

# Thurston Conservation District



EST 1948

# ANNUAL REPORT

# 2021

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

3	MESSAGE FROM LEADERSHIP
4	RECOGNITION OF PARTNERS
5	2021 AWARDS RECIPIENTS
6	NATURAL RESOURCE PRIORITIES, GOALS, AND ACTIONS IN 2021
19	EDUCATION PRIORITIES IN 2021
24	DISTRICT OPERATIONS IN 2021
28	2021 BUDGET OVERVIEW
29	BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
30	STAFF INFORMATION

*The mission of Thurston Conservation District is to educate and assist the citizens of Thurston County in the management of natural resources for the benefit of present and future generations, inspiring voluntary, incentive-based conservation practices.*



# *Message from Leadership*



On behalf of the Board of Supervisors, we are proud and delighted to submit this annual report highlighting some of the Thurston Conservation District's activities over the past year. As you will see, our Board and Staff have been quite busy identifying and meeting the needs of our community and advancing the priorities identified in our five year strategic plan. While the ongoing pandemic has challenged our entire organization to think and act in new ways, strong executive leadership and our motivated and talented staff have not just weathered the storm, but taken the organization to a new level. Stable and expanding funding has allowed us to add new staff capacity in critical areas, respond to emerging issues, and move forward with planning for a new Conservation and Education Center (CEC). The CEC will provide us with both much needed space for our expanding organization and a location for community education and a site for demonstrating conservation practices in new and innovative ways. Our partnerships with a host of local and regional organizations have further solidified TCD's reputation as regional leader on a range of conservation issues, and our innovative partnership with the City of Olympia to identify and protect threatened farmland in the urban area has strengthened TCD's reputation as a leader in the emerging and increasingly important field of urban agriculture. With our passionate and committed Board, strong and well respected Executive Director, and dedicated and professional Staff we are confident that our successes over the past year will serve as a springboard for an even more successful and impactful future.

- TJ Johnson, Board Chair



Throughout the year, Thurston Conservation District demonstrated its resilience and adaptability as we bounded back from the COVID-19 pandemic. We enjoyed continuing to help our community members address natural resource issues important to them and to our region, such as climate change, food security, species recovery and conservation of our dynamic and precious landscapes. Through ever-expanding partnerships, TCD has been able to increase targeted support and funding for conservation activities in our area. Education remains at the forefront of the services requested by our community members, and we are pleased to have filled a gap in information sharing and land management training for residents of our area and beyond. None of this would have been possible without the clear vision of our excellent Board of Supervisors, the dedication of our professional staff team, the expertise of our community partners, and the strong ethic of stewardship of our community members.

- Sarah Moorehead, Executive Director

# *Recognition of Partners*

Anchor QEA	Natural Systems Design	The Evergreen State College
Beckwith Consultant Group	Natural Waters Design, LLC	Thurston Climate Action Team
Billy Frank Jr. Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge	Nisqually Community Garden	Thurston County
Blue Coast Engineering	Nisqually Indian Tribe	Thurston County Ag Advisory Committee
Bounty for Families	Nisqually Reach Nature Center	Thurston County Environmental Health
Capitol Land Trust	Nisqually River Council	Thurston County Fairgrounds
Center for Natural Lands Management	Nisqually River Education Project	Thurston County Farm Bureau
Chehalis Basin Partnership	Nisqually Stream Stewards	Thurston County Master Gardeners
Chehalis Basin Education Consortium	NOAA Bay Watershed Education and Training	Thurston EcoNet
City of Lacey	North Thurston Public Schools	Thurston Economic Development Council
City of Olympia	Northwest Ag Business Center	Thurston Regional Planning Council
City of Tenino	Northwest Youth Corps	Timberland Regional Libraries
City of Tumwater	NOVA Middle School	Trout Unlimited
City of Yelm	Office of the Chehalis Basin	Tumwater School District
Community Farmland Trust	Olympia Coalition for Ecosystems Preservation	US Department of Agriculture
Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis	Olympia School District	Veterans Conservation Corps
Creekside Conservancy	Pacific Education Institute	WA Association of Conservation Districts
Dawkins Charitable Trust	Pacific Shellfish Institute	WA Conservation Corps
Department of Defense	Partners for Fish & Wildlife (USFW)	WA Conservation Society
EcoStudies Institute	Pierce Conservation District	WA Department of Ecology
Farm Service Agency	Pierce County	WA Department of Health
Grays Harbor Conservation District	Puget Sound Conservation District Caucus	WA Department of Veterans Affairs
Green Diamond Resource Company	Puget Sound Estuarium	WA Federation of State Employees
Griffin School District	Puget Sound Partnership	WA State Conservation Commission
GRuB	Puget Sound Restoration Fund	WA State Department of Natural Resources
JBLM Sentinel Landscape Partnership	QWG Applied Geology, LLC	Washington Farmland Trust
Joint Base Lewis McChord	Rainier School District	Waterfall Engineering, LLC
Lewis Conservation District	Resilient Veterans	WET Science Center
Mason Conservation District	South Puget Sound Salmon Enhancement Group	WSDA
National Association of Conservation Districts	Squaxin Island Tribe	WSU Extension Thurston County
Native Plant Salvage	Taylor Shellfish	Yelm Community Schools
Natural Resources Conservation Service		

