

SEPTEMBER 2023 | FALL ISSUE

# Cultivating

HEALTHY FARMS, FORESTS, FOOD,  
AND FAMILIES IN POLK COUNTY

THE EXPANDING ROLE OF  
WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE | **PG. 4**

# WHO WE ARE



**Oregon State University**  
Extension Service  
Polk County

The Polk County Office of the Oregon State University Extension Service provides research-based educational information and programs in Agriculture, Forestry, 4-H/Youth and Family and Community Development for the citizens of Polk County.

OSU Extension's mission is to convey research-based knowledge in a way that is useful for people to improve their lives,

their homes, and their communities.

## OFFICE LOCATION & HOURS

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# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

\*Go to [extension.oregonstate.edu/events](http://extension.oregonstate.edu/events) to see and register for OSU Extension events and [polkswcd.com](http://polkswcd.com) for event details

## SEPTEMBER

**19** - 4-H Countywide Cloverbuds - "Animals of All Ages" class @ Polk County Extension

**20** - Conservation Spotlight Podcast, KMUZ, 8am

**21** - 4-H Creative Card Creations class, 4pm-5pm @ Dallas Library

**22** - Youth Self Defense (ages 5-11), 5pm-6pm @ West Salem Kempco

**23** - Polk County Master Gardener Garden Chat "Put Your Garden to Bed", 2pm @ Monmouth Public Library

## OCTOBER

**2** - OSU Small Farm Social, 5pm - 7pm @ Chemeketa Agricultural Complex

**5** - 4-H Greenthumbers Countywide Horticulture Class, 6pm @ Polk County Extension

**6** - Polk County 4-H Open House, 6pm - 7:30pm @ Polk County Fairgrounds Building C

**9** - Polk SWCD Office closed in observance of Indigenous People's Day

**9** - Youth Self Defense (ages 12-18), 4pm - 5pm @ Indy Commons

**10** - 4-H Open Art Studio, 4pm - 5pm @ Polk County Extension

**11** - Polk SWCD Board Meeting - 6pm

**13-14** - Polk SWCD Native Plant Sale, Delbert Hunter Arboretum

**17** - 4-H Countywide Cloverbuds - "Be the Story Teller" class @ Polk County Extension

**18** - Conservation Spotlight Podcast, KMUZ, 8am

**25** - 4-H Card Making Class, 3pm - 4:30pm @ Monmouth Public Library

**27** - Polk County 4-H Awards Recognition Dinner @ Polk County Fairground

## NOVEMBER

**3&4** - Polk County Holiday Fair Craft Show @ Polk County Fairgrounds

**4** - Polk SWCD, Rickreall Creek Symposium, 10am-12:30pm, Dallas Aquatic Center

**4** - Polk County Master Gardener Garden Chat "Indoor Plant Care & Optional Plant Exchange", 2pm - 3pm @ Monmouth Public Library

**7** - 4-H Painting Ceramics, 4pm - 5pm @ Polk County Extension

**10** - Polk SWCD Office closed in observance of Veterans Day

**14** - 4-H Open Art Studio, 4pm - 5pm @ Polk County Extension

**15** - Conservation Spotlight Podcast, KMUZ, 8am

**23** - Polk SWCD Office closed in observance of Thanksgiving

## DECEMBER

**5** - 4-H Christmas Cookies Class, 4pm - 5pm @ Polk County Extension

**7** - 4-H Greenthumbers Countywide Horticulture Class, 6pm @ Polk County Extension

**12** - 4-H Christmas Centerpieces Class, 2pm AND 4pm @ Polk County Extension

**19** - 4-H "Let's Make Christmas Ornaments!" Class, 4pm - 5pm @ Polk County Extension

# WHO WE ARE



**POLK SOIL AND WATER**  
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Nearly 3,000 Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) across the United States are helping local people conserve land, water, forest, wildlife, and related natural resources. SWCDs are charged with directing programs to protect local renewable natural resources.

Polk SWCD was formed in April 1966, and promotes erosion control, reduction of invasive species, improvements to farms and forests, control of animal waste, as well as improving wildlife habitat and water quality/quantity issues in Polk County. The Polk SWCD is administered by 7 locally elected volunteer directors representing 5 zones and 2 at-large positions within the county. The Polk SWCD is a source of information and education on natural resources.

