MEMORANDUM

EUGENE WATER & ELECTRIC BOARD

Rely on us.

TO: Commissioners Barofsky, Schlossberg, Brown, Carlson, and Morris

FROM: Karen Kelley, Chief Operations Officer

DATE: October 1, 2025

SUBJECT: Upper Willamette SWCD Investments and Opportunities

OBJECTIVE: Information

Issue

The Upper Willamette Soil & Water Conservation District (UWSWCD) has requested EWEB enter into a 5- or 7-year intergovernmental agreement (IGA) to commit $1 million in funding for designing and implementing riparian/floodplain restoration, green infrastructure for stormwater treatment, cover cropping to support organic growing methods, and/or wetland enhancement and expansion projects.

Background

On July 7, 2025, EWEB Commissioners and General Manager received a letter from Karl Morgenstern, UWSWCD Board Chair, identifying UWSWCD investments and opportunities and requesting EWEB commit $1 million over five (5) years.

At the August 5, 2025, Board Meeting, Commissioners discussed the opportunity and staff's considerations as included in a background memorandum (attached). The Board requested additional information on the UWSWCD opportunity, which was specified in a letter from the General Manager on August 18, 2025, to Mr. Morgenstern (attached).

On September 26, 2025, Commissioners and General Manager received additional information, including an Interim Management Plan from Mr. Morganstern (Attached).

Discussion

Many of the benefits identified in the letter from UWSWCD are consistent with EWEB's commitment to maintaining the health of the McKenzie watershed, as expressed by Commissioners and EWEB's Drinking Water Protection Plan, and supported by EWEB programs and partnerships. Establishing intentional outcomes, within resource and financial boundaries, ensures that EWEB ratepayer investments are producing results that align with the Board's and staff's priorities.

The basis for staff's recommendation acknowledges the relevance and importance of the UWSWCD's project and request for support in watershed protection, while ensuring the resources (including staff and financial) are managed to achieve specific targeted results.

Recommendation

Management proposes that the Commissioners direct staff to incorporate support of the water quality and conservation efforts at Rice farms through a combination of in-kind and monetary support consistent with EWEB's Healthy Farms Clean Water program and Pure Water Partners mission, managed based on annual

budgets and targeted outcomes (milestones, task orders). Staff will work with UWSWCD to develop an agreement outlining intended results, metrics, key milestones, roles and responsibilities, and ongoing commitment criteria, but will not guarantee a specific dollar investment over the timeframe requested.

Requested Board Action
The Board has been solicited by UWSWCD to approve the development of an IGA committing $1 million funding over 5-7 years for the management of the Rice Farm project. Alternatively, Commissioners may direct EWEB management to pursue the staff recommendation as presented above.

Attachment(s)
Background Memorandum, August 3, 2025 (with initial request letter dated July 7, 2025)
Letter to UWSWCD from EWEB General Manager
Letter and Interim Management Plan from Karl Morgenstern, UWSWCD

MEMORANDUM

EUGENE WATER & ELECTRIC BOARD

Rely on us.

TO:	Commissioners Barofsky, Schlossberg, Brown, Carlson, and Morris
FROM:	Frank Lawson, CEO & General Manager; Deborah Hart, AGM & Chief Financial Officer; Karen Kelley, Chief Operations Officer
DATE:	August 3, 2025
SUBJECT:	Funding Request: Upper Willamette Soil & Water Conservation District
OBJECTIVE:	Action

Issue
Commissioners will deliberate and discuss the Upper Willamette Soil & Water Conservation District's request for $1 million to support *conservation stewardship* of property adjacent to the McKenzie River upstream from EWEB's Hayden Bridge Water Treatment Facility.

Background
On July 7, 2025, Eugene Water & Electric Board (EWEB) Commissioners and General Manager received a written request from Karl Morgenstern, Board Chair of the Upper Willamette Soil & Water Conservation District (UWSWCD) requesting EWEB enter an Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA) committing funds totaling $1 million within and/or over five (5) years to support *conservation stewardship* of property adjacent to the McKenzie River upstream from EWEB's Hayden Bridge Water Treatment Facility.

At the July 8, 2025, EWEB Meeting, Commissioners agreed, via "hand raises" to allocate agenda time at the August 5, 2025, meeting to discuss and potentially act on the request. Commissioners instructed staff to prepare information on the financial impact of the request to EWEB customers.

Discussion
The letter received from the UWSWCD provides the context and purpose of the request, along with locational details of the associated property and is provided as Attachment A.

UWSWCD acquisition of this property could be beneficial to EWEB's Source Water Protection programs.

- Healthy Farms Clean Water - potential to reduce use of pesticides on hazelnut orchards and support a conversion to organic practices.
- Urban Runoff Mitigation – this property provides easier access to monitor and maintain a location with a history of illegal camping.
- Pure Water Partners Program – increase, enhance, and conserve riparian areas by removing invasive vegetation and planting native species to filter contaminants from this high priority area.

<u>Financial Impact</u>
To arrive at the draft 2026 revenue requirement increase of 6% presented in July, the water utility capital planning process removed or shifted projects to mitigate rate pressures as outlined below:

- Hayden Bridge Lower Pond Improvements $1.1million (delayed from 2025 to 2026/2027): Project to address deteriorating overflow structure, improve safety, ensure permit compliance and improve solids handling.
- City View 1150 Pump Station and other Upper Level Improvements ~$5 million (delays vary): Rebuild pump station nearing failure with no back up power plus additional safety and reliability projects in upper level pumping systems deferred in draft CIP.
- Main replacement and improvement budget reduced by ~$2.5 million annually for 2026 and beyond: EWEB's ability to proactively replace pipeline assets, strategically renew infrastructure ahead of city paving projects, and maintain industry KPI's for main breaks and water outages is reduced. Also, projects to reduce dead end pipelines, reduce customer outages, increase fire flows, and improve redundancy were deferred beyond the 10-year plan.
- Willamette Water Treatment Plant (reduced by $5 million for 2026): Reduction in the CIP limits EWEB's ability to progress through design. Delay is likely to result in increases to project cost and increases exposure to legal delays.
- East 23rd Street 42-inch transmission main Alder to University Street ($6 million): Project delayed from 2025 to 2027. This project will complete a critical transmission pipeline from Hayden Bridge to new tanks at East 40th and College Hill, greatly improving capacity and water quality. It also helps facilitate taking Santa Clara reservoir offline for repairs or decommissioning.
- Hayden Bridge Finished Water 45-inch replacement $3 million: Project to replace a section of corroded and leaking steel transmission pipeline leaving Hayden Bridge delayed to 2030 in CIP.

The UWSWCD letter requests $1 million of support over the next 5 years. If support were structured at $200k/year, it could be navigated with an incremental 0.5% rate increase in 2026.

The Water Utility's Long-term Financial Plan is pressured to maintain cash reserve targets in the near term, and Management committed to further savings mitigating significant single-year rate increases. Additional work is needed to identify savings in 2027, 2028, and 2030 to reach a more tolerable trajectory for increases. Draft financial plan highlights presented in July and the requested UWSWCD financial impact are summarized in the table below.

	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Revenue Requirement Increase	6.0%	15.5%	8.0%	2.5%	2.5%
Management Savings Commitment		$3.7 Million	$5.2 Million		$3.5 Million
Mitigated Revenue Req. Increase	6.0%	8.0%	6.0%	5.0%	4.5%
UWSWCD Request	$200k	$200k	$200k	$200k	$200k
Incremental Revenue Req. Impact	+0.5%				

With an incremental rate increase contributing to the near-term rate pressure and further financial assessment of the Willamette treatment plant to be presented this fall, staff evaluated providing support via in-kind services, including:

- EWEB staff time to participate in collaborative planning meetings, help develop a management plan, manage participation in Pure Water Partners, survey illegal camping, track budgets and administrative processes, etc.
- Contractor support for invasive vegetation treatment and native tree and shrub planting.
- Help facilitate the transfer of International Paper (IP) property to UWSWCD.

Support with in-kind services aligns well with EWEB's Source Water Protection Strategic Plan. Following the Holiday Farm Fire, the Watershed Stewardship Recovery Fee enhanced watershed protection efforts within the burn scar area. The fee is scheduled to sunset in 2026, and staff recommend continued watershed operations be supported within the overall revenue requirement and general rates.

In recent years, staff enhanced knowledge and expertise working on large watershed restoration projects and collaborating with Pure Water Partners. Project management skills specific to floodplain restoration, reforestation to optimize carbon capture, and land acquisition were central to the recovery efforts in the McKenzie River Watershed. In addition, staff efforts to monitor water quality and urban runoff at several points along the waterway have long been part of EWEB's normal operations and maintenance work. Staff believe support of in-kind services to facilitate property maintenance at the proposed site would offer substantially the same benefit to UWSWCD as was requested. Following funding reductions in conjunction with the sunsetting fee, budgets for Watershed Protection & Drinking Water Laboratory are forecast to be around $3.0 million annually. This in-kind work would be managed within approved budgets and Board policy.

Recommendation
In lieu of financial support, Staff recommend supporting conservation stewardship of the UWSWCD property in-kind, as described above, in keeping with our Source Water Protection Strategic Plan while staying within draft and future budgets. Staff would like to work collaboratively with the UWSWCD and partners to develop a management plan for the property. This collaborative planning process will better guide staff to develop in-kind support for the stewardship of this property. This is yet to begin. Until this process is underway, staff recommend waiting on specifying a financial contribution.

Should the Board decide to allocate new funding for this effort, Per Board Policy EL2, negotiating and executing an IGA with the UWSCCD, at the financial level requested, will require Board approval.

Requested Board Action
Potential motions for Commissioner deliberation could be as follows:

"…move to direct the General Manager, or designee, to negotiate and execute an Intergovernmental Agreement with the Upper Willamette Soil & Water Conservation District outlining the scope, terms, and conditions of in-kind support for conservation stewardship of specific property(ies) adjacent to the McKenzie River upstream from EWEB's Hayden Bridge Water Treatment Facility."

or

"…move to direct the General Manager, or designee, to negotiate and execute an Intergovernmental Agreement with the Upper Willamette Soil & Water Conservation District outlining the scope, terms, and conditions of up to <u>$1 million over five years</u> to support conservation stewardship of specific property(ies) adjacent to the McKenzie River upstream from EWEB's Hayden Bridge Water Treatment Facility."

UPPER WILLAMETTE
SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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To: EWEB Board of Commissioners and Frank Lawson, General Manager

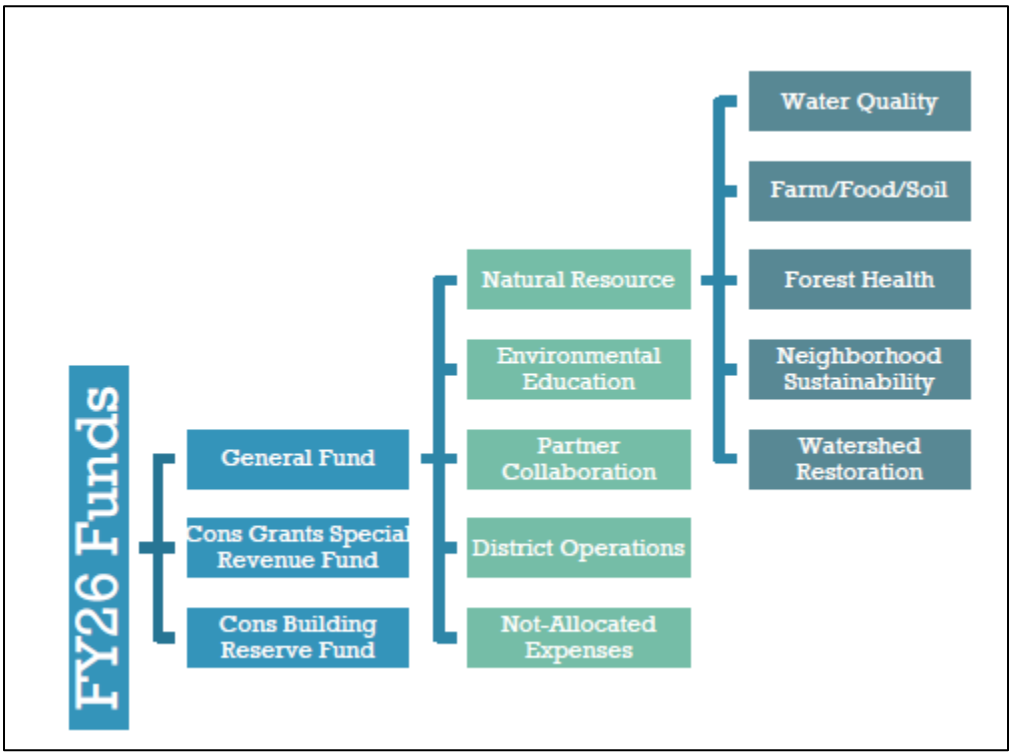
From: Karl Morgenstern, Upper Willamette SWCD Board Chair

Date: July 7, 2025

Subject: Upper Willamette SWCD Investments and Opportunities

Dear Board and Frank,
I had planned on attending the July 8th Board meeting to provide testimony, but it turns out that the EWEB Board meeting occurs at the same time as the McKenzie Community Land Trust Board meeting (which I am part of and the Treasurer). Instead, I am emailing this letter to communicate my thoughts. Believe me I would much rather be there in person and hope to in the future.