# 2021 Community Award Recipients



## DOUG RUSHTON CONSERVATION LEGACY AWARD

**Tom Salzer**

Tom has worked with Conservation Districts in Washington and Oregon at a variety of levels for much of his career, demonstrating a commitment that makes him a well deserving recipient of our award in honor of our long-term Board Supervisor, Doug Rushton. Tom has been described as a selfless leader, a good listener, and a dynamic problem solver who helps find solutions that work for everyone. His work has helped to break down barriers to voluntary conservation for generations to come and leaves a physical impact on our landscapes and in our communities.



## PRODUCER OF THE YEAR

**John & Susan Dana, 3Ds Alpacas**

The Danas willingly made conservation improvements on their property in order to improve both their agricultural-based business and their environmental stewardship. They implemented five best management practices which improve productivity and take better care of the natural resources on their property. They have also generously shared their about their experience and served as community leaders in demonstrating their efforts.



## LAND STEWARD OF THE YEAR

**Geoff & Lorna (not pictured) Mueller**

The Muellers have made history by being one of the first landowners to participate in the large scale restoration of the Chehalis River Basin laid out in the Aquatic Species Restoration Plan. Their commitment to conserving their property will play a big role in the preservation of important keystone aquatic species, like salmon. Geoff and Lorna's willingness to share their story openly with their community has resulted in shared excitement and interest from surrounding neighbors



## EDUCATORS OF THE YEAR

**Jana Brock & Dixie Reimer, North Thurston Public Schools**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers and school administrators found themselves literally reinventing the teaching profession. Two individuals at the North Thurston Public Schools, Jana Brock and Dixie Reimer, were the primary science resource for all teachers (Pre-K - high school) at North Thurston Public Schools. They kept science engaging and fun during a pandemic that shook the lives of every student. We are grateful for their leadership and impact.



## PARTNER OF THE YEAR

**Heidi Smith, Bounty for Families**

Heidi has been initiating and supporting a strong partnership between Bounty for Families and Thurston Conservation District since 2019—especially connected to the Yelm Community Garden project. Heidi and BFF have helped us make connections with other local groups and organizations and furthered the reach and impact of our collaborative work. Heidi in particular is a communicative, responsive, and enthusiastic community partner who tirelessly supports the Yelm community.



**NATURAL  
RESOURCE  
PRIORITIES, GOALS,  
& ACTIONS IN  
2021**

# Climate Change Adaptation & Mitigation

2021 saw some climate change related extreme weather in our community. Because of this, our District prioritized being able to offer support on a moment's notice in the form of emergency relief information and response guidance. When working directly with community members, our staff continue to encourage community members to plan ahead for disasters, install climate resilient features in their landscapes, and have plans in place.

Emergency preparedness was especially focused on in a collaborative workshop with our partners at the Community Farmland Trust. Participants were given guidance on creating an evacuation plan for their livestock.



Teachers participate in training focused on climate science.

## 2021 Highlights

### 3

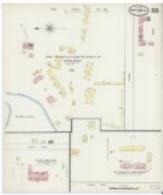
Professional development sessions focused on climate change offered to local teachers

Participated in regional workshop for farmers focused on emergency preparedness and planning for natural disasters.

Created robust online [resource list for emergency preparedness on our website](#) which covers flooding, fire, extreme weather, earthquakes, and more.

### Climate & Natural Disasters: Fire & Heat

- Clear danger zone around your structures
- Maintain vegetation
- Check electric features
- Think about storage - fuel, feed, hay, firewood etc.
- Signage & map resources



Emergency planning community workshop.

# Local Food Production & Consumption

## 2021 Highlights

4

Workshops on backyard food production

49

Backyard gardeners received technical assistance

Increased access to fresh food in Yelm, WA through weekly donations of produce from the Yelm Community Garden during summer months.



*Melissa Davis from the WSU SNAP Education Team joined TCD staff to put on a 'cooking with fresh produce' workshop attended by many families!*

Empowering community members to grow some portion of their own food was a big focus of both our education and technical assistance in 2021. Spurred by a growth in home-gardening during the COVID-19 pandemic, we saw lots of requests for services such as soil testing and questions about fruit trees and irrigation. We also sought to support this through educational workshops and partnerships such as a workshop on seasonal cooking with WSU SNAP Educator, Melissa Davis.

We continue to support access to local food through partnerships with community gardens, school garden programs, and local food access programs.