## OFFICE LOCATION & HOURS

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Published Sept. 20, 2023

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Designed and Published by the  
**Itemizer-Observer**

Printed by  
**Eagle Web Press | Salem, OR**

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147 SE Court Street | Dallas, OR  
**503.623.2373**

**[www.polkio.com](http://www.polkio.com)**

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**CULTIVATING** is a quarterly publication of Oregon State University Polk County Extension Service and Polk Soil And Water Conservation District. Included in these pages, readers can find practical information on farm and forest management, on home and lifestyle choices, and on the many programs and services available through the Service and the District.



PHOTO BY MORGAN NEIL

Kathy Hadley at the family farm is one of many female farm operators in Oregon. Hadley co-manages the Rickreall, Ore., farm with her father, Dean Freeborn.

## THE EXPANDING ROLE OF **Women in Agriculture**

### **Mitch Lies**

Cultivating Editor

**T**hat traditional farm where the wife keeps the books and watches the kids while the husband farms? In today's agriculture that's far from always the case.

Particularly in Oregon, more and more the wife is working the combine alongside the husband, spraying the weeds and involved in crop manage-

ment decisions. And in some cases, it's a female leading the operation.

Kathy Hadley, who farms near Rickreall, is one of this new generation of women farmers. For Hadley, one of two girls born to Dean and Andrena Freeborn, it was never in doubt that she would one day take over the farm. As Hadley put it, from the time she was out of diapers, she was on the farm. And by the time she obtained her master's degree in agriculture from Oregon State University, like many women in agriculture today, she was co-managing the

farm, in her case, with her father.

According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, 36 percent of U.S. farms include a female producer in a management role. In Oregon, that number is even higher. Forty-four percent of Oregon farms have a female producer in a management position.

It is hard to determine from available statistics what percentage of farms have a female as the principal operator. (According to the 2012 Census of Agriculture, 44 percent of farms nationally report having two operators and 7 percent

reported three operators.) But, Hadley noted, just in the Willamette Valley, there are multiple examples of farms with females as a principal operator.

Also, women have become much more prominent in farm organizations in recent years, she said. Of the Oregon Farm Bureau's six Board of Directors, for example, three, including the president, are women. You will also find women on many of Oregon's commodity commissions. The Oregon Tall Fescue Commission, for example, has more women (five) than men (four).

Still, navigating what for many decades has been a man's world isn't always easy for a women farmer, Hadley said, and over the years she has encountered uncomfortable situations, situations where she has to prove herself. "I remember when I was a teenager, and I told a mechanic that we work with about five errors I found in the manual with the combine and he was like, 'Okay, she knows what she is talking about,'" Hadley said.

There is also the occasional uncomfortable pause when closing a sale on the phone. "It is like, 'Okay, do we need to run this by somebody else?'" she said.

Still, those situations are occurring less frequently in recent years, Hadley said. "Today I don't feel like there is any of that kind of attitude anymore. People aren't surprised if they're dealing with a woman operator or owner. Maybe they aren't necessarily expecting it, but they don't question it because it's become more common," Hadley said.

Among the more challenging aspects of being a woman farmer is juggling the needs of family and farming, Hadley said. For example, she and her husband, Troy Hadley, who runs his family's farm outside of Silverton, decided their best option for childcare for their three boys was to hire a nanny.

"That was our solution, because we either had to hire somebody for the farm or hire somebody to stay with the kids," Hadley said. "And it is a lot easier to find someone that's good with childcare than good with everything that I deal with on the farm.

"I mean, you couldn't find anybody

that could deal with the breadth of everything that I deal with," she said.

One benefit that Hadley and other women farmers in Oregon enjoy is a strong support system. In Hadley's immediate circle are five females who are their farm's principal operator and who are also raising families.

"It is definitely very helpful having a group of peers that you can relate to, because we are juggling so much: kids, families, the business and home life," Hadley said. "So, it's nice to be able to relate and talk about any aspect of that that might be going on at any given time."

There also are organizations dedicated to women in agriculture, such as American Agri-Women, the Oregon Women for Agriculture and the Polk Chapter of Oregon Women for Agriculture, one of eight such chapters in the state.

Also, many of the Oregon State University Extension agents who work with Willamette Valley farmers are female, including the two lead grass seed Extension faculty, Nicole Anderson and Christy Tanner.

Asked if she would like to see more women farmers, Hadley said she really hadn't thought about that.

"I don't get too hung up with whether it is a guy or a girl running a farm," she said. "If people are happy and confident with what they are doing, then that's great.

