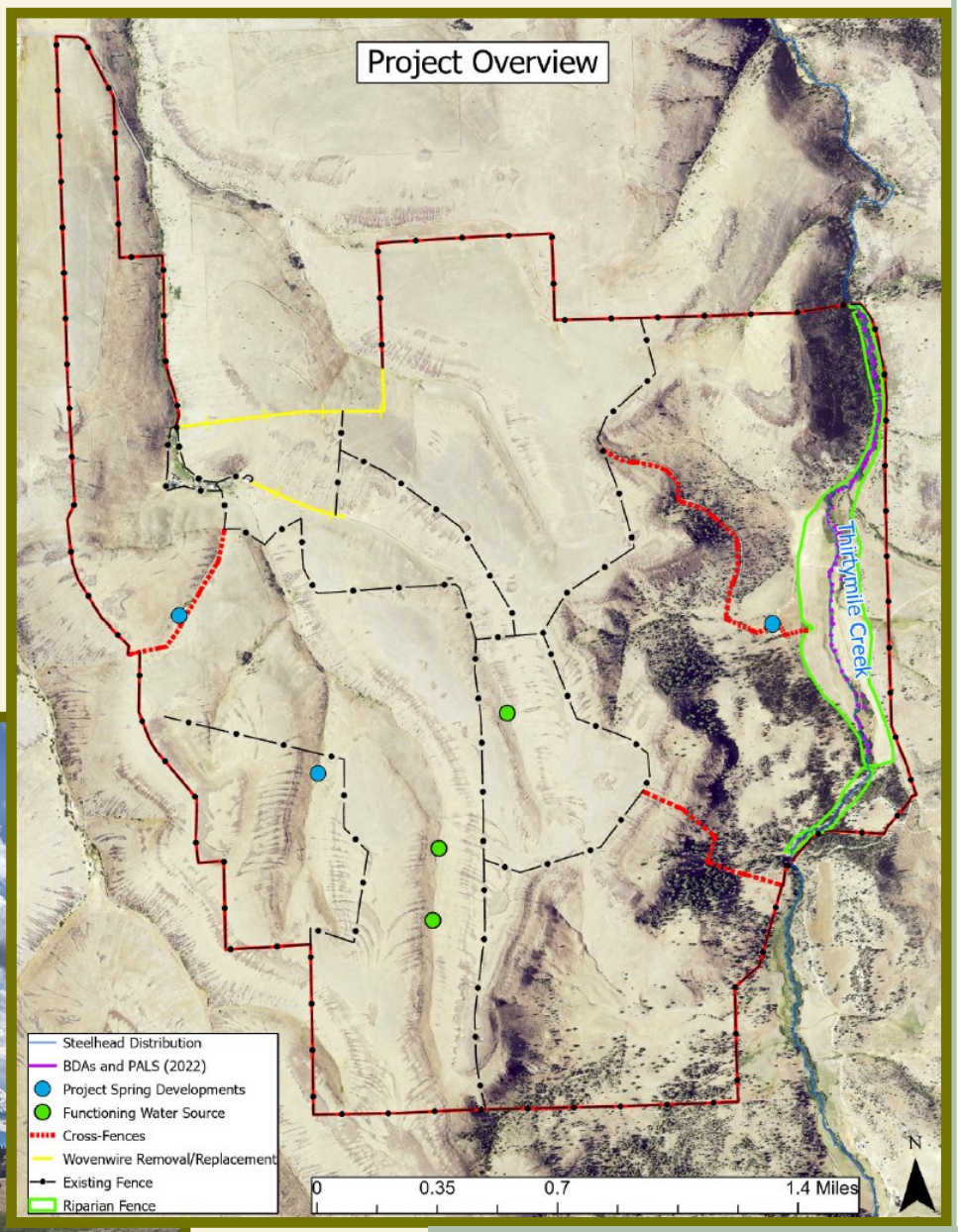
The John Day Basin Partnership (JDBP) formed in 2014 from a diverse group of stakeholders. The function of the Partnership is to build and implement a basin wide strategic action plan that can bring in additional funding to support more high-quality ridge-to-ridge watershed restoration projects.

Lower John Day Working Group-
OWRD Place Based Planning

In partnership with Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD), this is a collaborative water planning effort to address water challenges facing the Lower John Day Basin. In July of 2022, the Implementation Work Group requested a portion of the $1 million received by the Oregon Water Resources Department (Department) under the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) for implementation coordination of the Lower John Day Integrated Water Resource Plan (Plan) and support for implementation on the following tasks The Department allocated $250,000.00 to implementation of the Plan .

Gilliam SWCD Large Scale Restoration
Comstock basin

The Comstock Basin Riparian Fencing, Planting, and Livestock Distribution Project, led by the GSWCD, has recently received full funding. With this support, the project aims to address significant ecological concerns in Thirtymile Creek and its surrounding habitats in Gilliam County, Oregon. This project is in partnership with OWEB, FSA, and other regional stakeholders and will encompass restoration work on 1.9 miles of Thirtymile Creek and nearly 1,900 acres of adjoining pastureland.