*One of the weekly harvest deliveries to the Crossroads Community Covenant Food Pantry in Yelm, WA. Donated produce came from Bounty for Families' Yelm Community Garden which TCD helped coordinate.*

# PROJECT HIGHLIGHT

## YELM COMMUNITY GARDEN

TCD strives to support avenues for all community members to learn about gardening and have access to opportunities to growing some of their own food. Our NACD funded partnership with [Bounty for Families](#) (BFF) on the Yelm Community Garden project, initiated in 2020 and continued into 2021, has been a great example of this. Funding for the garden also came from the Nisqually Indian Tribe and the City of Yelm.



We had done much of the planning work for the garden in 2020, and we started off 2021 with a garden build event hosted by BFF and GRuB on Martin Luther King Jr. Day. This weekend event brought volunteers from the veteran support organization The Mission Continues to the garden space to build raised garden beds and trellises for the first growing season.

Newly built garden beds were filled with soil and planted up by volunteers from Rouge Permaculture and Resilient Veterans. A pollinator hedgerow was installed as a field trip project with Yelm High School Students. YHS students also worked in-class on constructing benches and arbors for the garden.



*Volunteers from the Mission Continues build the first garden beds (top left); Volunteers plant the first seeds & starts (left); YHS students plant native pollinator plants (middle); the garden at peak production (right).*

Throughout summer 2021, Yelm Community members joined TCD and BFF staff in the garden as we planted, maintained, and harvested the first season's growth. The successful collaboration of many community organizations has built a garden space that offers a source of nutrition, a learning space, and a site for future fieldtrips and community workshops. Visit the Yelm Community Garden in Yelm City Park.

# *Producer Support & Preservation of Working Lands*

Finding direct and immediate ways to support local farmers and growers has been vital to a local agricultural economy in the last few years. In 2021, TCD placed special emphasis on problem solving bottle necks for local meat processing, supporting ranchers and grazers who are offering much needed habitat enhancements via their pastures and fields, and increasing access to small farm equipment for homesteaders, small farmers, and commercial-scale farms alike. We also continue to support farmland access and successional planning for regional farmers through our [South Sound FarmLink program](#).

See page 12 to learn about a farmland analysis project with the City of Olympia and page 11 to hear from an equipment renter about the impact of local access to food processing equipment.



## *2021 Highlights*

**25**

New and beginning farmers and ranchers served through access to resources and information.

**108**

Individuals rented equipment including poultry processing equipment, nutrient spreaders, and hand tools.

Partnered with Washington State University Extension and EcoStudies Institute to form a regional [Grazing Association](#) to support ranchers, shepherds, and other grazers.

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## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

# POULTRY PROCESSING EQUIPMENT RENTAL

“Our first time using the Thurston Conservation District’s poultry processing equipment was a couple of years ago. We had purchased 92 Cornish crosses from tractor supply on clearance for 50 cents each. We’ve enjoyed raising, catching, and hunting for our family’s food. We’ve had hens for egg production and as pets for years. Raising meat birds was new to us. After researching the cost of buying equipment I heard about your program. We gathered the family together, picked up the equipment in the back of our truck, and made a day out of it. Everyone went home with chicken for their freezers and the cost was quite affordable.

This year we decided to hatch our eggs to further our endeavors of increasing our Maran flock. We were left with quite a few roosters and stew hens we didn’t need. Again we reached out to rent the equipment. This time we only had about 42 chickens and roosters to process. We had four additional families who joined in to experience the processing.



*Renter's freezer full of home-processed chickens.*

This year renting was a bit different. The equipment came in a nice enclosed trailer. We just had to hook on and go! The staff was more than willing to support with scheduling and they worked hard to accommodate the farmers during COVID-19 while minimizing the exposure of the community by having the trailer picked up at the previous renter’s and dropped off at the next renters’ home. They also put in place a sanitizing regimen for each user before passing on the equipment.

We are grateful for the employees who manage the equipment, and [we] understand the amount of work that goes into this program. We have made connections in the community by expanding our farm-to-farm networking and it has opened our eyes to the kindness of the farmers across our great county.” - *A Thurston County Farmer*

# PROJECT HIGHLIGHT

## OLYMPIA FARMLAND ANALYSIS MAPPING

In 2021, Board Chair TJ Johnson, TCD Executive Director Sarah Moorehead, and Natural Resource Specialist Adam Peterson worked with Olympia City Council members to undertake an analysis of current and potential farmland within the City of Olympia and Olympia's Urban Growth Area (UGA). The goal of this collaborative work was to provide current estimates of agricultural land present within Olympia city boundaries and within Olympia's UGA. Previous estimates of agricultural lands in these areas have been lacking, making it difficult to track changes over time. This analysis aims to provide a baseline of agricultural land area that can be used for future monitoring, as well as to provide information about characteristics of current agricultural land.