"I do think there are times, though, when maybe a girl doesn't think of farming as an option," she said. "For example, if there's a brother, maybe it is just assumed the brother would take over the farm.

"And so, I would hope that in the future, a daughter or female family member would be considered in the same way as a son for a farm looking to transition to the next generation," Hadley said. "I would hope that if they are interested, that they get an opportunity. I mean, I don't really think it matters whether they are a guy or a girl. If they're good for the job, they should be considered."

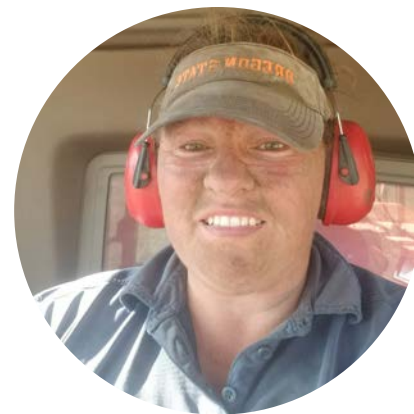


PHOTO COURTESY OF KATHY FREEBORN HADLEY  
Finishing grass seed can be messy business.

“ ... I don't really think it matters whether they are a guy or a girl. If they're good for the job, they should be considered

# 4-H GROWS IN POLK COUNTY

## Rachel Brandon

OSU 4-H Youth Development

Polk County 4-H is growing, growing, growing! Over 80 new youth joined the program in 2022-2023 - the biggest gain since 2017-2018. Even more impressive, already over 60 new families are waiting to join the program when it opens up for enrollment in October. The Polk County 4-H Program Coordinators attribute the fast-paced growth as a sign that their new programming is having a positive effect on 4-H.

Since being hired in January 2023 Andrea Hunter has re-vamped the 4-H horse program. Throughout the summer, professional horsemanship clinics were held bi-weekly at the Polk County Fairgrounds helping youth prepare for pre-fair and then the Polk County Fair. These classes resulted in a record-breaking number of youth who qualified to participate at the state level! Andrea has plans to revive the Critter Campus Learning Education Day which was traditionally held in January at the Polk County Fairgrounds. She hopes to bring additional educational opportunities to the animal science program.

Rachel Brandon transitioned from her 4-H support position to a full-fledged program coordinator in March 2023. Since her coordinator start date, she has offered a 5-day Foods Day Camp in June, a 3-day Junior Master Gardener Day Camp in July, and an Intro to Archery Workshop in August geared for youth who have never touched a bow and arrow before. Additional spring and summer programming included a ceramics painting class, container vegetable gardening, and a scrapbooking class at the Dallas Library. Future classes planned include card-making classes at both the Dallas and Monmouth libraries, classes on food preservation, baking, seasonal table arrangements, self-defense and more! (See schedule in the Calendar of Events)

All of these clinics and classes were



PHOTO BY JEN CASALEGNO PHOTOGRAPHY

Horse Pre-Fair this year was a blast for youth of all ages!

on top of the already action-packed summer youth show at the Polk County Fair. The 2023 fair brought in record numbers of turkeys, pigs, and horses. Staff had to get creative acquiring pens for the animals, but were excited to see the barns bursting full once again. It was an exciting fair with live animal shows, costume contests, performing arts, a static exhibit show, and even a dog demo. As the number of youth in the program continues to grow, so does the size of the Polk County Fair.

Both Andrea and Rachel are harnessing the newfound momentum and are excited to kick off the new 4-H Program year with the Polk County 4-H Open House on October 6th from 6:00pm-7:30pm @ the Polk County Fairgrounds. There will be food, hands on activities, animals, and prizes! All are welcome to attend and families can interact with 4-H Clubs and even enroll their youth at the event if they wish.

As the program approaches the start

of the new program year beginning October 1st, Polk County 4-H has begun collaborating with local businesses in Polk County to bring free or low-cost programming to all youth - whether enrolled in 4-H or not. These include several self-defense classes, kickboxing, and various forms of dance. The goal is to give an opportunity to all youth in Polk County to get active and try new things.

The Polk County 4-H Program encourages all youth to join 4-H to experience the different opportunities offered. First year 4-H youth are able to join the program for free due to a generous donor who believed all youth should be able to access 4-H regardless of their financial situation. Subsequent years of 4-H are \$40 for an annual membership, but donations also allow the program to be able to provide scholarships to families who need the extra boost.

See our upcoming classes listed in the Calendar of Events!

