



# UMPQUA

## SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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Newsletter – March 2025

Umpqua Soil and Water Conservation District is a non-regulatory agency here to help our community conserve natural resources through educational, financial and technical assistance. Since 1953 Umpqua Soil and Water Conservation District has been serving the residents of Northwestern Douglas County by partnering with landowners to empower them to be stewards and experts on their own land.

### NEWS

## Groundwork: The Basics of Soil Science



Collecting soil samples in the garden.

We had a great afternoon learning about soils on February 7<sup>th</sup> at our Soil Science Workshop in Reedsport at the “Great Garden” Community Garden. We want to thank those who showed up for the event and stayed with us, even during the rain showers. For those of you who missed it, we look forward to seeing you next time! We are hopeful to be able to hold this workshop annually in the Reedsport area. At this year’s event we went over: Soil composition, soil sampling and testing, and fertilization techniques to enhance soil health.

Rhonda Black, Conservation Planner with Umpqua Soil & Water Conservation District took participants on a walk through the Great Garden where she showed them how to take soil samples from the garden beds, followed by explanations about nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, pH, and went over example soil test results from the lab, providing handouts.

According to Oregon State University from their “[Guide to Understanding Fertilizers](#)”, Nitrogen (N) promotes rapid green leafy growth. Too much nitrogen causes plants to grow way too fast or not produce the part of the plant that you are growing it for. For example: Applying too much nitrogen to tomato plants may cause plants to grow a lot of green leaves with few flowers, delaying fruit set and attracting insects such as aphids. Phosphorous (P) stimulates early root growth and hastens blooming. Potassium (K) increases resistance to drought and disease, and improves

quality of seeds. According to Penn State University from their guide, “[Understanding Soil pH](#)”, liming acid soil creates a favorable soil environment where plants can thrive. Most plants do well when the soil pH is between 6.2 and 6.8. pH is a measure of the acidity and alkalinity of a material. The pH range is 0 (extremely acid) to 14 (extremely alkaline) with 7 being neutral. When acidic soil is neutralized by liming, soil nutrients are made more available for the plants to absorb through their roots. When we see a micronutrient deficiency in a plant, it is not because there is not enough of the nutrient in the soil, it is because the soil pH has limited the availability of that nutrient. In addition to raising the soil pH, lime supplies the essential plant nutrients, calcium and magnesium to the soil. Calcium is critical if you want to avoid blossom end rot on tomatoes. Tree fruit is sensitive to shortages of calcium. Lime is the least expensive way to supply these nutrients.

A soil test can determine the correct amount needed for each nutrient and reduce the chance of underapplying or overapplying nutrients to the soil. If we add too much of a nutrient, it can be washed from the application area into waterways, which creates an unhealthy environment for fish and benthic macroinvertebrates, while at the same time costing the producer money due to purchasing a product that isn’t needed. Save yourself money and protect the watershed at the same time by contacting us today for a soil test! Soil tests are free to Umpqua Soil and Water Conservation District residents from backyard gardens to fields, pastures, and vineyards.



## Groundwork: The Basics of Soil Science, continued...

Natalie Edward, Resource Soil Scientist with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service brought the NRCS Soil Health Trailer to us for the event, where soil experiments were processed in real time in front of participants in the garden, including the impressive “Rain Simulator”.

The rain simulator test is used to mimic rainfall on soil samples using various parameters including rainfall intensity, drop size, and duration to copy different rainfall scenarios in order to study the impact of rainfall on soil properties in order to determine erosion rates, sediment concentration, infiltration, and runoff volume. Tests like this one, help us understand how soil interacts with rainfall. This information is crucial to identify for agricultural practices, land management, and hydrological studies. By identifying these risks we can avoid soil erosion, evaluate erosion control methods, and optimize irrigation practices.

Resource Soil Scientist Natalie Edward also demonstrated the “Slake Test” which is used to evaluate soil structure.

From NRCS, “The slake test demonstrates the stability of soil aggregates in water. When a chunk of topsoil is placed into water, the water is drawn into the soil and displaces air. If the large pores within the soil are stable, water can move into the soil without causing the aggregate to break apart (“slake”). Biological processes such as earthworm activity, root growth and decomposition, networks of root-associated fungal hyphae, and sticky exudates from other soil organisms including fungi and bacteria all contribute to soil aggregation and the stability of macropores. Stable macropores allow better infiltration of water into the soil, reducing water runoff, erosion and surface crusting.

Tillage has a major impact on soil quality, physically disrupting soil and causing decomposition of organic matter. Over time, tillage reduces soil biological activity and thus the ability of soil organisms to stabilize soil aggregates. Comparing soil aggregates from an untilled area such as a fencerow with a regularly tilled production area allows you to evaluate your soil’s structural integrity.”

All of us at Umpqua SWCD would like to thank Resource Soil Scientist Natalie Edward for bringing the NRCS Soil Health Trailer to this event and for showing us all of the experiments. We’d like to thank all of our attendees. We had a lot of great conversations and learned from one another due to each person’s gardening and planting experiences. Please join us again at another one of these great events!