The analysis was done using GIS mapping. The first step of this analysis was to locate and utilize data on agricultural land and its extent. Numerous agricultural land estimates, varying in scope and precision, already exist at county and state levels and were taken into consideration collectively. These existing data resources combined to provide a fuller picture of agricultural land in Olympia and its UGA. However, there were two clear gaps that remained. Small-scale livestock owners were generally not included in existing data resources, along with potential agricultural land. Both of these represent a significant portion of agricultural land in Thurston County. To fill in these gaps, sources of aerial and satellite imagery were reviewed to capture the full breadth of agricultural land present in Olympia and its UGA. This data was combined with existing data resources to develop a master GIS layer of agricultural land in Olympia and its UGA.

This survey work established baseline estimates of agricultural land for Olympia and its UGA that can be used to monitor levels of agricultural land across future years. The spatial GIS-centric approach taken here allowed us to not only generate area estimates of agricultural farmland, but also to look at attributes of those areas that are relevant to agricultural suitability and preservation, such as land values, ownership, zoning, and farmland quality. The analysis and protocol here can be extended to additional areas, such as if Olympia or its UGA are expanded. It could also be repeated at a future date to provide comparisons across time.

[Visit our website to see the results of the spatial analysis.](#)

# Protect & Restore Ecosystems

## 2021 highlights

12

Forest Stewardship Plans written for forest landowners—three times our 2021 goal!

14,255

Native plants sold at Annual Native Plant Festival & Sale

7

Veteran interns employed through our Veterans Conservation Corps Field Crew throughout the 2021 season

In all the work that Thurston CD does, consideration of the ecosystems within which we're working is top of the list. We approach a new project from a systems view where we look at the whole ecosystem and how our work can improve or protect the habitat and other natural resources present. This year we were especially excited to be able to increase our capacity to provide Forest Stewardship Plans through the use of our regional Forester based out of Mason Conservation District. Our addition of a Veterans Conservation Corps (VCC) crew also made more on-the-ground work possible!



VCC Crew Members install a beaver deceiver for a Capital Land Trust project (top); Habitat Specialist, Sasha Porter, plants evergreens at a riparian restoration project (middle); VCC crew assist a youth volunteer with planting (bottom).

## PROJECT HIGHLIGHT

# VETERANS CONSERVATION CORPS CREW

In 2021, Thurston Conservation District (TCD) partnered with the Washington Department of Veterans Affairs to host a Veterans Conservation Corps (VCC) crew. These military veterans serve Thurston County communities by improving water quality and enhancing wildlife habitat. Our talented crew members spend most days outside working on one of our large-scale restoration projects along the Skookumchuck River. They perform various restoration tasks that include things like removing invasive plant species, installing native trees and shrubs, erosion control, and performing regular maintenance on existing plantings. The work this crew accomplishes will result in restoration on more than 2,600 ft. of river shoreline and over 74 acres of land. These efforts will help aid salmon and aquatic species recovery efforts happening in the Chehalis River Basin. Aside from working on TCD's restoration projects, this crew also works with partner organizations to assist them with their natural resource enhancement projects. Partner projects crew members assisted with included things like helping build healthy habitat for the protected Oregon Spotted Frog species, removing fencing that excluded wildlife from reaching prime habitat, and building a beaver deceiver that allows beavers to continue doing what they do best, building dams, while also keeping dammed water from flooding nearby areas.

In addition to on-the-ground restoration training, TCD's VCC crew gets the opportunity to perform meaningful outdoor work that contributes to the greater good of their community.



# *Soil Conservation & Health*

## *2021 highlights*

**140**

Cooperators received soil test recommendations

Developed new climate-informed guidelines for nutrient spreader rentals to be implemented in 2022.

**16**

New crop varieties including wine grapes, pawpaws, and cut flowers were built into soil test recommendations for community members



*Soil testing at the Yelm Community Garden helped ensure a productive first growing season.*

Our Soil Health Program, including both our soil and nutrient testing and nutrient spreader rental program, is a cornerstone service at Thurston CD. This program was also one of our areas of growth and development in 2021.

We were able to streamline our soil test intake and reporting procedures in order to increase testing capacity, as well as develop some more advanced recommendations for cooperators. For example, in 2021 our staff wrote our first plant tissue + soil test interpretation for a vineyard. This kind of testing is the most informative for many perennials because it gives information about both what's in the soil and what's making it into the plant. We're planning on expanding that kind of paired testing in 2022.

Check out our featured story on page 16 to learn about changes to our spreader rentals!

# **PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT**

## **CLIMATE-INFORMED NUTRIENT SPREADER RENTALS**

In 2021, we made a programmatic move to incorporate the weather forecasts into how we rent out our two manure spreaders. We wanted to encourage community members to use the spreaders at times when it both minimizes water quality contamination issues and ensures they're not losing nutrients to excess run-off. This means avoiding using the spreader before rainfall is forecast.