# NEW EXTENSION OFFICE SPECIALIST LANDS 'Dream Job'

**Mitch Lies**

Cultivating Editor

**J**essica Shumake, the new office specialist at Polk County Extension, loves interacting with people and enjoys working in a supportive role, two attributes that should serve her well in her position.

"I've realized that I do best in supportive role, that I thrive in that environment," Shumake said.

And when it comes to Extension programming, Shumake couldn't be more at home. "I love canning, cooking, sewing, all of those hobbies," she said. "This feels like a dream job: All of my hobbies under one roof."

Shumake, who spent the past five years at Western Oregon University, said her connection to Extension

extends back to her childhood and her participation in 4-H. She also grew up around agriculture.

"My grandfather owned a lot of acres down in Lorane (Ore.) and we'd always come down for the summer and spend time during hay season," Shumake said. "And I have uncles and aunts with farms around the countryside. So farming was kind of way of life growing up."

Her family moved to Dallas when Shumake was in the fourth grade, and she's been in the area since. She and her husband of 24 years have two grown children.

Shumake said she is excited to be in her new position and is looking forward to serving the Polk County community.

"I'm just really excited to be able to be serving the community in this position," she said. "This office does so much. That was one of the big pulls for me for this job."



PHOTO COURTESY OF JESSICA SHUMAKE

A new face in the office, Jessica joins the Polk County Extension team.

## DODGE THE *raindrops* AND FINISH FALL GARDEN TASKS

**Kym Pokorny**

OSU Extension

**T**he rains may have started, but there's still plenty that needs attention in the garden – if you're up for it. Layer up and dodge the raindrops and you've got plenty of time to plant, transplant, evaluate and plan for next year.

Gardeners tend to think of fall as the time to put bulbs in the ground, but the warm soil and increasing moisture

make it a great time to plant most anything, according to Brooke Edmunds, an Oregon State University Extension Service horticulturist. Transplanting can also be done now, though it's best to move plants that have started to go dormant. If you've got a plant that's still actively growing, flag it and transplant in spring.

In terms of cleaning up the garden, the choice is yours, Edmunds said. Some people like a spic and span look over winter, but leaving some areas of the garden undisturbed will provide

shelter for beneficial insects and food for birds and other wildlife. For more information see the OSU Extension article Should I wait to clean up the garden in order to help conserve insects by Gail Langelotto, OSU Extension Master Gardener coordinator and professor in the College of Agricultural Sciences. Whether you decide to cut back and discard perennials or leave them alone, be sure to dispose of any diseased or

**CONTINUE ON**, page 8

pest-infested plant material.

Edmunds also recommends several ways to use fallen leaves. Many gardeners refer to leaves as “garden gold” because they are so useful. Protect empty beds with leaves (straw or other organic matter work, too). A layer of leaves as mulch on the soil surface will protect the soil from compaction and erosion from winter rains.

Shred some leaves to decompose in garden beds. This feeds the soil’s microbes, which release nutrients for plants. Use your lawnmower to run over leaves to shred them and then mix in to the top inches of the soil to breakdown over the winter. If you have a thin layer of leaves on the lawn you can use a mulching mower to leave the shredded leaves in place to “feed” the lawn.

Stockpile leaves in a dry spot to add to the compost pile in spring when there is more green material like grass clippings to balance it out. For information, see Clueless about compost? Expert shares timely tips. For information about how to use compost, see How to Use Compost in Gardens and Landscapes.

**Here are some additional fall gardening activities suggested by Edmunds:**

1. Collect seed of annuals such as zinnias, marigolds, dill and sunflowers (if you can harvest before the squirrels!). Dry them and put in labeled envelopes and store in a cool, dark spot. The refrigerator will work. You can also freeze them.
2. Take stock of the garden before everything dies down to determine what went wrong and what went right. Think about what is too tall for the front of the bed and should be moved to the back and vice versa. Make notes in a journal or an app.
3. Evaluate the vegetable garden. What



varieties grew and produced well? What didn't? What was too big for the space? Make a list of what you want to plant next year and what you will forgo.

4. Start a worm compost bin to manage your kitchen scraps. Worm bins can be kept inside or outside in a protected area like a garage, shed or deck.
5. Don't neglect to clean, sharpen and oil your pruners, Edmunds said. Use soap and water to clean off mud and sap, dry thoroughly to remove all moisture, use a flat file (you can find this in the tool aisle) to sharpen the blades, and then oil the tool to seal against rust. Store in a dry place and you'll be ready for next season!
6. Remember your feathered friends. Clean out and refill seed feeders (peanuts, sunflower, thistle, millet, cracked corn, and dried fruit will attract a diversity of species), install suet blocks, and mix up fresh sugar water weekly for the hummingbirds (1 part white sugar to 4 parts water).