I became Board Chair about 6 months ago and see a need to communicate more regularly with our key partners about what the Upper Willamette Soil & Water Conservation District (UWSWCD or District) is doing in our region, the investments we have made and continue to make since receiving a tax base in 2021, and opportunities to work together moving forward. The UWSWCD is a local government special district and has seven Directors elected by the voters to 4-year terms. The District covers eastern Lane County and includes four watersheds (Long Tom, Coast Fork Willamette, Middle Fork Willamette, and McKenzie). As a result of the 2021 tax base, the UWSWCD receives approximately $2.5 million each year in tax revenue and brings in another $2.2 million in outside grant funding. The 2020-2025 Strategic Plan focuses on natural resources (water quality, farm/food/soil, forest health, neighborhood sustainability, and watershed protection), environmental education, and partner collaboration (see below). The District is currently engaged in developing a new strategic plan for 2026-2030.



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The District went through significant growing pains as it went from a $150,000 annual budget with 1.5 FTE in 2020 to the current $12 million FY26 budget with 10 FTE. The first three years since receiving the tax base required major investments in office space, computer and network technology, software, health and retirement benefits, and starting a vehicle fleet (2 trucks). Over the last 2 years, the UWSWCD has made significant investments in our region and community, but none as large as the investment made in the McKenzie watershed to assist with restoration efforts following the Holiday Farm Fire.

District and McKenzie Watershed Council staff were the first responders assisting EWEB in the emergency phase of the response. Over the last couple years, the UWSWCD provided $430,000 in cash, $285,000 in outside grant funding, and over $200,000 as in-kind staff resources toward water quality and recovery efforts. The District values its partnerships with EWEB, the McKenzie River Trust, and the McKenzie Watershed Council and will continue investing in the work we do together as part of the Pure Water Partners. In 2024, the UWSCD began a grant program to push funds out to partner organizations for environmental education, partner support and capacity building, prescribed fire work, nutrient management, green infrastructure, and stream restoration. A total of $304,250 was awarded in grants to partner organizations that do work in the McKenzie. Approximately $800,000 was awarded to organizations doing work in the Long Tom, Coast Fork, and Middle Fork watersheds.

The District also makes significant investments to build regional food security following supply chain issues during the pandemic and more recently associated with bird flu and egg prices. In 2024, the UWSWCD received a $2.3 million grant from the Lane Health Council to increase farm efficiency in growing for local markets (e.g., irrigation, cold storage, greenhouses, equipment, etc.) and in return those farmers commit to providing a portion of their crops to identified markets. Each year the UWSWCD provides direct grant funding to farmers markets and food hubs throughout Eastern Lane County to increase capacity, attract more vendors, and advertise to consumers. Investments in local food production and clean water are investments in a healthy community.

Finally, I am writing to you to talk about an opportunity to conserve and protect nearly 290-acres immediately upstream of EWEB's intake at Hayden Bridge. Over the last year, I have been working on behalf of the UWSWCD with a landowner who values conservation and maintaining working lands close to our urban areas to facilitate a property transaction. In June, the UWSWCD Board approved moving forward with a Purchase Sale Agreement for the 289-acre Rice Farms with a closing date of 11/1/2025. The attached map shows potential uses of the Rice Farms property if the District became owners and the property's proximity to EWEB's High Banks property. The map also shows the IP property where we are working with MRT to facilitate a land donation so we could use the land access to that the parcel to address past water quality issues associated with transient camps. We are working with the MRT, McKenzie Watershed Council, and EWEB to develop a property management plan that will protect water quality, increase riparian and floodplain forests, and convert farm operations to organic practices.

The District is requesting EWEB's assistance to make sure the property sale happens in November. The property owner has generously offered a $1.8 million gift toward the purchase price with the District paying the remaining $4 million. As a result, this acquisition will drain the UWSWCD reserve fund and leave little resources available for stewardship and restoration work. An EWEB $1 million investment for conservation stewardship over the next 5 years as part of an Intergovernmental Agreement would go a long way in helping the UWSWCD Board vote in October to approve the sale and take on this large complex project. The IGA could be structured to provide the funds in the later years given the reality of EWEB's funding challenges in the near term.

Thank you for considering this request and for your service to our community and keeping our drinking water pure. I hope in the future I can attend the Board meetings in person. Take care.

UPPER WILLAMETTE
SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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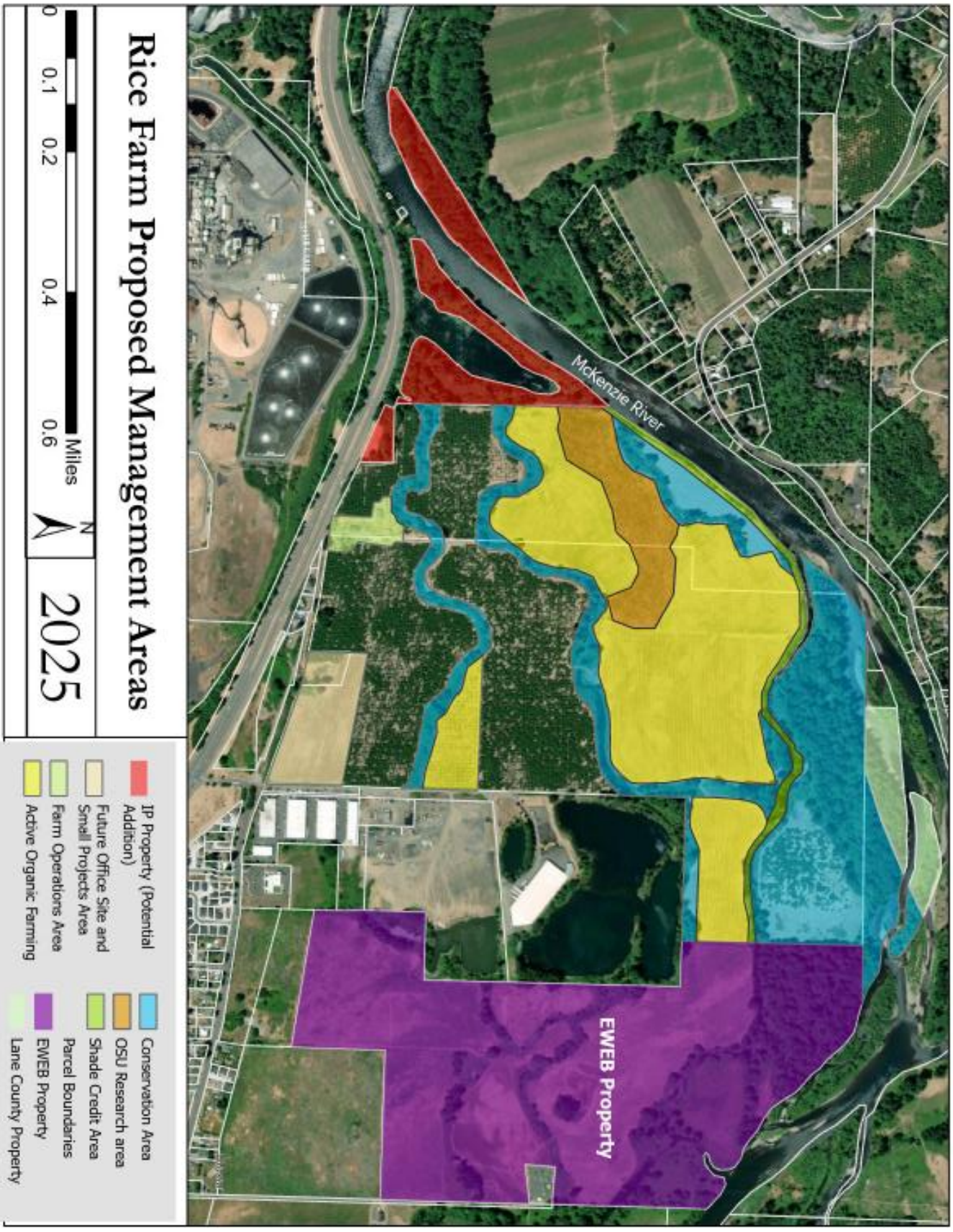

Eugene Water & Electric Board
4200 Roosevelt Blvd.
Eugene, OR 97402-6520
541-685-7000
www.eweb.org

August 18, 2025

Upper Willamette Soil and Water Conservation District
Re: Rice Farms Acquisition and Stewardship funding

Dear Chair Morgenstern,

Thank you for bringing the Rice Farm acquisition and stewardship funding opportunity for the Upper Willamette Soil and Water Conservation District (UWSWCD) to the attention of the Eugene Water and Electric Board (EWEB). EWEB recognizes the importance of this acquisition and appreciates the opportunity to be involved.

As you know, a board memo was provided to the EWEB Board of Commissioners on August 5, 2025, after we received your written request on July 8, 2025 to enter into an Inter-governmental Agreement (IGA) committing funds totaling $1million within and/or over five (5) years to support conservation stewardship of this property adjacent to the McKenzie River upstream from EWEB's Hayden Bridge Water Treatment Facility.

In lieu of financial support, EWEB staff recommended supporting conservation stewardship of the UWSWCD property through in-kind services. Staff suggested a variety of potential options that could support not only stewardship of the property but also protect our community's drinking water and support EWEB's Source Water Protection Strategic Plan and budget. EWEB Commissioners had a robust conversation regarding the memo and are very supportive of how UWSWCD's acquisition of this property could benefit EWEB's Source Water Protection Programs and the community.

The board agrees that they would like to see EWEB support this request contingent upon receiving more information. Specifically, in order to assess what type of support EWEB can provide for this acquisition, we request the following information:

- A management plan including the method and timeline for transition to organic farming practices (the property is not currently operated as an organic farm).
- An outline of a comprehensive collaborative planning approach including a timeline of activities, a list of stakeholders, and methods for receiving and incorporating stakeholder feedback.

- Financials for the management of the property. It appears that the hazelnut orchard will stay in operation which will result in a revenue stream. The UWSWCD also has a tax base. We seek to understand how the financial needs of the property will be met with existing and future UWSWCD resources. Please also provide other grant, funding, and match opportunities that the UWSWCD has received and/or is working towards. For example, Shade Credits are mentioned in the map which will provide a source of match.
- Stewardship calculator results, using the stewardship calculator provided by the McKenzie River Trust. This should be used in combination with your management plan to justify what stewardship resources are needed.

So that staff and Commissions can continue an evaluation of the best approach moving forward, we request that you provide these details by September 26, 2025 so we may discuss this information with the EWEB Commissioners at the October 7, 2025, Board Meeting for further consideration.