While logistically more complicated, making this switch to how we rent our nutrient spreaders has helped us follow through on our goals of increasing water quality throughout our community's watersheds and helped ensure our cooperators see greater success with their spreading. We've really appreciated renters cooperation and flexibility as we ironed out the details of this rental procedure in 2021.



# Water Quality & Quantity

Water quality is a cornerstone of the work that Conservation Districts do nationally, including here at Thurston Conservation District. In 2021, we worked towards clean and abundant water for everyone in our community through on-the-ground projects with community members such as implementation of efficient irrigation systems, planning and planting of filter strips and riparian buffers, and cooperation with regional leaders on large-scale projects a part of the Aquatic Species Restoration Plan in the Chehalis Basin. We also support our local marine ecosystems through programs like Shore Friendly Thurston (see page 18) and our Annual Orca Recovery Day event. Our K-12 water quality education through the South Sound GREEN program has also grown in 2021 to bring experiential science learning to students in our community.



*A filter strip planting at 3Ds Alpacas will filter excess nutrient runoff from their pastures while also providing additional habitat for wildlife on their property.*

## 2021 highlights

2

Conservation projects installed that increase in-stream-flow to support water quantity for salmon

53

Community members with shoreline supported through habitat restoration & water quality improvement technical assistance

5

Conservation projects implemented to reduce nutrient runoff



*TCD staff help a producer installing a big-gun irrigation system which will improve his irrigation efficiency.*

## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

# SHORE FRIENDLY THURSTON



Thurston Conservation District's [Shore Friendly Thurston program](#) is designed to connect marine waterfront homeowners of Thurston County with the technical support and resources to make informed, cost-effective and environmentally-friendly decisions about their shorelines.

Through Shore Friendly Thurston, we offer free, non-regulatory site visits and assessments to help identify problems or opportunities specific to someone's stretch of the shoreline.

A current nearshore restoration project, located on private residential waterfront property on Dana Passage, has been developed through the Shore Friendly Thurston program. The project involves shoreline armor removal and riparian restoration to support resumption of natural coastal processes and recovery of nearshore habitat. Removal of shoreline armor, such as bulkheads, allows natural shoreline sediment deposition. This benefits the beach, allowing it to build up with sediment rather than erode as often happens in front of shoreline armor.

The project underway involves a lot of invasive weed removal (ivy, blackberry, bamboo, reed canary grass) and planting native marine riparian vegetation. Native plants will benefit a wide range of wildlife, including birds, forage fish and salmon populations. This project particularly hopes to support Puget Sound Chinook, Steelhead, Chum, and Coho populations, while surf smelt and sand lance forage fish populations will also benefit.

We will remove approximately 195 linear feet of marine shoreline armor (gabion, concrete, and tires). After armor removal, the shoreline will be left in natural condition.



*Before photos of the project site on Dana Passage.*

# EDUCATION PRIORITIES & GOALS IN 2021



# Community Outreach & Engagement

## 2021 highlights

Developed a community awards program to highlight outstanding individuals and partners who have worked with us to further voluntary conservation in our community.

**190**

Volunteers engaged

**580+**

Hours volunteered by community members to support conservation through planting, invasive removal, student support, and more



*Youth volunteers help TCD staff at a planting volunteer event.*

Engaging our community in the work we do is how we ensure that we're meeting local needs. It is through participation, partnership, and feedback from community members and volunteers that we learn about their goals and how we can be of assistance. In this way, listening is one of our greatest engagement tools!

In 2021, that meant that we offered a lot of outdoors volunteer opportunities suitable for the whole family! We were thrilled to partner with others like the City of Olympia Parks Department and Bounty for Families to bring safe and informative outdoor learning events to our community. We also continue to engage the community through success stories and highlights; TCD's social media often shares project progress updates and features highlights such as our 2021 Community Awards Recipients (see more on page 5).

## **PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT**

### **PARTNERSHIPS MAKE WORK HAPPEN**

From putting on workshops to working directly with community members on their projects, from ensuring farmers are supported to responding to emergency situations, and from building new community resources to informing our Strategic Plans—partnerships are what make our work possible. The coordination of efforts by Thurston Conservation District and our vast array of partners (see page 4) has allowed us to leverage funding and capacity to increase the volume of voluntary conservation and landscape specific education to our community. In 2021, a few partnerships in particular stood out as amazing examples of this.

#### **BOUNTY FOR FAMILIES, GRUB, CITY OF YELM ETC.**

The Yelm Community Garden (page 9) installation was entirely possible because of partnerships. Those involved in this project each took on pieces that suited their areas of expertise and interest in the work. Together, we leveraged funds from multiple sources, volunteer power, and in-kind donations to build and plant a garden that continues forward as a community resource.