**Garden Chats** *Bring a healthy small- to medium-size house plant to exchange if you'd like!*

**Indoor Plant Care & Optional Plant Exchange**

**Saturday, November 4**  
**2:00-3:00**

Join us for a chat about caring for your indoor plants. Presented by Polk County Master Gardeners.

Come with questions! Monmouth Public Library  
168 Ecols St. S.  
Monmouth, OR

Questions? brooke.edmunds@oregonstate.edu  
503.623.8395

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**Put Your Garden to Bed**

**2:00 Sept. 23**

Learn about how to protect plants in cooler months, tool maintenance, and record keeping.

*Set yourself up for a bountiful 2024 garden!*

**Garden Chats**  
Join us at the Monmouth Public Library for special Garden Chats presented by the OSU Extension Polk County Master Gardener Program.

Monmouth Public Library  
168 Ecols St. S.  
Monmouth, OR 97361  
clasp@polklib.org  
503-751-0182

Oregon State University Extension Service Polk County

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# POLK COUNTY EXTENSION

# SUMMER INTERNSHIP REFLECTIONS

**Amber Stewart &  
Kieran King,**

OSU Extension Polk County  
2023 Interns

## **Amber Stewart**

Hello! My name is Amber Stewart and I am an Oregon State University Extension Service intern in Polk County. I am currently attending Chemeketa Community College to pursue my career goal of becoming a nurse. This is my second blog post.

I got to help at Polk County's Fair in early August. It was a busy but successful week filled with lots of good experiences with many opportunities to grow. Starting off fair week, I assisted with clerking in the 4-H art category. It was fun to see all the exhibits youth in Polk County entered. The following days I was at the front desk of the 4-H building to fulfill any responsibilities needed, some of which included directing our teen staff, setting up for 4-H events during fair and answering any questions that the public had about our 4-H fair or the 4-H program.

At the Oregon State Fair I assisted with horticulture. I helped the judge and clerk specifically in the flower category. I also got to help set up the horticulture exhibit section. I enjoyed the information I learned about horticulture from the judge while I was a part of this section of the state fair. This was such a good experience to expand my knowledge about horticulture. It was great to be able to be more involved with the process of the state fair.

As the end of my internship program draws near, I have been able to be a part of so much with planning learning day camps, 4-H Polk County Fair and Oregon State Fair. I am so thankful for all the opportunities I have gotten to ex-

perience and the skills I got to expand, including the new ones I have learned.

## **Kieran King**

Working for the OSU Extension Service has been a great way to spend my summer. I've met a lot of interesting people, worked on some really interesting projects, and learned a ton of new skills and information that I never expected to.

One of my favorite things that I've gotten to help with is the Olea project. I've had the opportunity to go to Aurora and collect data on OSU's olive orchard, assessing fruitset and collecting tissue samples. In the process, I've been able to meet many interesting people, including donors and researchers. Data collection and organization are also critical skills to learn as someone who wants to work in a STEM field.

Something else that I've learned during my internship is just how much work goes into public outreach. Everything from social media posts and email campaigns to manning and preparing fair booths takes so much time and effort that isn't usually seen from an outside perspective. Many of these things take hours to prepare and design, but people engaging with them may only see them for a few seconds. Even so, the unseen work that goes into outreach is worth it, because we are able to bring OSU Extension's amazing services to people in need of advice and assistance.

I'm very grateful for all that I've learned over the summer. I learned how to confidently communicate and bond with people in a professional environment, which are skills that I wanted to work on going into my internship. I've also learned a lot of practical information and skills, from noxious weed identification to the use of website building programs. Even though I might not use everything I've learned



PHOTO BY RACHEL BRANDON , OSU EXTENSION  
Amber Stewart helping clerk in the  
flower category at the Polk County Fair



PHOTO BY HAYLEY WHITE, OSU EXTENSION  
OSU Extension Small farms intern  
Kieran King during a site visit.

in my future career, I feel like a more well rounded person because of these experiences with OSU Extension.