Sincerely,

Frank Lawson

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Frank Lawson

UPPER WILLAMETTE
SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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To: EWEB Board of Commissioners and Frank Lawson, General Manager

From: Karl Morgenstern, Upper Willamette SWCD Board Chair

Date: September 26, 2025

Subject: Rice Farms Acquisition and Stewardship Funding

Dear EWEB Board and Frank,
Thank you for the August 18, 2025 letter indicating EWEB's support for the Rice Farm acquisition project and requesting additional information from the Upper Willamette SWCD so that the EWEB Board can make a more informed decision on the best way to support the restoration and stewardship of this key property. A lot has happened since my original July 8th request to EWEB for stewardship funding support. This letter aims to summarize the information requested based on what we know today and provide a clear path forward that could be mutually beneficial.

Interim Property Management Plan
District staff have worked diligently over the last two months collecting information, researching possibilities, meeting with partners, and assessing how other local government landowners approached similar situations (Willamalane Parks/Dorris Ranch, Clackamas SWCD, Yamhill SWCD, Tualatin SWCD, and East Multnomah SWCD). Staff have also conducted numerous tours of Rice Farm with our partners and potential collaborators to understand their views on the short- and long-term possibilities. These efforts informed the Interim Property Management Plan (IPMP) that focuses on the near-term site stabilization and security, restoration priorities, farm operations and infrastructure, education and research opportunities, communications, and collaborative planning approach (see attachment). This report reflects all the information we have at this point in the acquisition process, and I hope it addresses the first two bullets of your information request. The IPMP also provides some of the financial information requested in the third bullet associated with farm revenue versus expenses and other funding, such as the Shade Credit project with the Metropolitan Wastewater Management Commission.

Finances
The third bullet also requested additional information on the Upper Willamette SWCD's tax base and annual budget. As a result of the 2021 tax base, the UWSWCD receives approximately $2.5 (varies with tax revenue) million each year in tax revenue. During the period from 2021 to 2024, the District, guided by it's strategic plan, increased staffing, developed policies and procedures, built programs and systems, and put funding into a reserve account for property acquisition and future office space. 2025 was the first year that the District was fully staffed and implementing our Grant and conservation technical assistance programs at full capacity. For FY26, the District's budget includes plans to award approximately $1.4 million in competitive and non-competitive grants to local conservation organizations and residents of Eastern Lane County. It also includes redistributing funds from a Lane Health Council Grant as incentives for local farmers to implement farm conservation improvements and provide local healthy produce that supports Food For Lane County food boxes for residents in need, promoting local food security. The FY26 Upper Willamette SWCD approved budget includes the following expenditures:

- Environmental Education = $260,000 (Grant Program and Outreach)
- Collaboration = $480,000 (Grant and Conservation Programs Support, including PWP and UWSN)
- District Operation (10 FTE) = $1.5 million
- Natural Resource/Conservation Incentives = $1.2 million (Grant and Conservation Programs)
- Contingency = $275,000

- Unappropriated Ending Balance = $800,000 (covers 4 months of operations before taxes received)
- Total Requirements = $4.5 million

The total resources available for FY26 as per the approved budget include:

- Cash on hand at start of FY26 = $1.4 million
- Tax Revenue for FY26 = $2.7 million
- Grant Funding = $400,000
- Total Resources = $4.5 million

In addition, the District holds a Reserve Fund totaling $4.15 million specifically for property acquisition purposes, which will be used in total for the Rice Farm property acquisition and associated costs. The UWSWCD serves all of eastern Lane County, covering 1.9 million acres and several major urban sectors. For more information about the District's Strategic Plan and Conservation Programs, please see our website at www.uwswcd.org.

MRT Stewardship Calculator

As requested in the 4th bullet, the District created a stewardship calculator utilizing a template provided by the McKenzie River Trust. While this exercise was useful in many ways, there are several aspects about the calculator that are specifically attuned to the workings of land trusts, which limits its utility for Rice Farm planning. Stewardship funding has a very precise definition for land trusts and refers to the dedicated financial resources set aside for the long-term care of a property in order to maintain the conservation values in perpetuity. It is often assumed that any funding required for restoration or ecological uplift will be raised separately from monies dedicated to a long-term stewardship fund.

When the District requested funding for stewardship from EWEB this past summer, it was using the term stewardship more broadly, to include not only the maintenance of the conservation values, but also the agricultural practice modifications and ecological restoration required to improve upon those values. As a result, the calculator includes a number of "single event" costs that go beyond stabilizing and maintaining the site, some labels within the calculator were modified to reflect this difference. These activities are outlined in both the stewardship calculator and Interim Property Management Plan.

The District also used the stewardship calculator to distinguish between activities that will be funded through the District versus those that cannot take place without acquiring outside funding. The District modified the worksheets to illustrate which activities are contingent on outside funding and are most applicable to District's current request to EWEB. In summary, the stewardship calculator indicates over $800,000 for one-time site stabilization and restoration expenses and $430,000 in annual costs (including hard costs and staff cost) to move the property toward large scale conservation while transitioning the remaining orchard to organic farming practices. A link to the stewardship calculator can be found at:
https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1YCKMeN472xLvbNzpSJme4R0Ne9xIeHAI/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=117596570620049414313&rtpof=true&sd=true

Proposed Path Forward

It is clear that the acquisition of Rice Farm provides extensive conservation and restoration benefits, educational and food security opportunities for the community, reduces chemical use through organic farming practices that can over time be exported to other orchards in the region, and will compliment the work at nearby EWEB and MRT properties. It is also clear that the potential cost of this work is highly variable depending on the design and scope of these projects and the availability of outside grant funds to offset these costs. As a result, the Upper Willamette SWCD proposes that EWEB enter into a 5- or 7-year intergovernmental agreement (IGA) with the

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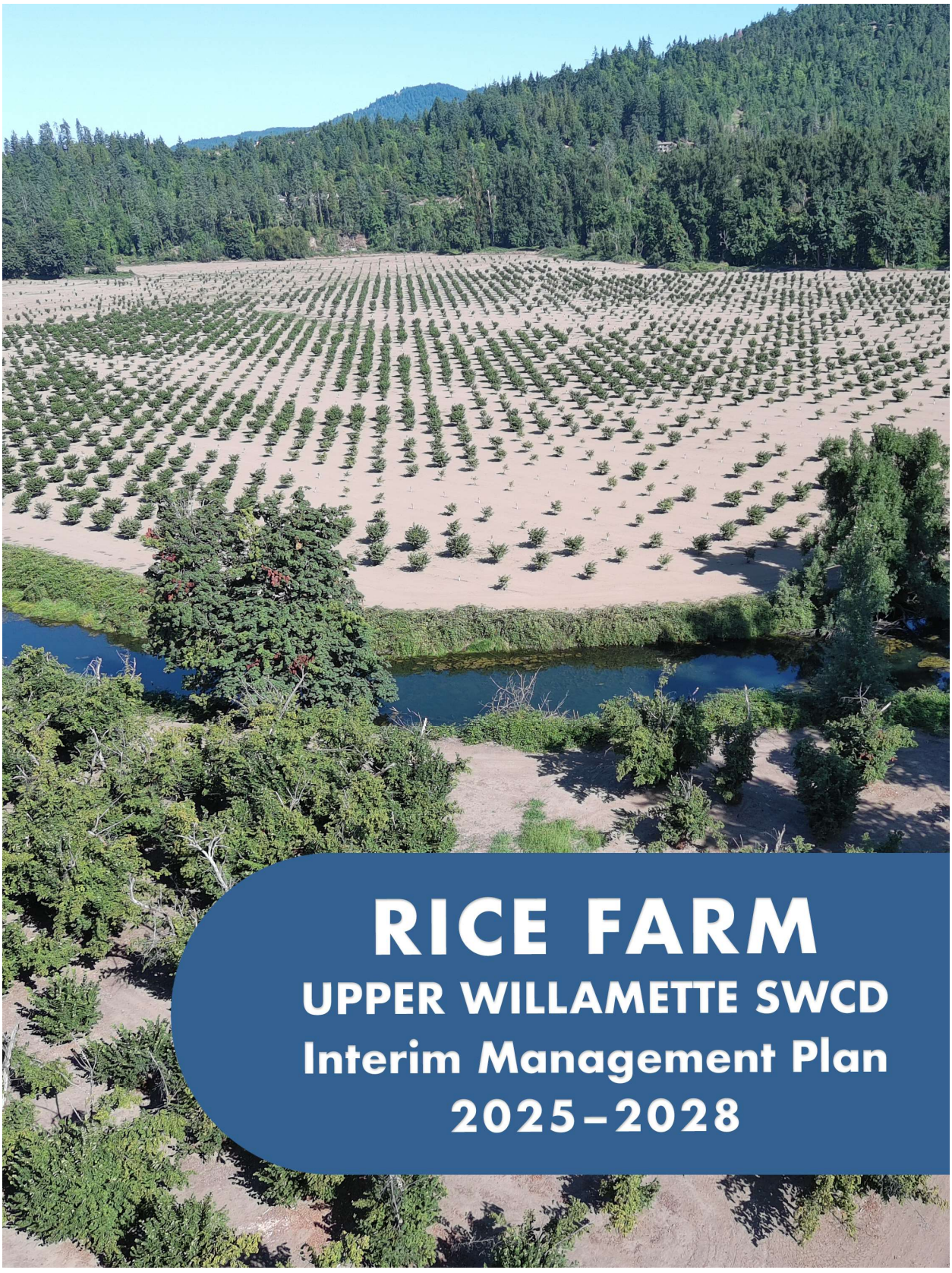
District to commit $1 million in funding for designing and implementing riparian/floodplain restoration, green infrastructure for stormwater treatment, cover cropping to support organic growing methods, and/or wetland enhancement and expansion projects. The District would work closely with partners to develop and scope restoration projects for grant funding opportunities. EWEB funding under this IGA could be used for initial design and permitting work, providing match for grants, cover project implementation funding gaps, and/or support post project monitoring. EWEB would approve use of funds on a project-by-project basis after other funding has been pursued and the resource needs are known. Thank you for your consideration of supporting this important conservation opportunity to protect the McKenzie River.



RICE FARM

UPPER WILLAMETTE SWCD

Interim Management Plan

2025–2028

UPPER WILLAMETTE
SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Introduction

The Upper Willamette Soil and Water Conservation District (UWSWCD/District) is seeking to acquire the 280-acre Rice Farm in November 2025 to advance its mission of promoting soil health, water quality, watershed function, fish and wildlife habitat, and sustainable working lands. This property is unique in its dual character: it contains both productive agricultural acreage in hazelnut orchards and important riparian habitat along the McKenzie River and its tributaries.

The purpose of this Interim Management Plan is to provide clear guidance to District staff and board members for the first three years of Rice Farm management, while a comprehensive long-term plan is developed with community and partner input. This interim plan ensures that the District can responsibly steward the ecological and agricultural values of the property, protect buildings and infrastructure, and begin fostering partnerships that will allow Rice Farm to emerge as a community asset.

While this document sets out near-term goals, actions, and responsibilities, it is important to acknowledge that the District is still learning about the property and its potential. For that reason, this plan is considered a living document. As new information becomes available and as conditions change, the District may amend the plan to reflect the best available science, management practices, and community priorities.

Several guiding principles were used to shape the interim plan:

- **Collaboration and Partnerships**: Success will depend on working with partners including Tribes, agencies, nonprofits, and the broader community.
- **Scaling to Budget**: Actions will be realistic, matched to District capacity and financial resources. Where possible, District resources will leverage funding from outside sources, bringing greater resources to the area.
- **Adaptive Management**: The District will monitor results and adjust practices as needed.
- **Commitment to Core Values**: Throughout, the District will manage Rice Farm in ways that protect water quality, sustain healthy soils, and balance agricultural and ecological goals.

The sections that follow provide an overview of the property's conditions and resources, outline management strategies for both working lands and habitat, address infrastructure and site

security, and describe approaches for collaboration, education, and communication. Together, they form the District's roadmap for ensuring responsible stewardship of Rice Farm in this interim period while laying the groundwork for long-term planning.