#### **WSU EXTENSION & ECOSTUDIES INSTITUTE**

2021 marked the beginning of a multi-year partnership with Thurston County WSU Extension & EcoStudies Institute as we work together to support regional grazers and promote conservation grazing. Through our partners successful application for funding and our combined efforts in community outreach, we started holding regular educational events informed by the needs of local farmers and ranchers.

#### **CITY OF OLYMPIA**

City of Olympia's Parks and Recreation Department was a wonderful partner on our Orca Recovery Day 2021 event, as well as other hands-on volunteer opportunities. These were some of our first in-person events in months and we're grateful for their partnership and leadership. We've also worked with others at the City on projects such as the Olympia Farmland Analysis (page 12).

#### **OTHER REGIONAL CONSERVATION DISTRICTS**

Staff from Conservation Districts throughout the Northwest regularly partner to share resources, information, and promote each others' events. By championing the work of our region as a whole, we're able to emphasize the landscape-scale restoration occurring and the ways in which we impact each other.

***THANK YOU TO ALL OUR PARTNERS!***

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# Adult & Youth Conservation Education



Volunteers gathered on a sunny winter day to plant a riparian buffer on the Deschutes River.

We've seen a continued growth in engagement with community members through our educational workshops and classroom lessons for students. In 2021, we were able to offer a mixture of outdoor in-person events, presentations in partnership with other local classes and organizations, and school-based experiential classroom lessons. Workshop topics included healthy home gardening practices, noxious weed control, livestock best management practices, back yard stewardship and more. Our [South Sound GREEN program](#) saw huge successes in classrooms, recording a record number of student interactions in the 2021 and offering engaging hands-on science activities for students during an abnormal COVID school year.

## 2021 highlights

### 35

Community educational events offered

### 774+

People attended virtual and in-person events

### 7,997+

Students participated in water quality testing, benthic macroinvertebrate labs, virtual salmon field trips, salmon dissections, Green Congress, and more with South Sound GREEN—an 87% increase since 2020!



Students from Olympic View Elementary participated in a water quality field day

# PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

## TEENS IN THURSTON

In 2021, Thurston Conservation District (TCD) formed a volunteer group for high school students called [Teens in Thurston](#) (TNT). This group holds monthly meetings where students have the opportunity to learn about conservation and sustainability, learn from Conservation District staff and other community partners about careers in natural resources, and build community between students from a variety of backgrounds and schools.

TNT volunteers also participate in and lead volunteer events within Thurston County to improve environmental and watershed health. Thanks to generous funding from the

Nisqually Indian Tribe this program has engaged 19 youth volunteer that have been able to participate in planting and invasive control work parties on TCD's and local community partner's restoration projects, help pick-up trash along salmon bearing streams, spruce up a nearby school garden, and serve as team leads during our annual Orca Recovery Day event! We look forward to seeing this program continue to grow as we head into a new school year.



Students met for the first time in September to share their goals and set some community guidelines for working as a group (top left); Students learned about compost at Avanti's school garden (bottom left); A group of TnT students at a scotch broom pulling party (bottom right).

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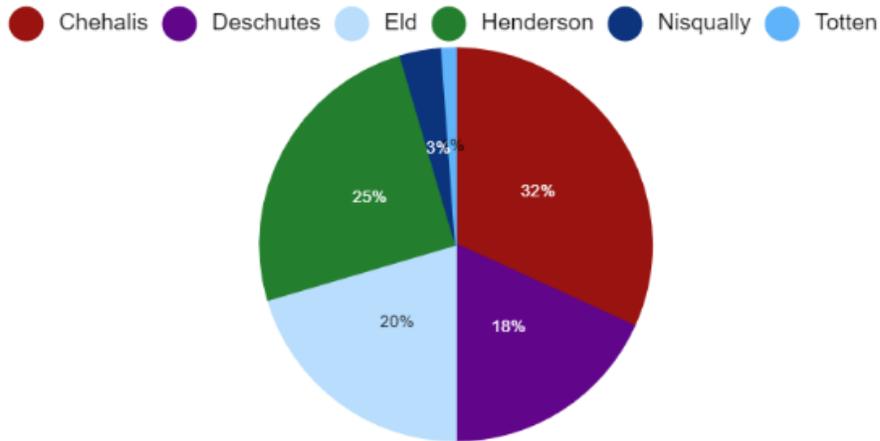
# **DISTRICT OPERATIONS 2021 HIGHLIGHTS**



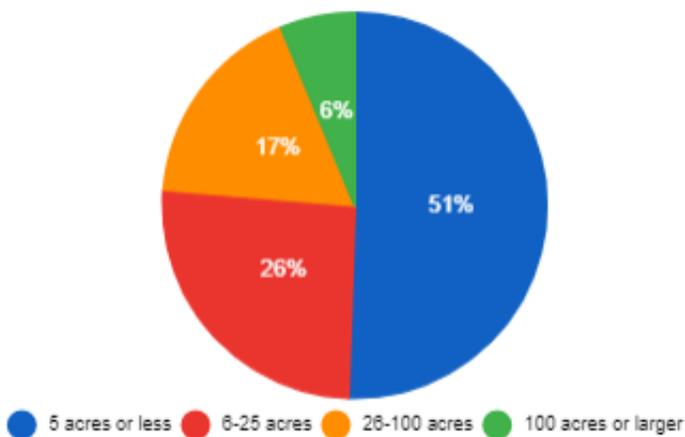
# COMMUNITY SUPPORT: WHERE AND WHAT OF TCD'S SERVICES ARE NEEDED?