Rain Simulator Demonstration



Slake Test Demonstration

### MEETINGS OF INTEREST

## Umpqua Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Director’s Meetings

April 10<sup>th</sup>, May 8<sup>th</sup>, June 12<sup>th</sup>

Meetings are generally held the 2nd Thursday of each month at 5:00 p.m. and held virtually.

Meeting information can be found on our website at <https://www.umpquasoilandwater.com/board-meetings>

## MEETINGS OF INTEREST

### Elk Creek Watershed Coalition Meetings

Second Tuesday of each month, 7:00 p.m., in-person at the Drain Civic Center located at 205 West A Avenue, Drain, Oregon 97435.  
<https://www.umpquasoilandwater.com/elk-creek-watershed-coalition>

## EVENTS

### May Day Gardener's Event

Stop by Jackson's Coffee House Café located at 2285 Longwood Dr. Reedsport, Oregon 97467 on Thursday, May 1<sup>st</sup> from 12:00 noon until 4:00 p.m. We'll be outside for gardeners and community members to get together.

- Bring starts, plants and seeds for free swap meet
- Buy grow-your-own mushrooms kit for \$20
- TLC Nursery starts and seeds for sale
- Children's art activity

Event organized by the Community Garden.



## EVENTS

### Scotch Broom Pull

The Oregon Dunes Restoration Collaborative is hosting a volunteer event to remove Scotch broom at the John Dellenback Dunes on Saturday, May 3rd from 10:00 AM to Noon. Volunteers are needed to continue our efforts to remove invasive Scotch broom from one of our "Protect the Best" sites. It is approximately 0.4 miles uphill on the trail to the worksite. This is a family event, so children and grandchildren are welcome. After the event, it is a short walk to an outstanding viewpoint, and the kids can enjoy rolling down the large sand dune!

Wear sturdy, closed-toe shoes for hiking on the sand and bring work gloves, water, and snacks. Please bring shovels, hand saws, or loppers if you have them. If you don't, ODRC will have a limited supply of tools you can borrow. Day use fees are waived for volunteers at this event.

Directions: From Florence, take Hwy 101 South approximately 32.8 miles to the John Dellenback Dunes Trailhead. Turn right (west) into the trailhead.



From Reedsport, take Hwy 101 South approximately 10.5 miles to the John Dellenback Dunes Trailhead. Turn right (west) into the trailhead.

From North Bend, take Hwy 101 North approximately 13.0 miles to the John Dellenback Dunes Trailhead. Turn left (west) into the trailhead.

## NEWSLETTER DELIVERY

Would you like to receive this newsletter by email? Send us an email with "newsletter" in the subject line to [rhonda@umpquasoilandwater.com](mailto:rhonda@umpquasoilandwater.com) to let us know! If you are not yet receiving this newsletter and would like to, but don't use email, call (541) 662-1341 and we'll add you to our mailing list.

Interested in replacing your tide gates that may be undersized or not working as well as you would like?

**Umpqua SWCD can assist you with your tide gate replacement project(s)!**



**Join us and our partners for a post tide gate installation tour in the near future!**

**Small Grants Program**

Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board Small Grants are available to District residents and producers for a variety of water quality/Ag WQ and habitat improvement projects through our Umpqua 7 Small Grant Team! Now is the time to start thinking about projects to implement in the Fall of 2025.

You know your property better than anyone else. Look around and let us know what you need assistance with. Contact the Umpqua Soil & Water Conservation District Office in order to begin the application process. Grants are available in amounts up to \$15,000.

Project Examples:  
 Livestock Exclusion Fencing, Off-Stream Watering Systems, Heavy Use Livestock Areas such as Hardened Livestock Feeding Areas, Improved Livestock Crossings, Manure Storage Facilities, and More!

**Farm Conservation Planning**

Farm Conservation Plans are documents developed jointly by Umpqua Soil & Water Conservation District and land managers. Farm Conservation Plans include actions that land managers can take to achieve their land use goals while protecting water and other natural resources. The planning process takes into consideration the size of the farm, type of soils, slope of the land, proximity to streams or water bodies, type of livestock or crops, and resources such as machinery, buildings and available finances.

Umpqua SWCD’s Conservation Planner looks at changes that can be made to improve farm productivity and reduce impacts on natural resources. Some examples include stream-side fencing, gutters and downspouts, composting manure, pasture management and renovation, weed management, creating sacrifice areas, cross fencing and pasture rotation of livestock. Our Farm Conservation Planner can offer technical assistance on questions such as what grasses to plant, how to build a fence and when to mow.

Once the land manager has decided which changes they’d like to make on their property, they work with our Conservation Planner to set a tentative implementation schedule. Revisions of the schedule and the plan can be made as the goals and needs of the land manager change.