Property Overview and Conservation Values

Rice Farm is a 278.5-acre property located along the McKenzie River in Lane County, Oregon. The property is composed of four contiguous tax lots (1702290002800, 1702280000500, 1702210000600, and 1702280000600) with associated addresses at 4810, 4824, 4970, and 5020 High Banks Road. The southern edge of the property borders High Banks Road within Springfield city limits, where land is zoned Heavy Industrial (HI). The remainder of the property is zoned Exclusive Farm Use (E-30), which requires a 30-acre minimum parcel size.

Conservation Context and Values

Rice Farm lies within a larger conservation landscape. The property includes nearly one mile of frontage along the McKenzie River, just two river miles upstream of Eugene Water and Electric Board's (EWEB) water intake at Hayden Bridge. EWEB's 142-acre High Banks property, managed for water quality and ecological research, abuts the northeastern boundary. Portions of floodplain forest along the northern boundary are owned by Lane County, and the McKenzie River Trust (MRT) owns several nearby properties both upstream and downstream, including Big Island, Chub Slough, and Springfield Oxbow. Together, these lands form an interconnected network of conservation properties, with Rice Farm positioned as a key link. (See Exhibit C: Conservation Context Map)

The UWSWCD purchase of this property aligns with our Strategic Plan, Mission, and Vision, and will support the local regional environmental efforts of our partners.

1. **Drinking Water Quality Source Protection:** Provide riparian protection and restoration along the McKenzie River to protect and enhance water quality for downstream water users and before entering EWEB's water treatment intake facility, potentially reducing pollution treatment costs and maintaining affordable, clean drinking water for ratepayers.
2. **Environmental Water Quality Temperature and Habitat Benefits:** Collaborating with the Metropolitan Waste Management Commission (MWMC) and The Freshwater Trust (TFT) to install a shade project along the Cedar Creek will be the final project needed for the MWMC to meet its DEQ/EPA temperature requirements.

3. **Working Lands and Agricultural Conservation:** Conserve the agricultural values of the lands for organic and regenerative hazelnut production. Provide support to the local working lands/hazelnut community through research, economic support, demonstrations, conservation planning, equipment rental and storage spaces, and more.
4. **Public and Youth Education:** Provides youth and public education opportunities and benefits: water quality and aquatic species habitat monitoring/testing, as well as other types of outdoor/ecological learning, such as identifying invasive and native plants and animals, farming practices, and connecting with nature.
5. **Tribal Partnership and Engagement:** This property purchase provides Opportunities to collaborate with the Upper Willamette Stewardship Network (UWSN) Tribal Liaison to develop pathways for Tribal Partnership and Engagement. See section below.
6. **Floodplain Forest Protection and Restoration on Cedar Creek and the McKenzie River:** Purchase of the property will ensure the protection of over 25 acres of mature floodplain forest and it creates the possibility of more than doubling that amount through ecological restoration. Flowing water and riparian areas are key habitats in the upcoming Oregon State Wildlife Action Plan, providing aquatic and terrestrial wildlife habitat and contributing to watershed health and climate change resilience.
7. **Green Stormwater Infrastructure:** The property is situated within the City of Springfield and some areas are zoned for industrial use. This acquisition presents the UWSWCD with an opportunity to collaborate with the Urban Waters Partnership (UWP) to design and install green stormwater infrastructure, aimed at enhancing pollution capture from urban runoff.
8. **Collaboration and Innovation:** The property offers numerous opportunities for collaboration on conservation and agricultural projects and programs, learning and research with universities and other organizations and agencies.
9. **Partnership Resources and Spaces:** The multiple buildings, and open spaces are potential resources for partners to utilize for their projects, program operations, and other services.

History

The farm has been in the Quackenbush/Rice family for generations and was formerly owned by Arlene Dietz. It includes one of the oldest hazelnut orchards in Lane County. While additional historical context will be developed in future iterations of the plan, the site already carries significance as a long-standing agricultural operation on the McKenzie floodplain.

Topography and Hydrology

The property is relatively flat, with elevations ranging from 475 feet at the downstream edge of the McKenzie River to 495 feet at the southeast corner. Multiple waterways traverse the site, flowing east to west. The McKenzie River defines much of the north and west boundaries, including a small island that is part of the property. Cedar Creek, a perennial tributary that supports salmonids, enters from the east and meets the McKenzie on the property's northeastern edge. Kizer Slough and an unnamed slough run through the southern portion of the site, while several seasonal sloughs activate during flood events. Except for the building area and portions of the property abutting High Banks Road, the property lies within the 100-year floodplain (AE flood hazard zone), with areas north of the unnamed slough also designated as floodway. See Exhibit B: Topographic Map.

Soils

Rice Farm contains a mix of floodplain soils, several of which are considered prime farmland (See Exhibit D: Soil map):

- **Unit 48 (Fluvents):** Found along Cedar Creek and the McKenzie River riparian areas; about 20% of the property; only area not classified as prime farmland soil.
- **Units 95 & 96 (Newberg fine sandy loam and Newberg loam):** East-west bands through orchard areas (See Exhibit X: Management Units)(W1–W4); about 28% of the property; prime farmland soils.
- **Unit 2 (Cloquato silt loam):** Found between Kizer Slough and the unnamed slough, as well as in the southeast corner; about 35% of the property; productive farmland soils.
- **Other smaller units:** McBee silty clay loam (near buildings), Chehalis silty clay loam (SE corner), and Chapman loam (southern boundary).

Working Lands – Hazelnuts

Approximately 205 acres are currently managed as hazelnut orchards. The orchards vary in age and variety, with many showing damage from the 2024 ice storm. Some blocks required complete replacement, others heavy pruning, and much of the older acreage suffers from Filbert Blight. At present, the orchards are conventionally managed with bare ground under trees. These conditions present both challenges and opportunities as the District considers soil health practices, organic transition, and future land use.

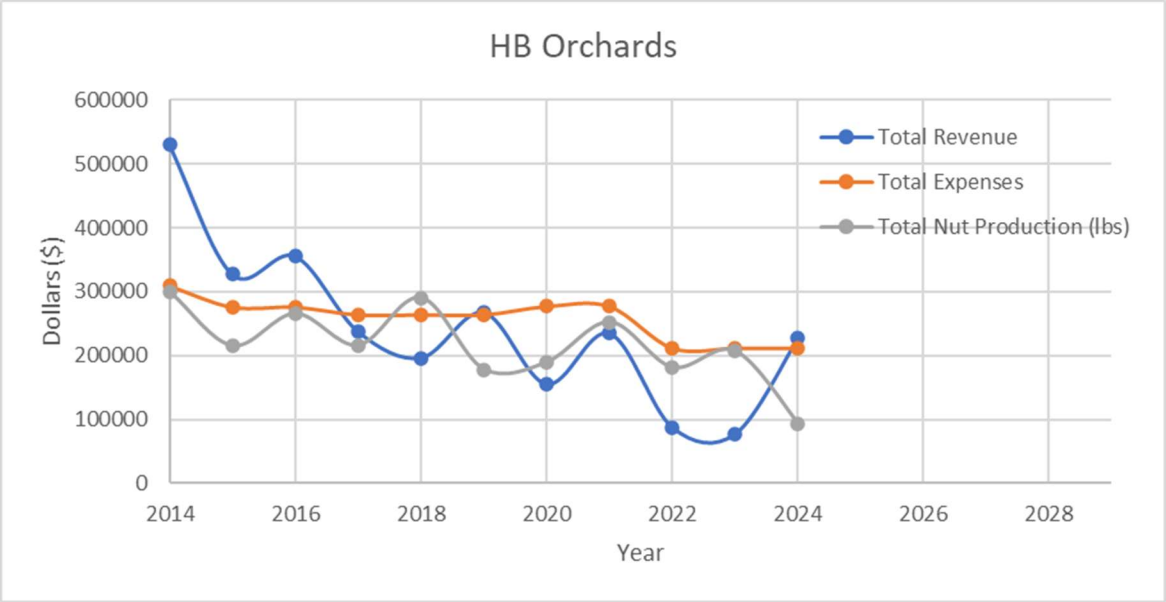
The following varieties are currently in production. All acreages are approximate:

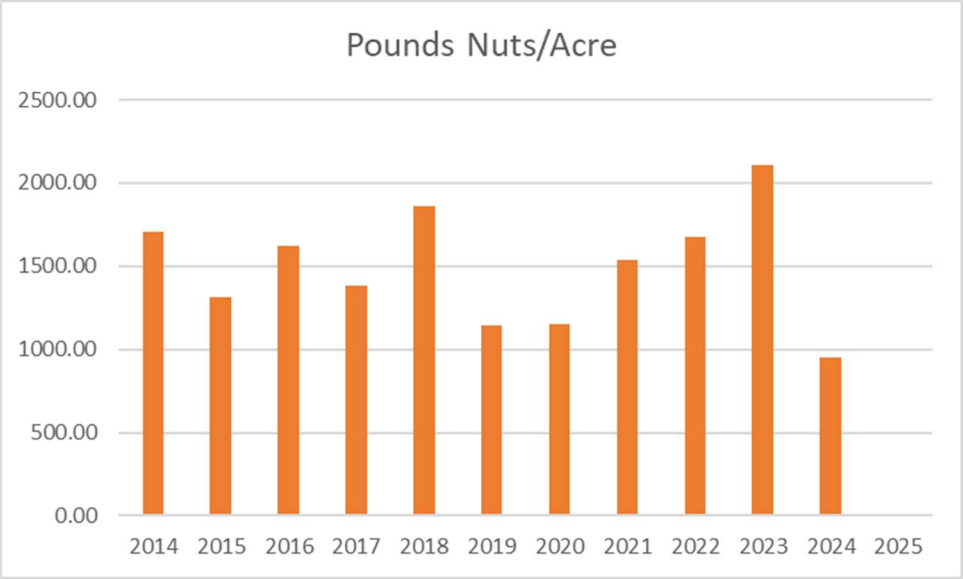
- Barcelona – 73 acres
- Jefferson – 50 acres

- Polly O's – 17 acres
- Unknown – 66 acres (not identified by landowner at this time)

Due to impacts of eastern filbert blight on the orchard it was decided to begin replacing the hardest hit areas of the orchard with more blight resistant varieties in 2015. By 2023, over 60% of the orchard had been replanted. As a result, nut production declined significantly as it takes approximately 7-10 years for nut production to reach merchantable quantities. The previous owner provided the District with production and revenue data from 2014 to 2024, which are summarized in the charts below.

It should be noted that the total revenue data includes Farm Services Agency disaster payments for crop losses in 2019 (wind storm) and 2024 (ice storm). Outside of those two years, expenses exceeded revenue every year since 2016 as a result of loss of productive acres with orchard replanting efforts. However, nut production per acre shows that the highest productive year was 2023 (see graphs below).





Riparian and Floodplain Vegetation

The riparian areas and floodplain forests range in condition from large intact mature floodplain forest between the McKenzie River and Cedar Creek to narrow degraded, invasive plant dominated sloughs. District staff have performed rapid assessments of the perennial waterways to document their conditions and consider what management options will provide the greatest benefits to our constituents. See Exhibit E: Management Unit Map

- **McKenzie River:** Riparian conditions vary. The northern floodplain forest (H1) is in excellent condition with cottonwood, bigleaf maple, and native understory. In contrast, the western reach downstream of Cedar Creek (H5) has narrow buffers dominated by invasive Himalayan blackberry and English ivy.
- **Cedar Creek:** This cold-water stream supports salmonids. It intermixes with McKenzie River upstream on EWEB High Banks Property and its confluence with the McKenzie River is on the NW boundary of Rice Farm. The riparian buffer on its eastern reach is in poor condition, with narrow, degraded buffers dominated by reed canarygrass and Himalayan blackberry interspersed with mature red alder and Oregon ash. The downstream reach transitions into mature floodplain forest to the north with better habitat complexity and large woody debris. Despite Cedar Creek having a reputation for heavy nutrient loading, many less pollution tolerant aquatic invertebrates are present including caddisfly, mayfly, and stonefly.
- **Kizer and Unnamed Slough:** Both are perennial but not known to support salmonids. Buffers are 40–50 feet wide and dominated by invasive species with few overstory trees, primarily red alder, big leaf maple, and Oregon Ash. Both drain into a property to the

west owned by International Paper. A slough in H5 appears to be seasonally disconnected, potentially creating fish stranding issues.