Thurston Conservation District has taken big steps in 2021 to identify and track where and what support our community needs. This baseline information generated by requests for technical assistance from community members allows us to capture data on priority resource concerns in various watersheds and for different land use types. Check out the graphs below for a snapshot of the technical assistance data from TCD for 2019–2021.

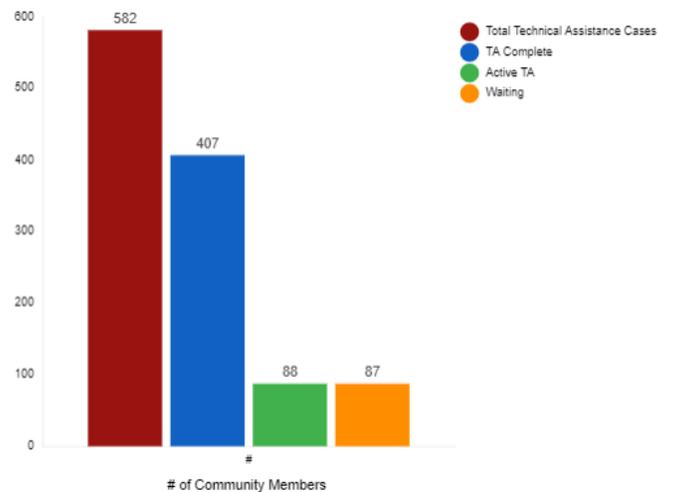
## TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE BY WATERSHED



## PERCENTAGE OF COMMUNITY MEMBERS WITH...



## TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE 2019-TODAY



## LAND MANAGEMENT FOCUS



# A FUTURE CONSERVATION & EDUCATION CENTER IN THE WORKS

As part of its 2020-2025 Strategic Plan, Thurston Conservation District committed to locating and engaging in the acquisition of land by 2024 for the development of a Conservation & Education Center (CEC) for Thurston County. In 2019, Thurston Conservation District began setting aside funds to save for the development of this new CEC, which would serve as the District's headquarters with staff offices, meeting and conference rooms, outdoor spaces for conservation demonstrations, community events, and educational programs for adults and children. In 2021, TCD hired a consultant to help determine the feasibility of such a project. We asked questions like: Is there affordable property available for a development like this in Thurston County? How have other WA State Conservation Districts developed their CECs? What are the possible benefits of a CEC for the community? What partnership opportunities are available? How much would such a facility cost and what are the finance options? TCD anticipates the results of this Feasibility Study in June 2022.



# TCD SUCCESSFULLY BARGAINS SECOND COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT

Thurston Conservation District staff are unionized under the Washington Federation of State Employees (WFSE) Council 28. In 2021, a staff team including Karin Strelhoff, Adam Peterson, and Sasha Porter participated in collective bargaining with a management team including Executive Director, Sarah Moorehead and Board Supervisors, Betsie De Wreede and Helen Wheatley. Together they came to agreement on a Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) for 2022–2024. WFSE Labor Advocate, Ariane Takano shared:



*“It was an absolute pleasure negotiating the 2022-2024 successor agreement with the TCD team. The District and the WFSE union partnered together to strengthen TCD’s Collective Bargaining Agreement, including progressive telework language, a field gear allowance, and cost of living increases. Collective bargaining raises wages and solidifies positive working conditions for all staff. Securing benefits for TCD employees also contributes to the successful operation of the District, which in turn benefits the communities that TCD serves. I have the highest respect for everyone at TCD and the valuable work you all do!”*