Finally, I'd like to thank my supervisor Hayley White for making my internship such a positive experience. Her guidance helped me stay on course throughout the internship, and she always affirmed the value of my work. I couldn't have asked for a better boss!

# *KNOTWEED* - DESTROYER OF WATERSHEDS

*You can help stop this invasive shrub*

**Beth Thiel**

Resource Conservationist Farm/  
Forest, Polk SWCD

**K**notweed is a highly aggressive, perennial plant native to Japan, China, and Korea. The World Conservation Union lists knotweed as one of the world's 100 worst invasive species. Brought to the U.S. as an ornamental landscape shrub, it can now thrive along our streams without the natural competitors or pests it co-evolved with.

It not only outcompetes native vegetation creating a monoculture, but its strong roots can also damage structural foundations. Along our streams, if knotweed dominates the vegetation, a lack of plant diversity results in a lack of insect diversity which results in a lack of amphibians, birds and other wildlife and a collapse of the important ecosystem services provided in healthy habitats. While knotweed has a powerful root system, the roots lack the fine root fibers that help hold soil, meaning soil is more at risk of erosion where knotweed dominates the vegetation.

When knotweed plants do produce seed, each is encased in a papery husk that seems made to float away and eventually begin new knotweed infestations far downstream. But it is the root system that is truly formidable.

Due to the sheer size of its root system, established knotweed is able to withstand mechanical control efforts and will re-sprout vigorously, if dug or clipped back. Hand pulling may actually increase the spread and mowing is ineffective. Research shows that knotweed stems removed once a month for three years resulted in the number of stems increasing. Additionally, small plant fragments can regrow into whole new plants. Even chemical



PHOTO BY BETH THIEL

Notice the bamboo-like stems and bright green, almost heart-shaped leaves alternating along the stem.



PHOTO BY EAST MULTNOMAH SWCD

Knotweed has hollow stems with raised nodes, giving it a similar appearance to bamboo.



PHOTO BY BETH THIEL

Knotweed has small flowers in clusters along the stem.

control efforts need to be thorough and include several years of monitoring and continued attack. Controlling this invasive plant requires a team effort with good resources.

Knotweed can be controlled chemically through concerted and prolonged effort. Thankfully there have been multiple projects over the years that have kept our knotweed populations low. Polk SWCD has worked with area partners including Marion SWCD, the Salem Stream Crew, and the Luckiamute, Greater Yamhill, and the Glen-Gibson Watershed Councils to control knotweed. Everyone needs to be involved in the control of this invasive species. If you are aware of a knotweed location, report it online at the Oregon Invasives hotline <https://oregoninvasiveshotline.org/>.

To identify, look for a tall (6-12 feet) dense shrub with bright green, smooth edged leaves and stems with reddish coloration that are segmented like bamboo. The flowers are small, creamy white, blooming in late summer and early autumn. It dies back to the ground every winter but comes back bigger and stronger the following summer. The stems are hollow and dead stems may remain standing during winter.

Polk SWCD is collecting information about known populations of knotweed and anticipates working with landowners to chemically treat knotweed free of charge to landowners.

Once you've found and reported knotweed, be careful not to spread it. Be cautious working around it as small fragments can get into machinery, dirt piles or the river and be moved to other areas where it will resprout and grow into a new population. For further information or suspicion of knotweed, contact Beth Thiel at [beth.thiel@polkswcd.com](mailto:beth.thiel@polkswcd.com).

# UPCOMING OPPORTUNITIES

## *Seeking Partnerships to Make an Impact in Polk County*

### **Kevin Porter**

District Manager, Polk SWCD

**W**e've been looking for opportunities to fund projects in Polk County with the Interest Reduction Act (IRA) funds. Many of the funding announcements we are getting have minimum requirements for "asks" that are very large, millions of dollars. Polk SWCD alone isn't going to swing a multi-million dollar project, but with partners to expand the area these funds service, we may be able to get there.

My goal as District Manager is to identify projects that can deliver positive results in this county. I can't do that without input from Polk County residents. If you see something, or have a potential project in mind, please reach out to me or a board member. We are happy to have discussions regarding any ideas that the community has. Specifically regarding these IRA funds, projects need to be county scale, or larger. Some potential projects include

outreach, technical assistance, and cost-share for small woodland owners, as well as suburban and urban forested land. This could be broad in scope, covering activities from thinning to promote stand health to understory management to reduce fire risks. There's also a funding opportunity to assist with removal of fish passage barriers. That often translates to the removal of failed or inadequate culverts or other stream crossings that impair fish passage.