Infrastructure

Rice Farm includes a mix of residential, agricultural, and access infrastructure that supports both working lands and potential community uses. Maintaining these assets in functional condition during the interim management period is essential to preserve property value, ensure safety, and allow for flexibility in future planning. See Exhibit F: Infrastructure Map

The property contains two residences and five agricultural outbuildings. Both homes will require routine maintenance in the short term, including roof and flooring replacements within the next two years. Agricultural outbuildings currently serve as equipment storage and farm operations.

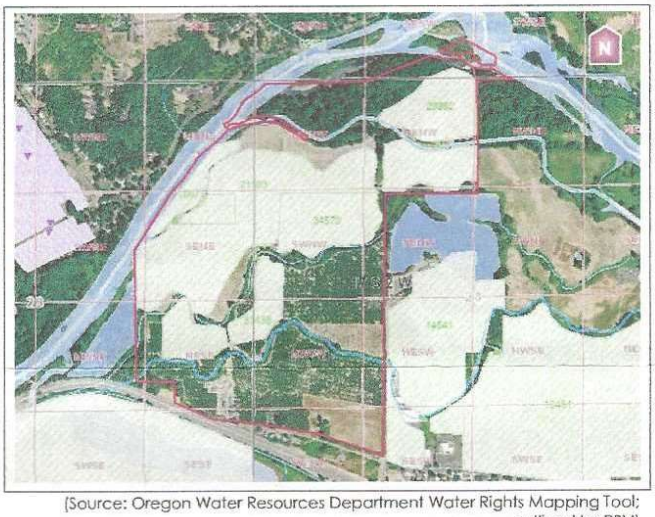
A primary north–south gravel road extends from High Banks Road into the property, providing year-round access to the orchard and buildings. Numerous dirt roads branch from the main route, connecting management units across the farm. Several key water crossings exist: culverts span Kizer Slough and the unnamed slough, while a concrete box bridge provides access across Cedar Creek into management unit H2.

Boundary fencing is minimal. The eastern property line has a three-strand barbed wire fence, but much of it is obscured by dense blackberry growth. The southern and western boundaries have no fencing.

Water Rights

The property has recognized water rights through five points of diversion (PODs) on the McKenzie River, Cedar Creek and two sloughs (see summary below). The property also has a productive well near the buildings. While pumps and hoses were historically used, current irrigation infrastructure is minimal and will need to be replaced.

Water Rights



(Source: Oregon Water Resources Department Water Rights Mapping Tool; outlined by PBV)

According to the Oregon Water Resources Department the subject property has irrigation water rights under the following certificates:

Water Right	Water Type	Use	Priority Date	POD	Flow Rate (CFS)	Dates of Use	Size (AC)	Status
Cert: 28882	Surface	Irrigation	7/30/1957	1 POD > Unnamed Stream > Cedar Flat Creek	0.31	1/1 to 12/31	25.00	Non-Cancelled
Cert: 21103	Surface	Irrigation	5/3/1950	2 PODs > Kizer Slough & Unnamed Pond > McKenzie River	0.45	1/1 to 12/31	49.00	Non-Cancelled
Cert: 28877	Surface	Irrigation	8/8/1956	1 POD > McKenzie River > Willamette River	0.11	1/1 to 12/31	8.95	Non-Cancelled
Cert: 33438	Surface	Irrigation	5/8/1961	1 POD > McKenzie River > Willamette River	0.2	1/1 to 12/31	16.00	Non-Cancelled
Cert: 34570	Surface	Irrigation	6/10/1964	1 POD > Kizer Slough > McKenzie River	0.21	1/1 to 12/31	16.60	Non-Cancelled

Management Goals and Actions 2025-2028

Riparian and Habitat Management

Rice Farm contains extensive riparian corridors and floodplain habitats that, if managed responsibly, would contribute to the health of the McKenzie River watershed. These areas have the potential to provide water quality benefits, fish and wildlife habitat, and ecological restoration opportunities. The interim management approach focuses on protecting existing high-quality habitats, restoring priority degraded areas, creating movement corridors between habitat patches, and laying the groundwork for larger-scale projects that will be addressed through long-term planning.

Goals and Objectives

- To protect and enhance water quality for the benefit of drinking water and fish and wildlife habitat.
    - To expand riparian buffers along Cedar Creek and portions of the McKenzie River through shade credit plantings, and to expand upon those shade credit units.
    - Manage unit H1 as high quality floodplain forest, and explore entering into a protection agreement with EWEB through the Pure Water Partners.
    - Monitor water quality in Cedar Creek, Kizer Slough and the unnamed slough
- To connect isolated habitat features and to restore watershed functions and processes.
    - Connect floodplain forest habitat found in Management Unit H1 with the floodplain forest found on EWEB's High Banks Property by restoring management unit H2.
    - Connect riparian area restoration plantings along the McKenzie River to the small slough in management unit H5.

Priority Actions

The District will pursue the following priorities during the interim period:

1. **Implement Shade Credit Plantings** along Cedar Creek and the McKenzie River in partnership with the Metropolitan Wastewater Management Commission (MWMC) and The Freshwater Trust (TFT).
    - These plantings are designed to reduce stream temperatures and provide long-term shading benefits.
    - The project involves removing invasive species, clearing hazelnuts in designated planting areas, and installing a mix of native trees and shrubs (with shrubs only near powerlines).
    - A 20-year contract will secure management and stewardship, with TFT providing site preparation, planting, plant maintenance, and monitoring.
    - The planting units will be 100ft wide along the McKenzie River, and 60 feet wide along Cedar Creek.
    - Areas under powerlines will be planted only with shrubs.
    - **Timeline:**
        - Dec 2025–Jan 2026: Finalize contracts.
        - Mar–Nov 2026: Site preparation (invasive removal, orchard clearing, planting plan).
        - Nov 2026–Mar 2027: Initial planting.
        - Ongoing: Invasive control, irrigation, herbivory protection, interplanting as needed.

2. **Protect and Manage Unit H1 as a Mature Floodplain Forest.**
    - Conduct a riparian assessment using Pure Water Partners protocols by June 2026.
    - Map invasive species and identify threats by July 2026.
    - Develop and implement an invasive treatment plan, potentially coordinating with TFT to reduce costs. Implementation will likely require contractors who are licensed herbicide applicators with the Oregon Department of Agriculture.
    - Continue to monitor forest condition and adjust management as needed.
    - Work with the Pure Water Partners to determine if the management unit will qualify for a longterm protection agreement.

3. **Plan for Restoration of Unit H2, and other potential restoration areas.**
    - H2 offers the best opportunity to connect Rice Farm's floodplain forest to the existing floodplain forest found on EWEB's High Banks property.
    - Interim actions will focus on research and planning rather than on-the-ground restoration.
    - The District will apply for funding for a restoration feasibility study that focuses on management unit H2, but will also encompass W1 and portions of W2, 3, and 4.
    - In addition to habitat restoration, watershed function and the ability of this property to act as green infrastructure (floodwater storage, nutrient filtering) will be considerations when choosing the preferred restoration alternative. The Urban Water Partnership will be one of the consulted partners.
    - Timeline:
        - Winter 2026: Convene with McKenzie restoration partners to align priorities.
        - Mar 2026: Review past restoration efforts in the Cedar Creek watershed.
        - Feb 2026: Apply for restoration feasibility grants with partners.
        - Dec 2027: Complete feasibility study.
        - Mar 2028: Select a restoration alternative with partners.

4. **Expand upon shade credit planting units, especially in management unit H5:** Remove an isolated hazelnut block adjacent to the McKenzie River and expand riparian buffers along the McKenzie River and Cedar Creek. Ideally this project will be implemented concurrently with the shade credit work described above to maximize efficiency. Even with a truncated timeline, the District will collaborate with its partners, including the McKenzie Watershed Council and other parties within the Pure Waters

Partners. Funding already secured through The Freshwater Trust's shade credit program will be leveraged to match other funding sources.

- Apply for implementation grants in the winter of 2025.
- Operate as orchard until fall 2026 to suppress weeds, then restore in winter 2027.
- Follow timeline listed in #1 above

5. **Other Potential Restoration actions:**
    - **Other Sloughs (H4, H6, H7, H8):** Expanding the vegetated buffer of these sloughs is a desired goal. However, these sloughs are currently dominated by reed canarygrass and Himalayan blackberry. Restoration success is uncertain; these units are considered low priority unless new funding is established.
    - **H5 Slough:** This slough appears seasonally disconnected, with possible fish stranding issues. The District will observe conditions in 2026 and consult with ODFW to determine next steps, if any.
    - **Wildlife enhancement:** Work with community groups to enhance wildlife; for example, the installation of bird or bat houses.

Monitoring and Adaptive Management

Monitoring will be built into all habitat maintenance and restoration activities. PWP protocols will be applied in H1, TFT will monitor shade credit sites, and future monitoring in H2 will depend on the chosen restoration strategy. Findings will guide adaptive management, ensuring treatments and plantings remain effective over time.

Capacity and Budget Considerations

Riparian work will be scaled to available budget and partner capacity. The expansion of the shade credit units and restoration of HF should be considered even if the external grants are not awarded, due to the benefits of coordinating with shade credit plantings. Larger-scale work in H2 and other locations will not move forward until external funding is secured.

Collaboration and Partnership Planning Process

In 2025, the Watershed & Floodplain Restoration and Stakeholder Engagement Report was prepared for the UWSWCD. The authors of the report interviewed 31 individuals from 20 organizations representing tribal governments, non-governmental organizations, special districts, utilities, universities, state and local governments, and the federal government. Among other findings, the stakeholders provided guidance to the District on the region's

priorities, important project types, and what should be the key themes of our work. One of the most emphasized themes in the report is the importance of collaboration. This stakeholder input has shaped our approach to the property to date, including the management actions listed above. The District will continue to function within this collaborative ecosystem, working with partners to enact watershed restoration, strengthening and supporting existing partnerships and programs as we develop watershed management and restoration plans for the property to ensure our plans are aligned with regional strategic plans.

Working Lands Management

The hazelnut orchards at Rice Farm represent both an important working lands component and a significant opportunity to model sustainable agriculture that aligns with the District's soil and water conservation mission. While the orchards have faced challenges in recent years, including ice storm damage, disease, and declining commodity prices, they remain a central feature of the property. The interim management approach emphasizes soil health, reduced chemical use, and gradual transition toward organic and regenerative practices, while evaluating the long-term role of hazelnut production within the broader vision for the farm.

Goals and Objectives

The District will maintain the working lands component of Rice Farm where appropriate while promoting soil health and sustainable agriculture. Watershed and soil health goals will remain central to management decisions, ensuring that farming activities complement conservation outcomes. Management actions will incorporate the five soil health principles identified by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS):

- Keep the soil covered through the use of cover crops.
- Minimize soil disturbance by reducing tillage and mechanical impacts.
- Maximize plant diversity to support ecological resilience and soil function.
- Keep living roots in the soil to sustain soil biology year-round.
- Integrate livestock where appropriate to aid nutrient cycling and pest management.

Transition Strategies

To achieve these objectives, the District will:

- Reduce reliance on synthetic chemicals.
- Transition orchard management to organic production.
- Plant cover crops across the orchard floor to build soil health.

- Participate in regenerative agriculture research, including the 2026 Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG) cohort focused on native cover crops and basalt dust applications.
- Evaluate the potential to reduce hazelnut acreage in favor of alternative crops or expanded habitat.
- Research opportunities and methods for livestock integration as both an ecological and economic strategy.