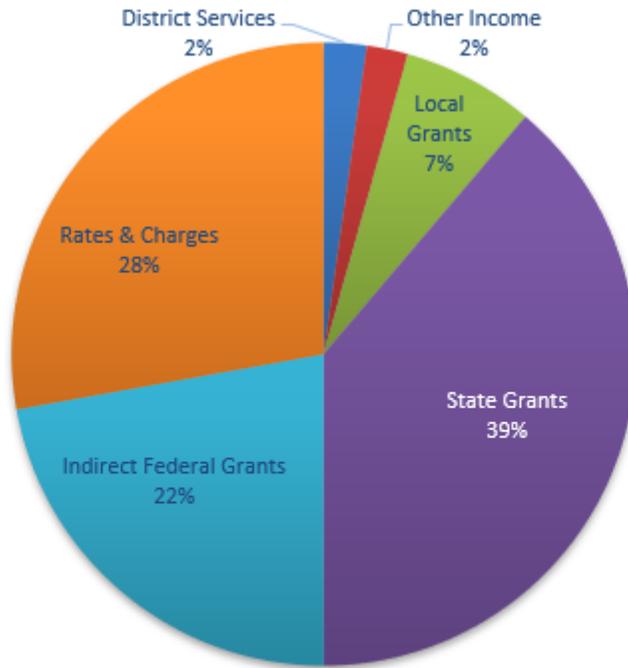
*TCD Staff and Board Members meet to work on the 2022—2024 Collective Bargaining Agreement (Photo by Ariane Takano)*

The successful CBA acknowledges a harmonious working relationship between management and staff based on the principles of collaboration and mutual respect which will best help the achievement of common objectives. It is the intent of agreement and our shared work on it to support the mission of The District with a commitment to collaboration, honesty, mutual respect, and fair treatment to all employees, as well as the promotion of environmental sustainability in the delivery of high quality, efficient services to Thurston County.

Together, we recognize the value of employees, the work they perform, and the contributions they make to the District. We’re pleased to have this document in place to support our staff in doing their best work for our community.

You can see a full version of our final Collective Bargaining Agreement on our [website](#).

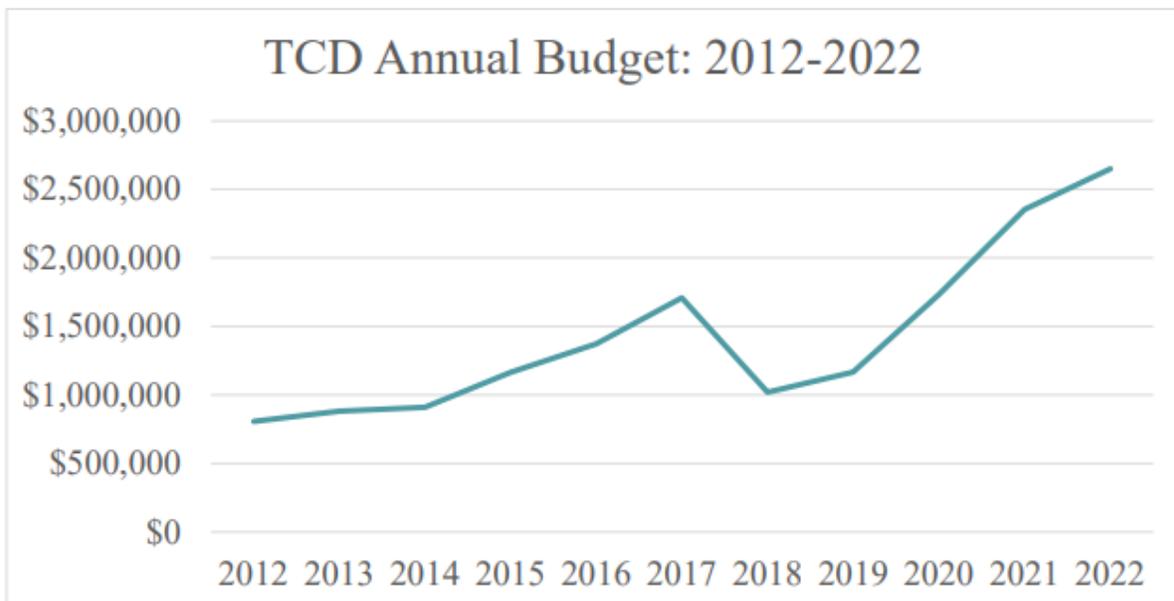
# 2021 Budget Review



**Thurston Conservation District 2021 Income**  
**\$1,995,867**

## HOW HAS OUR BUDGET CHANGED?

The below graph is a visual representation of both steady and dramatic growth in Thurston Conservation District's budget throughout the past 10 years (2012-2022). A most remarkable accomplishment is the acceleration of our financial health that is clearly seen post-2019. This increase translates into increased on-the-ground restoration, new relevant programs in our community, and increase staff capacity to assist community members.



# *Board of Supervisors*



**Helen Wheatley**  
Vice Chair

Elected Position #1  
helen.wheatley@thurstoncd.com



**TJ Johnson**  
Board Chair

Elected Position #2  
olyurbanagrarian@gmail.com



**David Iyall**  
Board Auditor

Elected Position #3  
david.iyall@thurstoncd.com



**Doug Rushton**  
Board Member

Appointed Position #1  
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**Betsie DeWreede**  
Board Member

Appointed Position #2  
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*Thurston*  
Conservation  
District

EST 1948

