

The Rolling Thunder

Soil & Water Conservation District

District Partnership Award

Sherman and Wasco SWCDs were awarded the District Partnership Award from NRCS for providing outstanding assistance during fiscal year 2018 to help farmers and ranchers impacted by catastrophic wildfires. NRCS and the Wasco and Sherman SWCDs partners responded promptly and efficiently by offering technical and financial assistance through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). The assistance helped producers address several natural resource concerns; primarily soil and wind erosion, plant degradation, and plant pest pressure. The Wasco and Sherman SWCDs provided exemplary partnership to NRCS to provide outreach, contracting, and field support for post-fire recovery activities in Wasco and Sherman Counties. SWCD staff were actively engaged in local communities impacted by the fires and participated in several meetings and community forums to hear landowner's needs and concerns. Working in partnership with NRCS, they kept landowner's needs at the forefront of their business approach and offered a suite of conservation practices that addressed the localized resource concerns in a manner that would also meet producer's needs. The role of local SWCD staff was paramount to the success of this effort. For example, they coordinated the contracting of herbicide and seed and scheduled aerial applications with participating landowners in a timely manner. Due to the timing of the fires in late summer, staff worked on a very rapid timeline to mobilize a cost-share program and obligate funds before the end of the fiscal year. Staff worked long hours and demonstrated an outstanding level of customer service to successfully obligate nearly \$7 million in financial assistance for Wasco and Sherman County producers within only a few weeks.

District Employee Partnership Award

Chase Schultz of the Wheeler SWCD was recognized for his exemplary support to NRCS to further conservation program delivery for the North Slope Ochoco Holistic Restoration Project. The project is improving water quantity and quality, restoring fish and wildlife habitat, improving forest and rangeland health, and sustaining agricultural productivity in Wheeler County. Chase has been a key contributor of the project. In his first year assuming the lead role for the SWCD, Chase coordinated all cultural resource work on more than 20 contracts. He worked with NRCS archaeologists to arrange for surveys, submitted all necessary paperwork on time, and coordinated with landowners to ensure the surveys were successful. He also worked diligently to inventory, layout and certify all upland practices including juniper cuts, range seedings and livestock water developments. He ensures that landowners interests are fully represented.



Pictured Left to Right: Shilah Olson, District Manager for Wasco SWCD; Dan Esposito District Conservationist (DC) for Wasco NRCS; Amanda Whitman, District Manager for Sherman SWCD; and DelRae Ferguson, Acting DC for Sherman NRCS.

Pictured Left to Right: Chase Schultz of the Wheeler SWCD; Damon Brosnan, District Conservationist for Gilliam and Wheeler county NRCS; and Kevin Conroy, Acting State Conservationist for NRCS Oregon.

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“In the spring, I have counted 136 different kinds of weather inside of 24 hours.”

~ Mark Twain



Soil & Water Conservation District continued...

Upcoming Meetings

The SWCD will hold a Budget Hearing on May 14th, 2019 at 5:15 pm followed by a District Board Meeting at 5:30 pm at the SWCD Office, 302 Scott Street, Moro, OR 97039.

Annual Meeting

The annual meeting was held on March 28th and was a huge success with 42 people attending. The SWCD presented the 2017-2018 annual report and our guest speaker, Bob Zybach, did an excellent job explaining the history of wildfires in Oregon and gave some insights into the recent wildfires that impacted Sherman County.

County Cost Share Funding

The SWCD will have more funding for county cost share grants this coming July to address resource concerns. Examples of previous projects include reshaping terraces to improve water storage capacity and ease of farming, spring developments to improve livestock distribution and water access, improving haul roads to decrease wind and water erosion, and cross fencing to improve livestock distribution. Projects under \$10,000 are reimbursed at 75% of total cost and 50% for projects over \$10,000 with project cap set at \$15,000. Participants are given one year to complete projects.

Aerial Seeding

Aerial Seeding will be available this fall as the SWCD contracts out seeding of areas burned in the 2018 wildfires. If you have burned ground you would like seeded or other potential areas with resource concerns that need vegetation establishment please contact the District and we can assist you.

