



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Natural Resources Conservation Service



COLLABORATION at work |

**2019 has been a year of successful collaboration in Oregon.** With the rollout of the 2018 Farm Bill, we're working with landowners to embark on changes that will expand our programs and improve conservation implementation across the state.

We're breaking down the barriers of technology and business to better collaborate with producers and partners to achieve our shared conservation goals. This means working with landowners directly to identify specific resource concerns in their area through a process we call the Strategic Approach to Conservation. 2019 saw the introduction of some of our highest-quality coordinated strategies yet, developed in cooperation with local communities to address issues such as water quality, forest maintenance and soil health.

Over the course of the past year, we gained two new Joint Chiefs projects to help private forest owners combat wildfire risk—with one of

those projects being our very first Joint Chiefs project with a Tribe as the lead partner, the Elk Creek Watershed Project led by the Cow Creek Band of the Umpqua Tribe of Indians. We also hosted NRCS Chief Matthew Lohr in March to celebrate the ribbon cutting for the Tumalo Irrigation District modernization project – one of several multi-million-dollar irrigation projects underway through our watershed program. I could go on and on about the accomplishments this year in Oregon, though as you will see in this report, the numbers speak for themselves.

— **Ron Alvarado**  
State Conservationist  
OREGON

[www.or.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.or.nrcs.usda.gov)

## FY19 Investments in Conservation

### EQIP

Environmental Quality Incentives Program  
(includes all locally-led EQIP and state initiatives)

- ▶ **529** contracts
- ▶ **178,948** acres
- ▶ **\$21.2M** obligated
- ▶ **\$1.9M** payments

### RCPP

Regional Conservation Partnership Program  
(includes RCPP-EQIP and RCPP-CSP)

- ▶ **86** contracts
- ▶ **32,709** acres
- ▶ **\$5.6M** obligated
- ▶ **\$1.7M** payments



## Restoring clean water in the Fletcher Gulch watershed



Third-generation farmer Charlie Barlow embraces a practical, conservation-minded vision that has helped the community transform its irrigation water delivery and significantly improve water quality in the Fletcher Gulch watershed.

For the past two decades, farmers in the Fletcher Gulch Watershed worked with NRCS and multiple partner groups to address a serious problem in their watershed: cleaning up the water. Thanks to grant funding from the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board and the Bureau of Reclamation, the outdated water-delivery system that served the area was converted to an underground pipeline. Furthermore, to capitalize

on water savings from the pipeline, NRCS offered financial assistance to farmers to convert from flood irrigation to sprinklers through EQIP. This is a prime example of the success that can be achieved through collaboration.

Read the full story here:  
<https://arcs.is/1anvHv>

## Innovations in biochar

In 2015, NRCS awarded a Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG) to the South Umpqua Rural Community Partnership for a project with the goal of transforming farm waste into high-quality compost to improve soil health. This has resulted in

innovations spanning the state, including the introduction of a new enhancement for the Conservation Stewardship Program, which now allows CSP forestry participants to convert woody debris into biochar.

Read the full story here:  
<https://arcs.is/00OXWz>

## FY19 Investments in Conservation

### CSP

Conservation Stewardship Program  
(New contracts only, Includes CSP  
General and CSP Grasslands)

- ▶ **107** contracts
- ▶ **217,953** acres
- ▶ **\$9.5M** obligated

### SGI

Sage Grouse Initiative

- ▶ **25** contracts
- ▶ **51,564** acres
- ▶ **\$3M** obligated
- ▶ **\$352,795** payments

### Organic Initiative

- ▶ **12** contracts
- ▶ **475** acres
- ▶ **\$446,394** obligated
- ▶ **\$6,183** payments



Kelpie Wilson of Wilson Biochar Associates holds a lightweight biocharred piece of wood.



# Conservation Success in the Field

## Grounded in principle, Oregon ranchers maximize soil health on grazing lands



Jack Southworth holds up a healthy soil clod from his property in the Bear Valley of Seneca, OR.

Despite challenges like restricted rainfall and a short growing season, ranchers in eastern Oregon are coming together to improve soil health on their properties. This includes practices such as keeping the ground covered at all times, planting a variety of range grasses and implementing short-duration, high-intensity grazing to ensure

pastureland has time to rest and rehabilitate.