Management Actions

Interim actions will lay the groundwork for long-term transition:

1. Secure a temporary management contract with an orchardist to maintain production in the fall and winter of 2025/2026. The chosen operator will reduce pesticide and herbicide use in 2026 while the District develops an Organic Systems Plan (OSP).
2. Draft an OSP and transition plan, with implementation beginning in 2026 and full transition to organic certification in 2027. This action will be closely tied to research into the economics of organic certification, including markets for transitional hazelnuts.
3. Develop a cover cropping plan that utilizes a native seed mix combined with Dutch white clover. A small test area will be planted in the late fall 2025 if feasible, with full scale implementation scheduled for the fall of 2026.
4. Implement some transitional management practices in 2026, prior to the development of the OSP. These practices will include replacing much of the chemical sucker management with mechanical sucker control that will include hand pruning and brush cutters. We will have a greater emphasis on Integrated Pest Management (IPM) as well, which will include increased pruning for blight management, utilizing pheromone disruptors for filbert worm management, and other IPM strategies.
5. Conduct initial trials with organic fertilizers, with the goal of replacing synthetic inputs once cover crops are established.
6. Phase out scraping of orchard floor soils beginning in 2026, eliminating the practice once cover crops are established.
7. Work with researchers from OU, OSU, and the NRCS to install a Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG) plot at Rice Farm. The CIG is a 5 year research effort that is testing how to utilize different types of cover crops and basalt dust amendments to improve soil and tree health, biodiversity, and carbon drawdown while potentially reducing the need for conventional practices like flail mowing and liming. The CIG aims to demonstrate the ecological and financial benefits of this system at scale

Livestock Integration

The District will research the feasibility of incorporating livestock into orchard management. This will require careful planning to address water quality concerns. It is assumed that extensive fencing and monitoring will be required. Potential benefits include reduced chemical use, sucker and weed control, and improved nutrient cycling. Sheep could provide vegetation control, including pruning of hazelnut suckers. Pigs and chickens could be used in small-scale trials to help manage filbert worm populations. Any implementation will be limited to small, closely monitored pilot projects.

Research and Long-Term Considerations

Financial sustainability remains a critical question for the future of hazelnut production at Rice Farm. Preliminary records indicate that the orchard has been operating at a loss for the past five years, largely due to a high proportion of young, non-producing trees and a sharp decline in commodity prices. Transitioning to organic management is expected to increase operating costs, but it could also open premium markets and create new revenue opportunities. The District will contract with a farm accountant to conduct a financial feasibility analysis and develop long-term projections in 2026.

Partnership Opportunities and Collaboration

Just as the District collaborates with partners on watershed restoration, partners will play an active role in shaping the working lands components of Rice Farms. The following ideas, shared by partners, are offered for consideration in the development of the long-term management plan.

- An equipment rental program to support regional farmers.
- A community tool-lending library.
- Manure and compost exchange programs.
- Demonstration plots and research trials for regenerative agriculture.
- Hosting workshops and field days for local producers.
- Using the farm as a training site for District and partner staff.
- Creating youth and university student engagement opportunities.
- Exploring incubator farm programs or apprenticeship partnerships.
- Contributing to local food production for food assistance programs.

By taking a phased, adaptive approach, the District will maintain hazelnut production in the short term, test regenerative and organic practices, and evaluate whether hazelnuts remain the best use of the property's working lands in the long run.

Site Security and Safety

Ensuring the safety and security of Rice Farm is an immediate priority during the interim management period. The property contains two residential buildings, five agricultural outbuildings, equipment, and infrastructure that are vulnerable to vandalism, theft, and trespass. In addition, unauthorized access could compromise both agricultural production and habitat restoration efforts. The District's approach is to implement cost-effective, wildlife-friendly security measures that protect assets while maintaining the ecological integrity of the property.

Goals and Objectives

- Prevent vandalism and theft from residential and agricultural buildings.
- Discourage trespass and dumping along the southern boundary and at key access points.
- Reduce risks to ongoing agricultural and ecological management activities.

Actions Taken and Planned

Several measures will be implemented to address immediate security needs:

- **Fencing:** A wildlife-friendly fence will be installed along the southern border to discourage trespass and prevent illegal dumping. The design will include three wires, with the top and bottom wires barbless and set at heights that allow safe passage for deer and other wildlife while deterring unauthorized vehicle and pedestrian access. The District will also research the feasibility of a "living fence" — a vegetative barrier that could provide both security and habitat benefits.
- **Lighting and Monitoring:** Additional motion-detection lighting will be installed around all buildings to deter unauthorized activity at night. Interior security systems are planned for both residences, while exterior systems will be added to agricultural outbuildings.
- **Structural Improvements:** Building security will be enhanced through upgrades to doors, locks, and windows. These improvements are intended to reduce vulnerability without compromising the potential future uses of the structures as offices, educational spaces, or housing.

Remaining Questions

One outstanding issue is where the District will be permitted to install gates along the main roadway. Gating could provide an additional layer of security but must be balanced with access

needs for staff, contractors, and partners, as well as any county or emergency access requirements. This question will require further consultation with regulatory authorities and partners before a decision is made.

Infrastructure

Rice Farm's infrastructure consists of residential buildings, agricultural outbuildings, access roads, and water diversion points. These assets are valuable both for their current use in managing the property and for their potential future role as community, educational, or District office facilities. Protecting and maintaining them during the interim period is essential to preserve long-term flexibility and ensure compliance with health, safety, and legal requirements.

Goals and Objectives

- Maintain existing residential buildings to preserve property value and potential uses.
- Maintain equipment and agricultural buildings to ensure functionality and compliance with relevant statutes.
- Research and plan upgrades that would allow the residences to serve as offices, meeting spaces, or classrooms for environmental education programs.
- Maintain water rights and infrastructure at existing points of diversion (PODs) to support restoration plantings and agricultural ventures.
- Evaluate long-term options for water rights, including potential conversion or transfer to instream use
  .

Actions Taken and Planned

Several steps have been taken to assess and maintain Rice Farm's infrastructure, with additional actions planned for the next three years:

- **Building Assessments:** A professional building inspector will be hired to evaluate roofs, wiring, septic systems, and ventilation in both homes and outbuildings. Initial expectations are that the western home will require roof replacement within two years, and the eastern home will need new carpet and flooring within the same timeframe. At least one outbuilding roof is also expected to require replacement.
- **Grounds Maintenance:** The District will contract a landscaping firm to mow and maintain areas around the residential and agricultural buildings. Any landscaping installed will incorporate naturescaping and firewise principles. This will reduce fire risk and preserve accessibility.

- **Culverts and Roads:** The two culverts on the property will be inspected and cleaned annually to ensure proper drainage and road stability. An inspection and maintenance schedule will be developed for all road crossings and critical access points.
- **Future Educational Use:** The District will work with environmental education partners to identify building specifications required to make residential or agricultural structures safe and functional as education or community-use spaces. This research will inform potential upgrades and grant applications.
- **Water Rights and Irrigation:** Pumps and hoses will continue to be used at PODs to irrigate restoration plantings as needed. Maintaining the validity and operational capacity of these rights will be a high priority to preserve options for both agricultural production and habitat restoration in the long term.
-

Collaboration: Tribal Engagement, Education, and Communication

The UWSWCD is committed to fostering and engaging partnerships for collaborative stewardship and management throughout the interim phases and into the long-term management and implementation stages. The District plans to include relevant and interested partners in various aspects of planning and implementation to enhance shared values, promote stewardship, establish trust and relationships, leverage resources, and provide meaningful benefits to partners and community members. The District has a longstanding history of prioritizing and practicing partnership development, demonstrated through its involvement and support in collaborations such as the Upper Willamette Stewardship Network (UWSN), the Pure Water Partners Program, the Urban Waters Program, and other regional and local partnerships. We are dedicated to working collaboratively with Tribes, local, state, and federal agencies, nonprofits, community-based organizations, and community members to build consensus, foster inclusion, promote transparency, and facilitate mutually beneficial management decisions and land-use opportunities.

Principles

- Actively involving community members in discussions, decision-making and activities about and on the land.
- Building and enhancing relationships and creating collaborative pathways to engage partners and stakeholders.
- Fostering communication with community partners, stakeholders and the public.
- Encouraging public participation through public meetings, workshops, surveys, etc.

Questions:

- Who are our key stakeholders/collaborators?
- What is the history of engagement on Cedar Creek? How have others tried to engage with the land and community in the vicinity?
- What are the values we are trying to protect with this land purchase?
- What are the goals and objectives of our community engagement efforts?
    - How do these goals align with UWSWCD's goals and the needs of the wider community?
- Do we need a community engagement committee/working group to include staff, board, members of the UWSN?
- Do we need to add staff/capacity?
- What are the opportunity costs (if staff do things like mow trails, etc.)?
- What partners could fill roles if we don't add staff capacity?
- What grants should we apply for and who can collaborate with us on those grants?
- Should we hire a consultant for any of these strategies/steps?
- In what phases can these strategies be placed? What does the timeline look like?

Resources

- Avarna DEIJ Toolkit for Indigenous and Community Engagement
- Avarna DEIJ Toolkit for Marketing, Communications, Branding, and Social Media

Strategies and Timeline:

Determine capacity and funding for the planning & implementation of a collaborative planning process. If a consultant company is chosen, consider the timeline, funding, and scope of work. Seek grant funding in early 2026.

- **Learn the history of engagement on/near the site, *January 2026-April 2026***
  Identify primary stakeholders that have a history of engagement in the area. Identify key community members. Conduct Interviews with key members of staff of the community.
    - Cedar Creek Irrigation District
    - McKenzie Watershed Council engagement history on Cedar Creek
    - Pure Water Partners Program

- SUB
- EWEB

- **Break up discussion groups by "subject matter" (food resilience, soil health/agriculture, water quality, etc. and form conversation groups around each subject.**
  - Identify the different "subject matters".

- **Hold a series of meetings/events with partners, agencies, *April- June 2026***
  - Focus groups
  - Open discussions
  - "Delphi method" - get opposing opinions

- **Create a media press kit, that includes a press release, photos, and stakeholder contacts**. ***January- March 2026 and ongoing.***
- **Social media campaign January 2026 and ongoing.**
- **Assessment and Understanding**
- Depending on the timeline of hiring a consultant company or internal staff capacity timeline from January 2026-June 2026
  - Conduct surveys, interviews, or hold focus groups to understand the needs, concerns, and priorities for various stakeholders.
  - Collect feedback throughout the engagement process.
  - Make adjustments to strategies based on feedback.
  - Learn from the process and commit to continuous improvement.

Documentation

- Record the outcomes, lessons learned, and any challenges encountered during the community engagement process.
- Communicate the results with the community, stakeholders, and UWSWCD staff and board.

Tribal and Indigenous Groups

Partnership development with Tribes and Indigenous groups is a vital aspect of our engagement strategy. To facilitate this, we will collaborate closely with UWSN Tribal Liaison, Haley Case-Scott, who will assist the District and other UWSN members in building relationships with Tribal

Nations and adhering to tribe-specific engagement protocols. Actions listed below reflect recommendations and suggestions of the Tribal Laison.

There are several preliminary steps the District will take in the winter of 2026. We will complete the draft Tribal Partnership and Decolonization (TPAD) Tribal and Indigenous engagement survey and protocol. We will reach out to specific members of the Tribal cultural resource's teams at the local Tribal offices, such as those from the Siletz and Grand Ronde Tribes, to discuss the property purchase and potential values to the Tribes. This communication could provide an opportunity for the Tribes to tour the property and meet with UWSWCD staff, allowing us to explore potential benefits for the Tribes and local indigenous communities. We will also engage with the Traditional Ecological Inquiry (TEIP) program managers to explore potential Native Youth projects and educational sites.

A key question to consider throughout this process is the immediate benefit our engagement provides to the Tribes and Indigenous communities, as well as what we can offer them. We should also reflect on our values related to concepts such as co-management, co-stewardship, and our commitment to rematriation, as well as ensuring access to land for cultivating and harvesting important traditional foods. There might be opportunities for access to other cultural activities, such as fishing and hunting, alongside considerations for food sovereignty. It is expected that these conversations and plans will develop over the course of several years.

In the **Winter and Spring 2026**, we will initiate communications to address the local Tribal offices' needs for vegetables and food production for Tribal members, potentially through initiatives such as greenhouses or community gardens to grow and distribute food locally. Further discussions with Jared Pruch (UWSWCD Grant Management Specialist), representatives from the local tribal offices, and the Grow Lane County initiative will support our efforts to initiate these conversations and determine if there are ways the farm property can help provide fresh, locally grown foods to communities in need while also supporting local farmers.