Range Drill

A Range Drill is available to landowners/operators to rent from the SWCD for range restoration, pasture seeding or grass seeding.

Farm Service Agency

Please keep in mind the following important dates:

- March 1 – July 15: Primary Nesting Season, no maintenance activities can be conducted on CRP without written request and approval by COC
- May 27: Offices closed for Memorial Day
- July 1 – Please submit requested documentation for Livestock Deaths (LIP) and Additional Feed Purchases (ELAP) due to winter storms to the FSA office.
- July 15: last day to timely file any remaining crops for acreage reports



Program Updates

The Sherman County FSA announces our funding for the 2018 ECP sign up has been approved for fencing applications under \$100,000 and over \$100,000. Please submit your cost documentation and labor receipts in order to begin the payment process. FSA will be conducting site visits to verify fences are being completed to NRCS specifications. Look for your approval letters to come in the mail along with specification sheets. For more information, or to make an appointment to submit your documents, please call the office at 541-565-3551 x 2

CRP Participants Must Maintain Approved Cover on Acreages Enrolled in CRP and Farm Programs

- Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) participants are responsible for ensuring adequate, approved vegetative and practice cover is maintained to control erosion throughout the life of the contract after the practice has been established. Participants must also control undesirable vegetation, weeds (including noxious weeds), insects and rodents that may pose a threat to existing cover or adversely impact other landowners in the area.
- All CRP maintenance activities, such as mowing, burning, disking and spraying, must be conducted outside the primary nesting or brood rearing season for wildlife, which for Oregon is March 1st through July 15th. However, spot treatment of the acreage may be allowed during the primary nesting or brood rearing season if, left untreated, the weeds, insects or undesirable species would adversely impact the approved cover. Please submit a written request to Sherman County FSA Committee to conduct spot spraying or mowing during the Primary Nesting Season. In this instance, spot treatment is limited to the affected areas in the field and requires County Committee approval prior to beginning the spot treatment. The County Committee will consult with NRCS to determine if such activities are needed to maintain the approved cover.
- Annual mowing of CRP for generic weed control, or for cosmetic purposes, is prohibited at all times.

Sherman County Area Watershed Council

Upcoming Meetings

The next Watershed Council Meeting will be held June 11, 2019 at 7:30 am at the SWCD Office.

Small Grant Funding

Do you have resource concerns or a conservation project in mind? Small grant funding will be available in July from the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) for conservation projects. Once funded participants will have two years to complete projects.

We are Hiring!

The SWCD and Watershed Council are currently accepting applications for a full time Watershed Program Assistant in Moro, Oregon. Benefits included, pay DOE. Duties include assisting the execution of day to day management, outreach, education, and administrative tasks for the Sherman County SWCD and Watershed Council. The Program Assistant will provide support for the SWCD and Watershed Council meetings, grant submittals and tracking, project implementation and NRCS Farm Bill support. Application information can be found on our website: www.shermancountyswcd.com/Jobs.html. Contact Amanda Whitman for questions @ 541-565-3216 ext. 109 or email amanda.whitman@or.nacdn.net. Applications will be accepted until position is filled.

Arbor Day Tree Planting

The Watershed Council had a successful Arbor Day planting trees & shrubs with the Sherman Elementary 4th graders at the Deschutes State Park along the river in areas burned during the Substation Fire. Planted species included Red Osier Dogwood, Black Cottonwood, White Alder, and Coyote Willow. A big thanks to Oregon State Parks and Mrs. Mobley for making this a successful day. The class also got a quick wildflower hike with the Watershed Coordinator and photography lesson courtesy of Jeremy Lanthron. Tree planting activities continued at the Bill Todd Memorial Nursery with the Sherman High School Intro to AG class.



Natural Resource Conservation Service

Office Updates

The application deadline for the 2019 CSP Sign-Up is May 10th. Call Emily Huth (541) 565-3551 Ext. 108 for more information.