The window for applying for these IRA funds is now and stretches into next year. If we are successful with any of the applications we might submit, those funds are ready to be distributed ASAP. We've built flexibility into the District budget so we can take on something quickly, if the opportunity presents itself. As always, the District has access to OWEB grant funding, from small \$15,000 grants that can be very flexible in scope and scale, to large grants for specific riparian and upland projects.



PHOTO BY MORGAN NEIL

Kevin Porter, District Manager, Polk SWCD

### FOR MORE INFO

If you would like to have a conversation about potential projects or areas of concern where the SWCD could help, I'm more than willing to have a cup of coffee or take a tour. Call me at 503-623-9680 ext. 110, or email at [manager@polkswcd.com](mailto:manager@polkswcd.com).

## LONG-TERM SUCCESSES

### on Small Acreage Projects with Andante Vineyards

### **Marc Bell**

Senior Resource Conservationist,  
Polk SWCD

**K**aren Saul and her husband Joe first connected with the Polk SWCD in 2014. They had just begun their journey as rural land managers, wishing to establish wine grape production and manage the neglected oak woodland

and pond on the property. I first met Karen on the site, she was overwhelmed with excitement and the pressure to learn at a rapid pace what to prioritize and how to accomplish their goals.

Touring the woodlands with Karen and USFWS Partners Program staff Chris Seal, we pointed out opportunities, threats and how to prioritize the large list of tasks. Oak woodlands can be pushed into a number of directions

with deliberate management actions (or lack of action), after talking about what efforts would be needed for different options, Karen and Joe were enthusiastic about getting their boots dirty protecting legacy oaks, preventing invasives from overtaking valuable native brush, forbs and grasses – if not a bit wary of the volume of poison oak they knew was out there!

**CONTINUE ON**, page 13

Ultimately, we were able to bring about \$9,000 in additional funds, coordinating with USFWS Partners program efforts and the landowners. This was mainly spent on competition thinning, releasing both legacy and new oak growth. The second major spending component was on native plants. Andante is a LIVE certified and organic operation, making chemical control options limited. Quick establishment limits invasive species opportunities for regrowth, so we opted to provide plug and two-year grow out transplants rather than preparing for seed germination and establishment.

Fast forward to 2023, nine years after the first work was planned, Karen and Joe's wine grapes have grown into Andante Vineyards, with a tasting room and venue overlooking the restored oak woodland. You can clearly identify the fir that was girdled during the restoration across the pond. The faint blue-green color of Roamer's Fescue bunchgrass tufts have grown from small islands to acres around the south and eastern open meadows. Native yarrow, self-heal, tarweed and others provide a variety of flavors to pollinators otherwise gorging on pinot blossoms. We talked about how various features have developed, the resident heron that have moved on, and the owls that have made a home in the woods more recently. There is still more poison oak in the woods than they would like, but they are prepared to take on the next stages of sustaining the habitat enhancements they have invested in and love.



PHOTO BY MARC BELL

Extremely dense oak woodland in 2014 before project started.



PHOTO BY MARC BELL

Restored oak woodland in 2023 after much work.

# MID-VALLEY SMALL FARM SOCIAL IS BACK FOR ITS SECOND YEAR

**Audrey Comerford**

OSU Extension Agritourism

Save the date for Small Farm Social 2023! On October 2nd from 5-7 pm, come to the Chemeketa Agricultural Complex in Salem for a casual community building event just for farmers.

Small Farm Social is an opportunity for farmers across the Willamette Valley to connect with one another, as well as with local agricultural service providers. There will be many programs and services to learn about. Some of the service providers attending include soil and water conservation districts, NRCS, Rogue Farm Corps, Oregon Ag Trust, Oregon Aglink, and more. The program includes a welcome and introduction with plenty of time for socializing and connecting. Appetizers and refreshments will be provided and there will be a no-host bar.

Last year's event was held in late July and saw 70 attendees. Even with the weather being incredibly warm that day, the organizers were pleased with the attendance and hope the date change to October makes it even better.

This event is being hosted by Oregon State University Small Farms Program, Chemeketa Community College, and Friends of Family Farmers. Thank you to our sponsors that help make this event possible.



**FOR MORE INFO**

For more information and to register, visit <http://beav.es/T8b>



PHOTOS BY AUDREY COMERFORD

Farmers connect at the 2022 Small Farm Social.