These suggestions are taken from the Avarna Group Community Engagement Tool-kit specific to Tribes and Indigenous Communities:

- Expand the list of partners in science work to Indigenous peoples and people who don’t necessarily identify as “scientists” but have knowledge (such as traditional ecological knowledge)
- Approach Tribal Nations and Indigenous communities as sovereign nations and not merely stakeholders.

- Avoid “TEK bandwagoning,” i.e., expecting Tribal Nations or Indigenous communities to know everything about their traditional ecological knowledge and ways (e.g., fire, medicine, foodways) and expecting them to be willing to share it all with you.
- Be cognizant of burdens to Tribal Nations and Indigenous communities resulting from multiple organizations approaching them for engagement; coordinate and align your tribal engagement with other organizations operating in the same geography.
- Provide ethnographic right of refusal - “There are ethical/methodological considerations about whether findings should be shared publicly (which assumes access to knowledge of place). Information can be intensely personal or sacred or only for certain people, or can cause harm, or just none of their damn business. Offering refusal means research is accountable. This keeps communities, lands, and food from being in a resource relationship to researchers. Researchers are not entitled to land, samples, and local knowledge. Researchers have stakes in the research, but communities have rights. Rights trump stakes.” (Max Liboiron, Métis nation, founder of CLEAR lab)

Regional Environmental Education

Rice Farm has already begun to emerge as a promising site for environmental education and youth engagement. Emma Garner, Regional Education Development Team Coordinator for the Upper Willamette Stewardship Network (UWSN), toured the property and identified numerous opportunities for student involvement. She also connected with Stephanie Lawless of the WELL Project, who expressed strong enthusiasm for involving students in water quality and habitat survey teams. Given the established partnership between the WELL Project and the Regional Education Program, planning for student engagement will be straightforward and require minimal support from District staff.

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Educational opportunities span a range of locations and topics:

- **Main Parking Area:** Potential hub for student orientation and gatherings.
- **Residences (if made accessible):** Classroom-like settings for partner presentations, student-led reports, and group activities (see Infrastructure section).
- **Slough Crossings:** Water quality sampling with WELL Project teams.
- **Hazelnut Orchard:** Soil health testing and comparisons across land types; Tribal and Native Youth professional development opportunities.
- **Cedar Creek:** Stream surveys, water quality testing, electrofishing, and macroinvertebrate sampling.
- **Riparian Forest (H2):** Plant identification, wildlife observation, and restoration projects.

These activities align with the District’s goals of fostering hands-on learning, supporting Tribal and Native Youth engagement, and building future conservation capacity.

Timeline: Immediate conversations with Emma Garner and Stephanie Lawless Present-December 2025.

- Education Opportunities- January 2026- July 2026 and ongoing.

Broader Partnership Engagement and Collaboration:

Present- 2028 See strategies and dependent on timeline and recommendations of the consultants.

The District recognizes the importance of partnerships in advancing both conservation and working lands goals at Rice Farm. During the interim period, outreach will be broadened to include a wide range of partners, ensuring diverse perspectives inform planning. An engagement interest survey will help assess willingness to collaborate, prioritize activities, and identify new opportunities.

Potential partners include:

- **UWSN partners (UWSWCD is a member) and project teams**: Watershed Councils (MWC, MRT, CFWWC, MFWWC, MRT, Friends of Buford Park, and Mt.Pisgah Arboretum), Working Lands, Uplands, Regional Education Development Team, Floodplain, Tribal Partnership And Decolonization, Urban Waters Partnership
- **Pure Water Partners Program:** EWEB, MWC, MRT and collaborating organizations.
- **Local and Regional Stakeholders:** Springfield Utility Board, City of Springfield, Cedar Creek neighborhood, Willamalane Parks and Rec, and Rivers to Ridges members.
- **Conservation and Technical Groups**: The Freshwater Trust, Prescribed Burn Association, oak and prairie specialists.
- **Academic Institutions:** University of Oregon, Oregon State University, and Lane Community College.
- **Community-Based Organizations:** Beyond Toxics, NAACP, Food for Lane County, and groups representing Indigenous and marginalized communities.

By casting a wide net, the District will maximize collaborative opportunities and position Rice Farm as a regional hub for conservation, education, and sustainable agriculture.

Public Access

General Public access during the interim period will remain limited. In the first year, access will be provided to invited groups such as Tribes, Indigenous communities, and partner organizations. Broader community access will be considered in years two and three, guided by staff, board, and consultant planning efforts. This phased approach allows the District to balance stewardship responsibilities with community interest while establishing clear safety, liability,

and ecological protection protocols. Effective public communication campaigns will be essential to building community understanding and trust during this process.

Communication Strategy

The District will implement a proactive communication strategy to share updates about Rice Farm, highlight its conservation and agricultural values, and build momentum for broader community engagement. Key components include:

- Newsletter Announcement: Informing stakeholders of the acquisition and initial goals.
- Talking Points: Equipping board and staff with consistent messaging.
- Feature Article: A magazine-style piece authored by the Media and Outreach Specialist, telling the story of the property's history, acquisition, and future vision.
- Documentation of the orchards' transition from conventional to organic production over time to include film, drone footage and interviews, sharing both successes and failures, as an educational tool and resource for other hazelnut growers.
- Ongoing Updates: Regular communication through the District's website, social media, and outreach materials documenting developments, management actions, and community opportunities.
- Social Media Campaign

The District expects to expand and modify its communication strategy as partner engagement, habitat restoration, and agricultural modifications are implemented.

Long-Term Collaboration and Community Engagement Action Plan: January 2026-Ongoing

- Create a detailed plan including specific activities/events that further the goals of communication, participation, and relationship-building.
- Develop a budget for community engagement.

The District intends to integrate community voices into the development of the long-term management plan. This will require revising current staff job descriptions or hiring new staff dedicated to Rice Farm community engagement. Consultants may also be brought in to support the creation of a comprehensive public engagement strategy.

All engagement efforts will be guided by the DEIJ Community Engagement Toolkit and Communications Toolkit developed by the Avarna Group. These resources emphasize equity, inclusion, and authentic partnership with Tribal Nations, Indigenous communities, marginalized groups, and community-based organizations.\

Additional Capacity Needs

The acquisition of Rice Farm presents significant new opportunities for the District to advance conservation, education, and working lands programs. However, realizing the full potential of these opportunities will require additional staff capacity and dedicated management attention. While much of the habitat restoration and stewardship work can be supported by existing staff expertise, there are important tradeoffs. Staff time devoted to Rice Farm reduces availability to serve other private landowners and partners through programs such as Pure Water Partners (PWP) or direct landowner engagement. Careful planning will therefore be needed to balance new responsibilities with existing commitments.

Facility Management

New responsibilities are associated with maintaining buildings, fences, and other infrastructure at Rice Farm. The District will need to add facility management duties to an existing staff position or hire a part-time facility manager. Key responsibilities would include:

- Coordinating with security firms.
- Tracking building maintenance needs and scheduling routine inspections.
- Hiring contractors for building repairs and upkeep.
- Conducting weekly inspections of the property to identify trespass, damage, or fence incursions.
- Potentially managing an equipment lending program or other options that the District chooses to pursue.

Working Lands Management

Management of the hazelnut orchards and other agricultural operations introduces responsibilities beyond the District's historic scope of work. The District will need to assign these activities to an existing staff position or consider hiring a dedicated agricultural coordinator. Key responsibilities would include:

- Serving as the point of contact with Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG) partners.
- Managing relationships with orchardists or farm lessees.

- Evaluating the operational and financial impacts of transitioning the orchard to organic production.

Community Engagement

Rice Farm also creates new opportunities for engagement with partners, volunteers, and the general public. To meet these opportunities, the District will need to expand its community outreach and engagement capacity. Options include adding these duties to an existing staff role or hiring new staff with a focus on public engagement. Responsibilities could include:

- Coordinating volunteer activities such as restoration planting, invasive removal, and monitoring.
- Managing outreach campaigns, educational tours, and events.
- Building relationships with new partners, particularly Tribes, Indigenous communities, and community-based organizations.
- Documentation of the orchards' transition from conventional to organic production over time to include film, drone footage and interviews, sharing both successes and failures, as an educational tool and resource for other hazelnut growers.

Conclusion

The Rice Farm Interim Management Plan provides the District with a clear framework for stewarding this unique property over the next three years while laying the foundation for a long-term, community-driven management plan. During this interim period, the District will focus on protecting the property's natural and built assets, maintaining agricultural operations, and initiating habitat restoration projects that advance regional conservation goals.

By emphasizing both ecological stewardship and working lands management, the District ensures that Rice Farm can serve as a model for integrated land use—where water quality, soil health, wildlife habitat, and sustainable agriculture are managed together. Immediate steps such as securing riparian plantings, transitioning the hazelnut orchards toward organic and regenerative practices, improving site security, and maintaining infrastructure will stabilize the property and protect its long-term value.

Partnerships will play a central role in this interim period. Collaborations with Tribes, Indigenous communities, conservation organizations, educational partners, and local residents will help shape the property's future while expanding opportunities for community engagement.

Through education initiatives, pilot projects, and outreach, Rice Farm will become a living laboratory for students, researchers, and practitioners across the watershed.

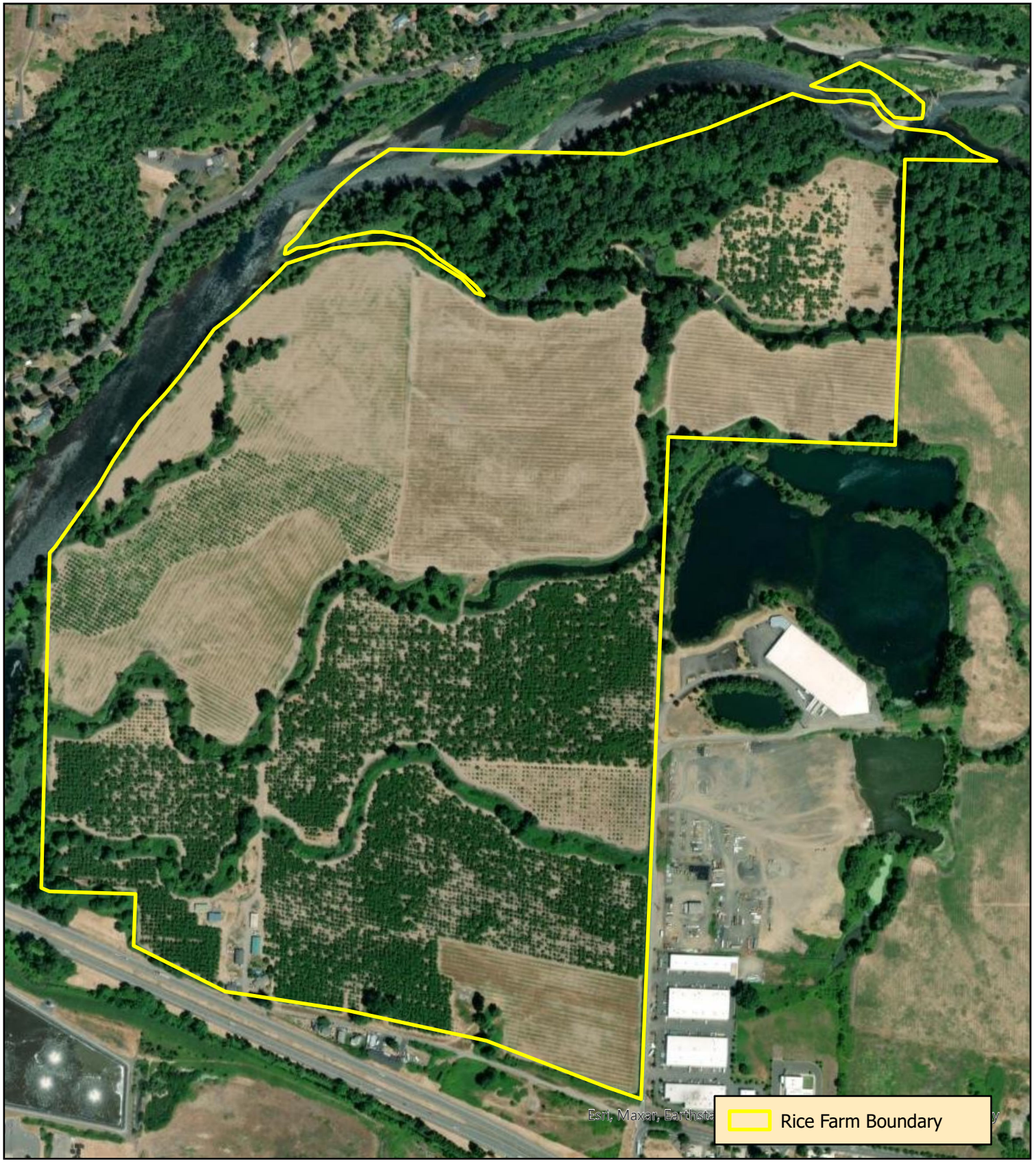
Capacity needs have also been identified, including facility management, farm operations oversight, and community engagement support. Addressing these needs will be essential to ensure that the District can fully activate the opportunities Rice Farm presents without compromising its ability to serve other landowners and partners.