Staff Changes

We appreciate the time and hard work put in by Del Rae Ferguson, NRCS Range Conservationist from Condon, as the interim acting District Conservationist (DC) and wish her well in returning back to Condon to manage NRCS programs in Gilliam and Wheeler Counties. The office also welcomes back Jake Calvert, NRCS Soil Conservationist from Heppner, as the current interim acting DC as NRCS continues the hiring process for a new DC.



Lower Grass Valley Canyon Noxious Weed Assistance

The Sherman County Area Watershed Council has funding available to treat noxious weeds in the Lower Grass Valley Canyon. Surveys from 2017-2018 documented Rush Skeletonweed, Diffuse and Russian Knapweeds, Scotch, Canada, and Bull Thistles, along with White Top and Puncture Vine covering an estimated 370 acres. The Sherman County Weed District will be completing herbicide application and placing biological control agents. Please contact the Watershed Council if you have an area in mind to get treated in the project area. Land enrolled in USDAs Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) or Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) is not eligible.

Experiment Station Weather

Air Temperature

Month	Average Max	Average Min
January 2019	43	27
January average	39	26
February 2019	35	18
February average	44	27
March 2019	41	21
March average	52	32
April 2019	59	38
April Average	58	36

January

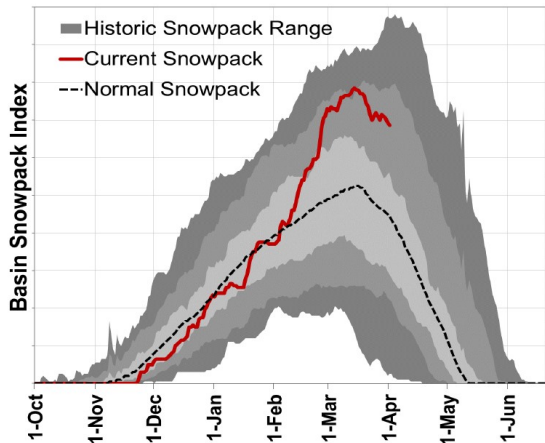
The highest temperature was 59°F on the 28th
The lowest temperature was 15°F on the 15th