# POLK SWCD RECOGNIZES KEY PARTNERS IN CONSERVATION

## 2023 Conservation Awards

### Morgan Neil

Outreach Coordinator, Polk SWCD

#### **Outstanding Volunteer Award- Dale Derouin**

Dale ‘lives’ community service and land stewardship. He has helped at native plant sales; he’s led tree tours, helped to add native plants at Cornerstone in the winter, and is involved in planning future events.

#### **Outstanding Volunteer Award- Pam Wetzel**

Pam has put in several hours tagging and organizing plants at our native plant sales. She volunteered at our Earth Day litter pick-up at Baskett Slough with Andante Vineyards. Pam also helped add a pollinator hedge row and other native plants at the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde’s native plant nursery.

#### **Environmental Educator Award – Lua Siegel, Luckiamute Valley Charter School**

Lua is the Gardening and Outdoor Education Program Coordinator for the LVCS. Lua has inspired hundreds of kids. Lua believes in hands-on learning through field trips and has worked with the community and school to install an impressive school garden.

#### **Conservation Research Award - Derek Godwin, Watershed Management, OSU Extension**

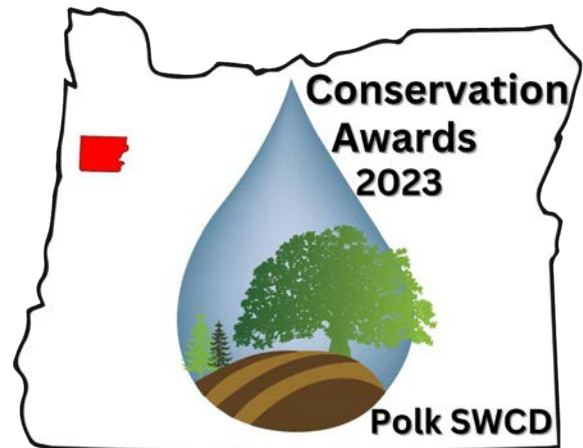
Derek specializes in education and research related to minimizing the impact of land use practices on water quality. Derek has worked at OSU for nearly 20 years and has been involved with over 40 publications and intellectual contributions.

#### **Wildlife Stewardship Award- Tony Spitzack, The Bureau of Land Management**

Tony Spitzack has made several in-stream large woody debris projects possible. The Rickreall Creek watershed has seen improvements to fish habitat and riparian function under Tony’s stewardship. The BLM has been a generous partner through Tony.

#### **Urban Conservation Stewardship Award – Glenn-Gibson Watershed Council**

The Glenn-Gibson WC helps manage the Orchard Heights Oak Savanna, a 14-acre parcel owned by the City of Salem. They continue to educate the community about increasing tree canopy at home, and invasive species removal and control. They have added multiple pollinator gardens in the city parks and oak savanna.



#### **Watershed Stewardship Award- Luckiamute Watershed Council**

The LWC has performed large woody debris projects in several Polk County streams. Their other projects include: invasive species control, native tree and shrub plantings on streambanks, and fish passage improvements. They are also a key partner in in the Mid-Willamette Beaver Partnership.

#### **Environmental Restoration Award- Institute for Applied Ecology**

IAE has worked with Polk SWCD on many habitat restoration and improvement projects. Most notably at our conservation property, Cornerstone, they have implemented a 30-acre Kincaid’s Lupine planting and a 10-acre Willamette Daisy planting.

#### **Cooperating Landowner Award- The Thorstads**

Art and Barbie Thorstad have been working with the USFWS, NRCS and the Polk SWCD since 2018. Through partnerships with multiple agencies, a vision for returning the land to its historic oak habitat and sheer tenacity, Art and Barbie Thorstad have made great strides, contributing to the footprint of oak habitat restoration in Polk County. They have taken on one of the most challenging landscapes to restore.

#### **Outstanding Cooperator Award- The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde**

The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde does so much for conserving land in and around Polk County for wildlife habitat. The Tribe helped us produce a video series about Traditional Ecological Knowledge and supported the recent cultural burn at our property, Smithfield Oaks. Their staff regularly supports District outreach and events.



**PolkSWCD.com**



PRE-ORDER NOW!

**Native Plant Sale**

OCT. 13 & 14

Polk Soil & Water  
Conservation District

40 varieties to choose from!

Pick up at the Delbert Hunter Arboretum in Dallas.

Volunteer and get a 25% discount.

Enjoy apple cider donuts and coffee at this fun fall event!