Summary

- 20,300 feet of riparian fence
- 3,500 riparian plants
- 11,500 feet of cross fence
- 3 sources of off-site

County, Community, Outreach and Engagement

Gilliam County

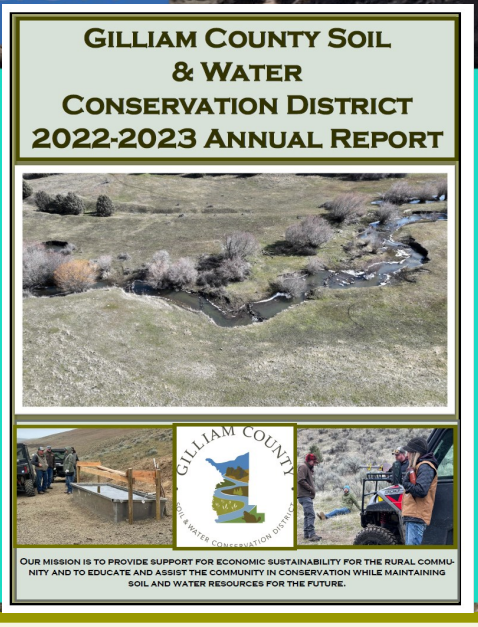
Gilliam County provide capacity funding for Implementation of the **Gilliam County, John Day Basin, Total Maximum Daily Load Implementation Plan dated December, 2019.** The District will implement the TMDL Plan, assist the County with completing reports that County must provide to DEQ in accordance with the TMDL Plan. Provide assistance with Geographic Information Systems to County's Assessor at County's request, and provide outdoor and conservation educational opportunities to students enrolled in schools located within the boundaries of Gilliam County.

Small Grant Program

This is an excellent resource for small acts of conservation kindness that can be done by land managers and land owners. In partnership with OWEB, we are able to use $100,000 every two years to support these efforts.

Education and Outreach

The Gilliam SWCD continues to engage the community, producers, and landowners through numerous events and activities.



Additional Help

Summer Intern- Kallyn Wilkins

This summer I had the opportunity to work at the Gilliam SWCD. I am working on finishing a Bachelor's Degree in Environmental Science, so working at the SWCD allowed me to learn more about the different fields of work within conservation. Spending time in the field was by far one of my favorite parts about this summer. I was able to go out with Liz Blackburn and her team to help with her Steelhead Bass interaction study. I learned a ton about how data is collected to understand how Smallmouth Bass effects the population of Fry Steelhead in Thirtymile. In addition, I also went out with NRCS and learned what cultural resource surveys are all about. It was interesting to see all the work that goes into getting different NRCS projects approved. A few days were spent in the field with Herb completing CBASS drone flights. It was really neat to see how much ground a drone is able to cover in a short amount of time.

When in the office I spent time learning about grant reporting and project management with Norie. I also had the opportunity to learn more about GIS with Herb and how it is utilized for different projects such as juniper removal, showing fire boundaries, and which landowners were effected most by the fire. Additionally, I worked with Roger learning about the CREP and CRP programs. It was interesting to learn more about how these programs operate and what they do. This summer was eye opening to see all the ways that the SWCD works and all that they are able to do.

Interim Watershed Council Coordinator- Melanie Theall

This winter, I had the opportunity to work with the Gilliam East John Day Watershed Council. Growing up in Lakeview, Oregon, with a deep connection to agriculture and the outdoors, my passion for natural resources led me to pursue a degree in Rangeland Sciences at Oregon State University. Summers spent fighting wildfires further solidified my desire to work in conservation.

During my time with the Watershed Council, I greatly enjoyed expanding my knowledge of watershed science, particularly learning about Beaver Dam Analogs (BDAs) and the significant benefits they provide to ecosystem health. A highlight was the opportunity to attend the Oregon American Fisheries Society conference and learn about the diverse projects happening across the state.

While field work was limited due to the winter season, I did have the chance to go out with NRCS and gain insight into the process of project approvals. In the office, I focused on learning valuable skills such as grant writing and project management. Additionally, I dedicated a significant amount of time to working on the irrigation efficiency study.

Prior to joining the Watershed Council, I spent time traveling and working in New Zealand, broadening my perspective and appreciation for different ecosystems. My temporary position is concluding this week, and I'm looking forward to heading to Australia in April to work and travel. This experience with the Gilliam East John Day Watershed Council has been invaluable in furthering my understanding of conservation practices.

Gilliam Soil and Water Conservation District Staff Directory

District Manager	Herb Winters	384-2672, ext 110
Office Manager	Norie Wright	384-2672, ext 108
Project Manager	Roger Lathrop	384-2672, ext 106
Conservation Technician I	Jessica Gillen	384-2672, ext 108
Watershed Coordinator	Katie Garthwaite	384-2672, ext 111

Board of Directors

- **Jordan Maley**-Chairman- Jordan is the OSU Extension Agent for Gilliam County. Jordan also manages family holdings north of Condon and on Ferry Canyon.
- **John Anderson**-Vice-Chair-John and his wife Marilee own land in the Thirtymile Watershed.
- **Rich Harper**-Secretary/Treasurer- Rich and his wife Alice manage the Circle W Ranch on middle Rock Creek.
- **Chet Wilkins-**Chet is the Gilliam County Assessor and operates a family ranch on Rock Creek.
- **Doug Potter-**The Potter family operates a multi-generational farming operation in the Condon area. When not helping out on the place Doug maintains a "day job" with the Gilliam County Weed Department.

Gilliam SWCD Thanks

The work of the Gilliam SWCD is supported and enhanced by many, starting with our producers and landowners. But, none of our projects would succeed without the support of our funding partners. Our thanks to our producers, landowners and the following funding partners:

- Oregon Dept. of Agriculture
- Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board
- Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs
- Bonneville Power Administration
- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Gilliam County
- Farm Service Agency
- Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Oregon State University
- Bureau of Land Management