February

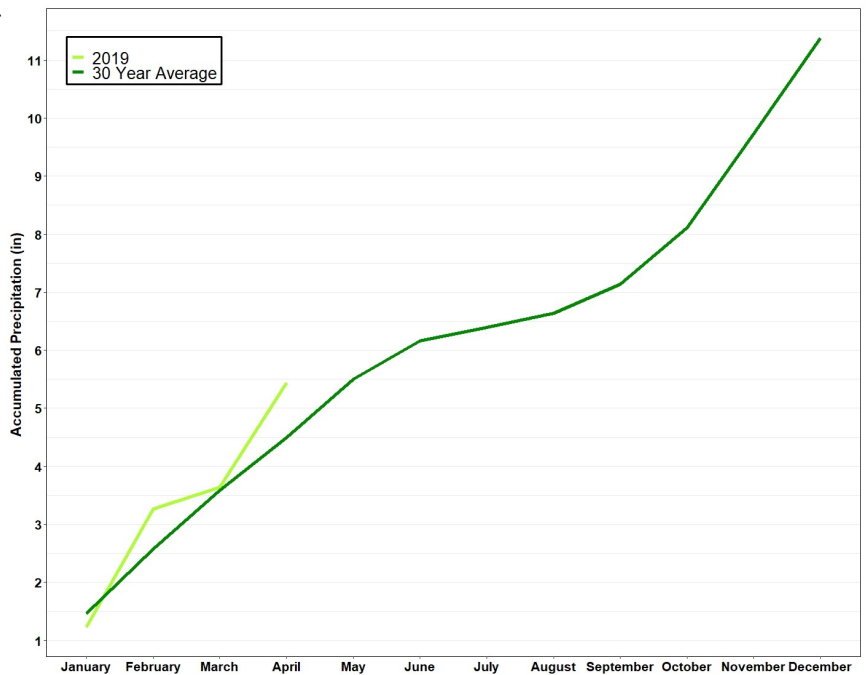
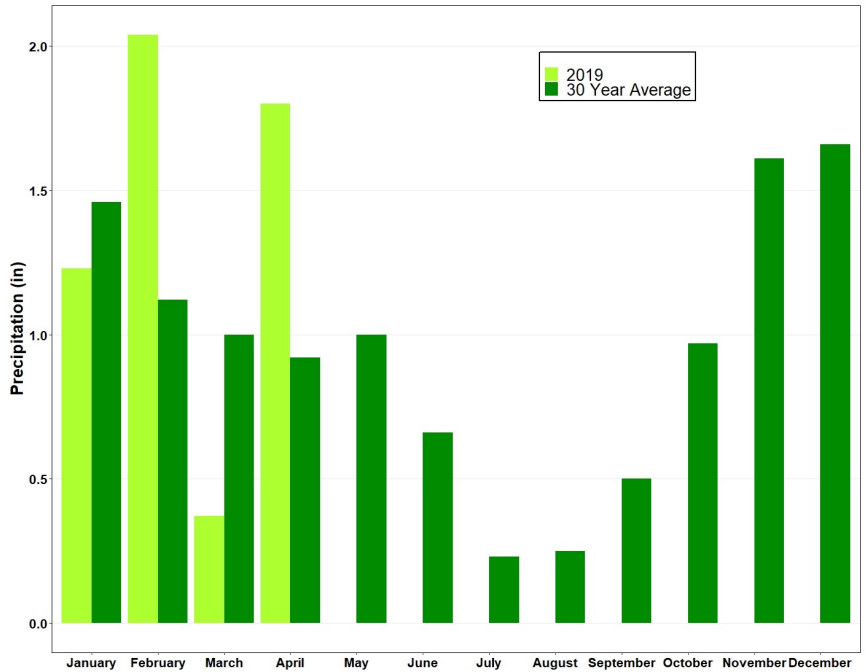
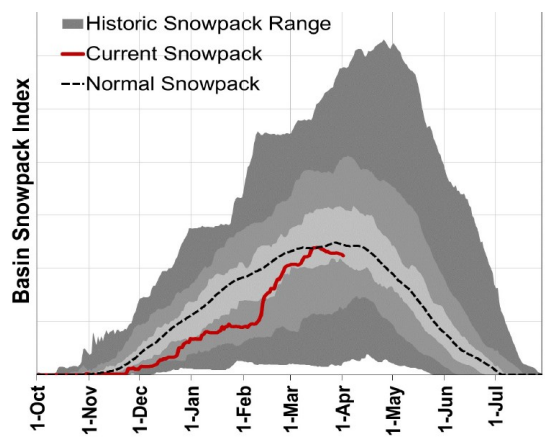
The highest temperature was 45°F on the 4th
The lowest temperature was 0°F on the 4th & 9th

Snowpack: John Day Basin is at 153% of normal. Hood, Sandy, and Lower Deschutes, are at 94% of normal

John Day Basin Mountain Snowpack



Hood, Sandy, and Lower Deschutes Basins

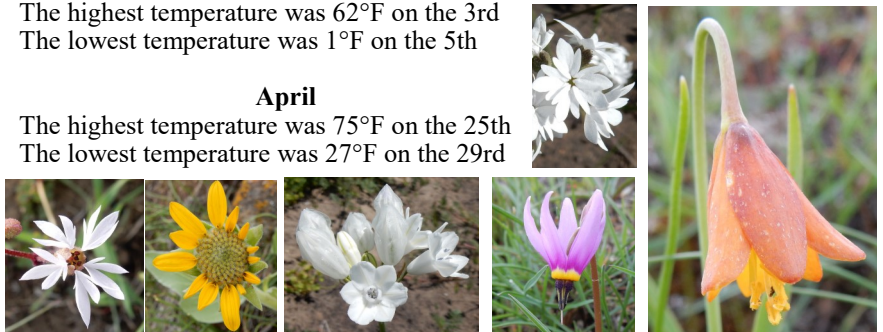


March

The highest temperature was 62°F on the 3rd
The lowest temperature was 1°F on the 5th