Read the stories of five innovative ranching families and learn how soil health practices helped them improve conditions on their properties and, in turn, increase their profits.

<http://arcg.is/81Onv>

## Tribal youth plant seeds of heritage

The NRCS Corvallis Plant Materials Center (PMC) is working with the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde to provide plants of cultural significance for use in ceremonies and various restoration projects. This includes an educational opportunity for students from the Grand Ronde Chinuk Wawa language class to harvest camas using traditional digging sticks.

Read the full story here: <https://arcg.is/15i8eO>



Students with Jeremy Ojua explore camas beds.

# FY19

## Investments in Conservation

### Seasonal High Tunnel Initiative

- ▶ 40 contracts
- ▶ 100 acres
- ▶ \$283,356 obligated
- ▶ \$108,674 payments

### Joint Chiefs Landscape Restoration Initiative

Partnership with Forest Service

- ▶ 45 contracts
- ▶ 6,693 acres
- ▶ \$2.3M obligated

Includes 4 projects: Salmon Superhighway (Tillamook County), North Warner (Lake County), Elk Creek (Douglas County) and Chiloquin (Klamath County)

### National Water Quality Initiative Readiness Projects

- ▶ \$489,218

Includes readiness projects to improve water quality on surface and groundwater sources of drinking water in the following watersheds:

- ▶ Cities of Canby and Molalla SWPA – Molalla River
- ▶ City of Myrtle Point SWPA – North Fork Coquille River
- ▶ City of Baker City SWPA – Multiple watersheds in the Powder Basin
- ▶ City of Eugene / Eugene Water & Electric Board, McKenzie River SWPA
- ▶ Cities of Winston and Dillard, South Umpqua River, Lookingglass Creek Sub-Watershed SWPA



Oregon Senator Jeff Merkley (right) Ken Rieck, Tumalo Irrigation District Manager and Matt Lohr (second from left) in Bend, OR.

## Senator Merkley and Chief Lohr celebrate water-saving partnership in Central OR

In March 2019, Oregon Senator Jeff Merkley joined Tumalo Irrigation District Manager Ken Rieck, and NRCS Chief Matt Lohr for a ribbon cutting ceremony to commemorate a new irrigation modernization project that will save water, protect in-stream flow habitat for fish, and reduce energy costs for farmers.

Occurring over the course of 11 years, the project will modernize up to 1.9 miles of Tumalo Irrigation District's canals and 66.9 miles of laterals to improve water conservation, water

delivery reliability, and public safety. By converting open irrigation ditches into a closed piped system, the project will reduce water loss from canals by up to 48 cubic feet per second (cfs) or 4.9 billion gallons per season. Water saved from the project will be permanently protected in the Deschutes River and Tumalo Creek, benefiting fish and wildlife habitat.

The project will also deliver water to irrigators in a safer, more efficient manner and reduce energy consumption from pumping.

## FY19 Conservation Easements

Conservation easements are becoming ever more popular among Oregon's farm communities to keep land in agriculture for future generations, prohibit future development, and conserve wetland habitats.

### ACEP Agricultural Conservation Easement Program

#### The Nature Conservancy, Wallowa County

- ▶ **6,600** acres
- ▶ **\$732,600** invested

#### Wallowa Land Trust, Wallowa County

- ▶ **481.88** acres
- ▶ **\$222,500** invested

### WRE Wetland Reserve Easements

- ▶ **1,146** acres
- ▶ **\$1.1M** invested

## Success in Partnership: Bradshaw Drop Irrigation Project



In 2018, Rogue River Valley Irrigation District (RRVID) embarked on its largest project in recent history.

The Hopkins Canal Pipeline Project met its goal in 2019 to pipe over 3 miles of open canal to save water instream for fish habitat, replace aging irrigation infrastructure, to allow for more efficient conveyance of irrigation

water to Agate Lake and the rest of the RRVID patrons, and to provide pressurized water to over 700 acres of farmland East of White City, in Jackson County, Oregon. This is the largest pressurized irrigation pipeline project to date in Jackson County.

Read the full story here:  
<https://arcg.is/0OKPTr>