Farm Conservation Plans can help land managers, who have livestock, to meet the requirements of the Oregon Department of Agriculture Umpqua Basin Agricultural Water Quality Area Plan. This document can be found by going to:

<https://www.oregon.gov/oda/Documents/Publications/NaturalResources/UmpquaAWQMAreaPlan.pdf>

All aspects of Farm Conservation Planning services provided by Umpqua SWCD are free of charge and without obligation. Umpqua SWCD is a non-regulatory, non-enforcement agency.

**MISSION STATEMENT**

**“The mission of the locally led Umpqua Soil and Water Conservation District is to provide assistance to any individual, group, or agency in applying natural resource conservation practices for the wise use of their natural resources.”**

**The District is currently recruiting for the Zone 2 and Zone 3 positions to be appointed to the Umpqua SWCD Board of Directors.**

Zone Director qualifications:

- Must be a registered voter within the Umpqua SWCD boundary in Douglas County.
- Reside within the zone being represented within the District.
- Own or manage 10-acres of land within the zone represented, or
- Serve at least one year as a Director or Associate Director and have a District-approved conservation plan.

An interactive map of the District and zones can be found at:

<https://geo.maps.arcgis.com/apps/instant/lookup/index.html?appid=31b2f5ae9d494ecfbf7ff2608061a63f>

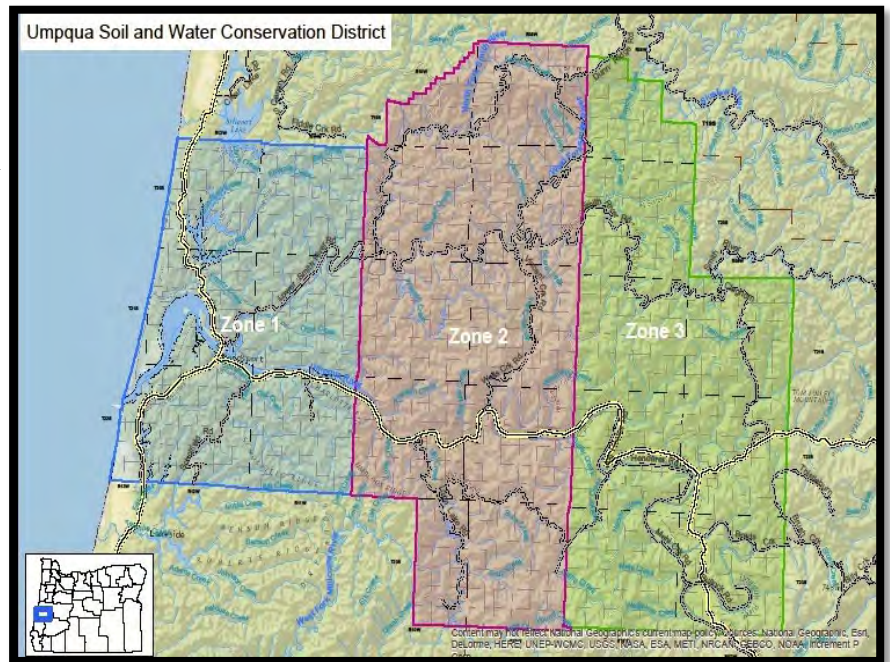
Please contact Umpqua SWCD if you are interested in becoming a Zone 2 or Zone 3 Director!

**Director Responsibilities:**

The Board of Directors set the direction of the District through the development and/or oversight of the strategic plan, biennial work plan, and District policies, with input from the District Manager and Staff. The Board and Staff enjoy a great working relationship that ensures natural resource stewardship programs and projects are available to all Douglas County citizens within the Umpqua Soil & Water Conservation District boundaries.

An individual Board member may only exercise their authority and responsibility of his or her position when the Board is in legal session and only as part of a specific Board action (e.g. resolution, motion, policy, etc.) and must be recorded in the public meetings minutes. Individual Board members may be given limited authority to act on behalf of the

Board only when authorized by a specific Board action.



The responsibilities of the Board of Directors include but are not limited to the following tasks:

Approval and tracking of budgets, require and understand sufficient financial reports, oversight, employee performance reviews, approval and monitoring of annual work plan, strategic plan development and approval, represent Interests of Constituents, come to meetings informed and prepared, stay abreast of local conservation issues, promote the District’s work to local landowners, local and state agencies, legislators, and other organizations.

In addition to the responsibilities listed above, the Directors, as a Board, have legal powers under ORS 568.550. To find out more go to: [https://oregon.public.law/statutes/ors\\_568.550](https://oregon.public.law/statutes/ors_568.550)

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

**Umpqua Soil & Water Conservation District:**

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Check out our website! Go to <https://umpquasoilandwater.com/> where you can find out meeting information, event flyers and links, newsletters, our YouTube Channel and more!

Find us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/UmpquaSoilandWaterConservationDistrict](http://www.facebook.com/UmpquaSoilandWaterConservationDistrict)