April

The highest temperature was 75°F on the 25th
The lowest temperature was 27°F on the 29th



Lower John Day Working Group Meeting

Outreach Event: The Lower John Day Working Group is holding an outreach event on **Thursday, May 23 from 5:00 pm to 7:30 pm** at Cottonwood Canyon State Park. The event is planned to share with producers, ranchers, conservationists, and recreationists enjoying the John Day River what the Placed Based Partnership is about and how the engagement of all relevant stakeholders ensures the continued sustainable use of water in the John Day River for both recreation and agriculture. There will be speakers from Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife and OSU Pacific Northwest Climate Impacts Research Consortium (CIRC). CIRC is a climate-science-to-action team funded by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). CIRC acts in a supporting role for communities, policy makers, and resource managers in Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and western Montana as they adapt to climate variability and change. To do this, CIRC collaborates directly with Pacific Northwest communities as part of our Community Adaptation effort. CIRC researchers are also developing Climate Tools, a series of free online resources and applications.



Background: Place Based Planning began with the Oregon Legislature, the Water Resources Commission, and the Oregon Water Resources Department. A “place-based” integrated water resources planning approach is a tool for Oregon communities to achieve that level of coordination, by collaboratively developing a shared vision for the future, and anticipating the need to address specific water-related challenges. In 2016 the Gilliam County Soil and Water Conservation District, on behalf of the Lower John Day Working Group, applied for and was awarded a grant from the Oregon Water Resources Department to engage in a collaborative water planning effort to prioritize and address water challenges and plan for a sustainable water future. Place-Based Planning is a five-step planning process. Through this effort we will identify regional solutions to efficiently develop, conserve, store and utilize water to meet both instream and out-of-stream needs. The steps are as follows: 1) Build a Collaborative and Integrated process, 2) Characterize Water Resources, Water Quality, and Ecological Issues, 3) Quantify Existing and Future Needs/Demands, 4) Develop Integrated Solutions for Meeting Long-Term Water Needs, 5) Adopt the Plan. We are currently working on Step 3, examining current and future instream and out-of-stream water needs in the Lower John Day Basin, and will be seeking landowner input and feedback on solutions to meet those needs.

Local Advertisements

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~ CONSERVATION CALENDAR ~

May 10: Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) Sign Up Deadline
May 14: Wasco County Crop Hop Tour, 8:00 am, at the Auction Yard in The Dalles
May 14: Oregon Wheat Foundation Golf Scramble and Sponsor Opportunities, Pendleton Country Club
May 16: Sherman County SWCD Budget Hearing, 5:15 PM, SWCD office
May 16: Sherman County SWCD Board Meeting, 5:30 PM, SWCD office
May 23: Lower John Day Working Group Planning Meeting, 1 - 4 pm, Cottonwood Canyon State Park
May 23: Lower John Day Working Group Outreach Event, 5 - 7:30 pm, Cottonwood Canyon State Park
May 27: Memorial Day - Sherman SWCD Office Closed
June 10: OWGL Board Meetings, Pendleton Convention Center
June 10: Irrigated Wheat Field Day, Hermiston AG Research & Extension Center
June 11: Sherman County Area Watershed Council Meeting, 7:30 am, SWCD office
June 11: Sherman County SWCD Board Meeting, 8:30 am, SWCD office
June 12: CBARC Field Day, OSU Extension, Moro, OR
June 20: Morrow County Crop Tour, time and location TBA
July 4: Fourth of July - Sherman SWCD Office Closed

~ BOARD & STAFF ~

SWCD Staff

Amanda Whitman, District Manager
Jacob Powell, Watershed Council Coordinator
Vacant, Watershed Program Assistant

NRCS Staff

Jake Calvert, Acting District Conservationist
Emily Huth, Soil Conservationist

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