Ultimately, this interim plan balances action with flexibility. It allows the District to manage the property in the present while creating space for broad community input to guide the long-term vision. Rice Farm has the potential to become both a working landscape and a community asset—advancing conservation, education, and agricultural innovation in the Upper Willamette.

Exhibits

A. Aerial Imagery
B. Topographic Map
C. Conservation Context Map
D. Soil Map and Legend
E. Management Unit Map
F. Infrastructure Map

Exhibit A: Aerial Imagery



0 250 500 1,000 US Feet

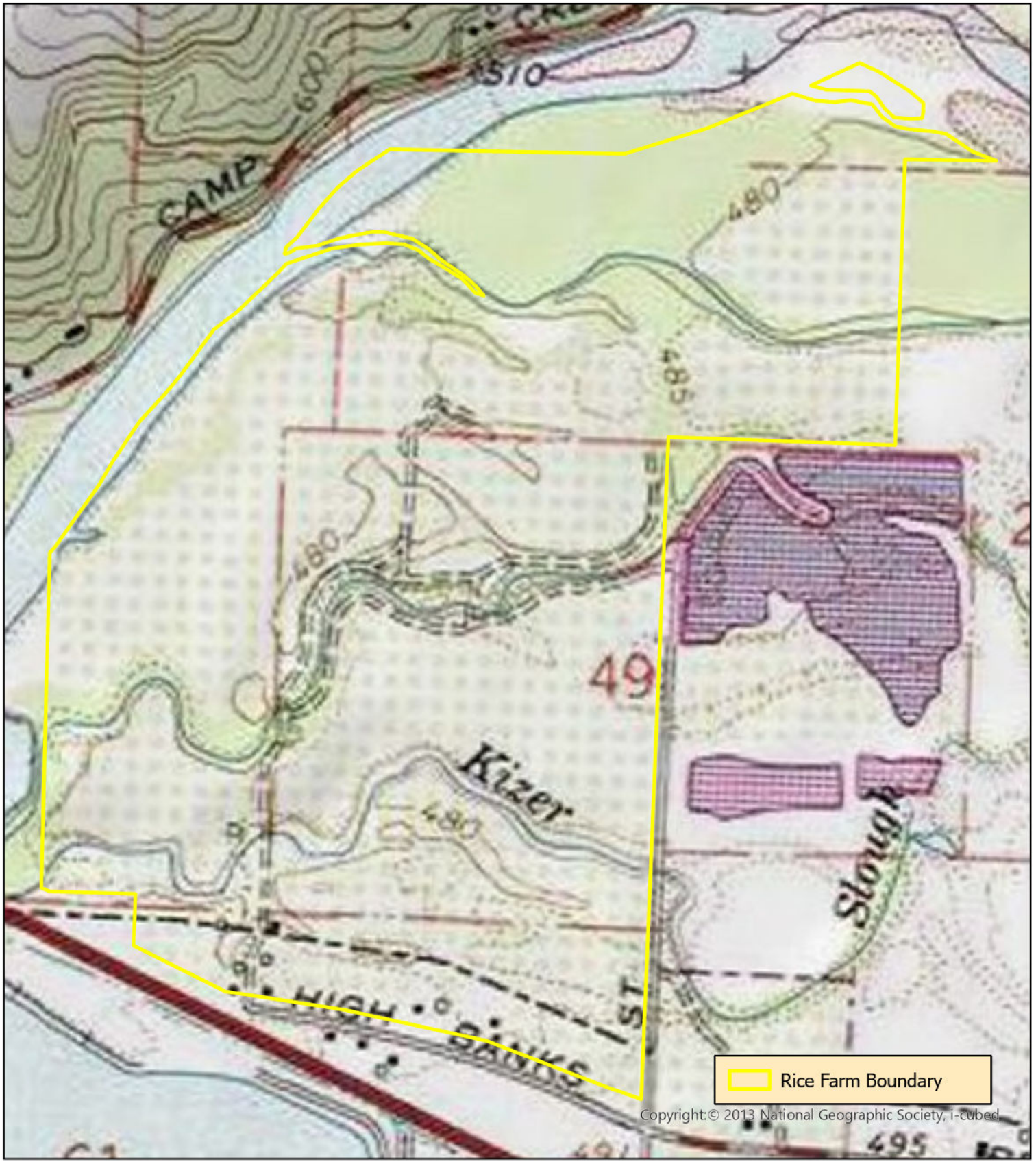
Upper Willamette Soil and Water Conservation District

Data: LCOG, The Freshwater Trust, ESRI

Rice Farm Interim Management Plan

N

Exhibit B: Topographic Map



0 250 500 1,000 US Feet

Upper Willamette Soil and Water Conservation District

Data: LCOG, The Freshwater Trust, ESRI

Rice Farm Interim Management Plan

N

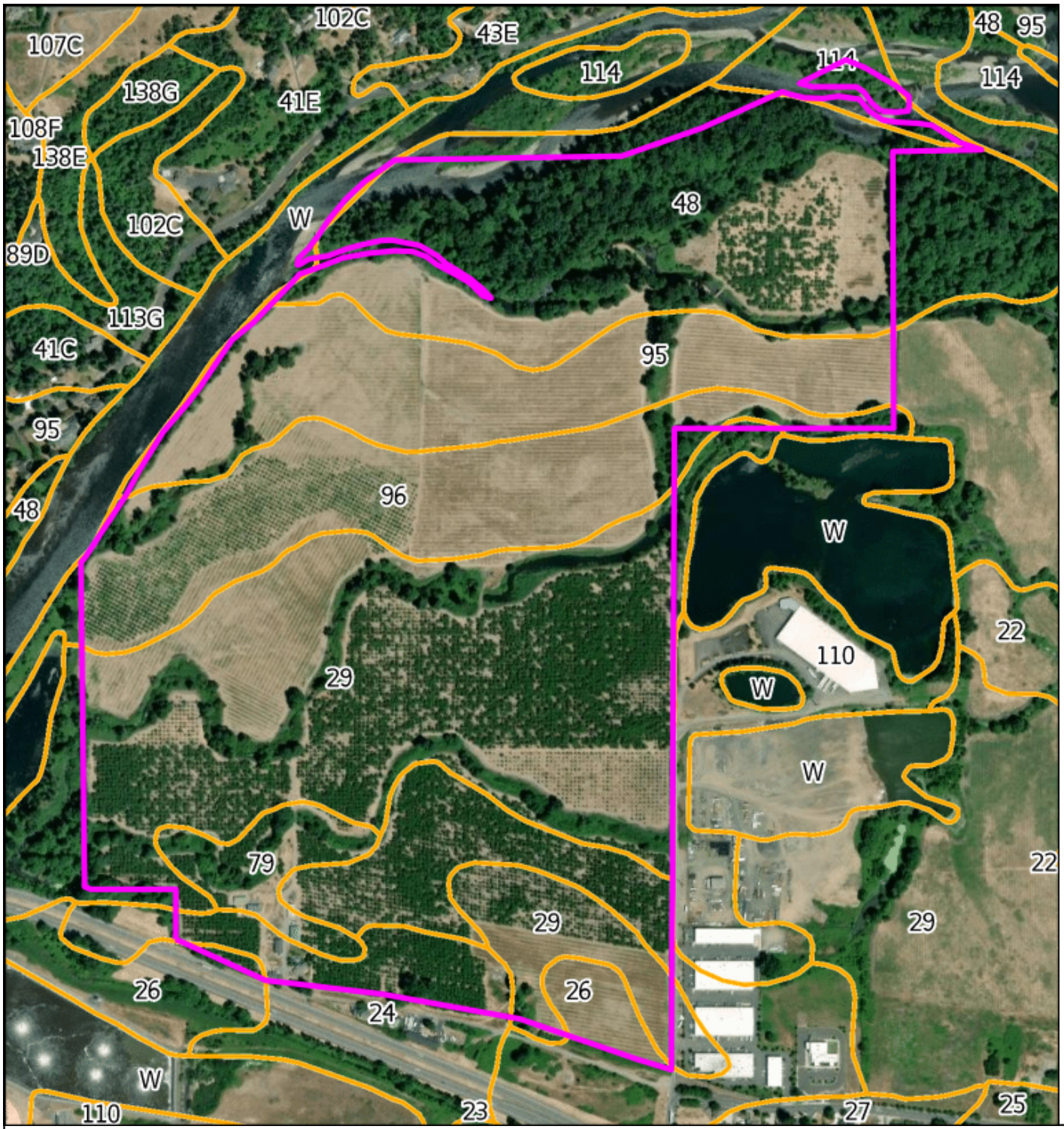
Exhibit C: Conservation Context Map

0 2,500 5,000 US Feet

Data: LCOG, The Freshwater Trust, ESRI

N

Exhibit D: Soil Map and Legend



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https://landmapper.ecotrust.org

Soil Types

Property boundary

Soil type

Data Sources
NRCS

0 feet — 2,000

0 meters — 400 — 800

Soil type table

Rice Farm

114 Riverwash

Area: 2.2 acres (0.8%)

Drainage: Poorly drained

Site Index: None

Erosion Hazard: Not rated

Restrictive Layer Depth: No Data Available

24 Chapman loam

Area: 9.4 acres (3.4%)

Drainage: Well drained

Site Index: None

Erosion Hazard: Slight

Restrictive Layer Depth: No Data Available

26 Chehalis silty clay loam, occasionally flooded

Area: 22.0 acres (7.9%)

Drainage: Well drained

Site Index: None

Erosion Hazard: Slight

Restrictive Layer Depth: No Data Available

29 Cloquato silt loam

Area: 97.2 acres (34.8%)

Drainage: Well drained

Site Index: None

Erosion Hazard: Slight

Restrictive Layer Depth: No Data Available

Soil type table

Rice Farm

48 Fluvents, nearly level

Area: 59.9 acres (21.4%)

Drainage: Poorly drained

Site Index: None

Erosion Hazard: Not rated

Restrictive Layer Depth: No Data Available

79 McBee silty clay loam

Area: 8.9 acres (3.2%)

Drainage: Moderately well drained

Site Index: None

Erosion Hazard: Slight

Restrictive Layer Depth: No Data Available

95 Newberg fine sandy loam

Area: 38.6 acres (13.8%)

Drainage: Well drained

Site Index: None

Erosion Hazard: Slight

Restrictive Layer Depth: No Data Available

96 Newberg loam

Area: 40.9 acres (14.6%)

Drainage: Well drained

Site Index: None

Erosion Hazard: Slight

Restrictive Layer Depth: No Data Available

Soil type table

Rice Farm

Water

Area: 0.4 acres (0.2%)

Drainage: None

Site Index: None

Erosion Hazard: Not rated

Restrictive Layer Depth: No Data Available

Area:

Drainage:

Site Index:

Erosion Hazard:

Restrictive Layer Depth:

Area:

Drainage:

Site Index:

Erosion Hazard:

Restrictive Layer Depth:

Area:

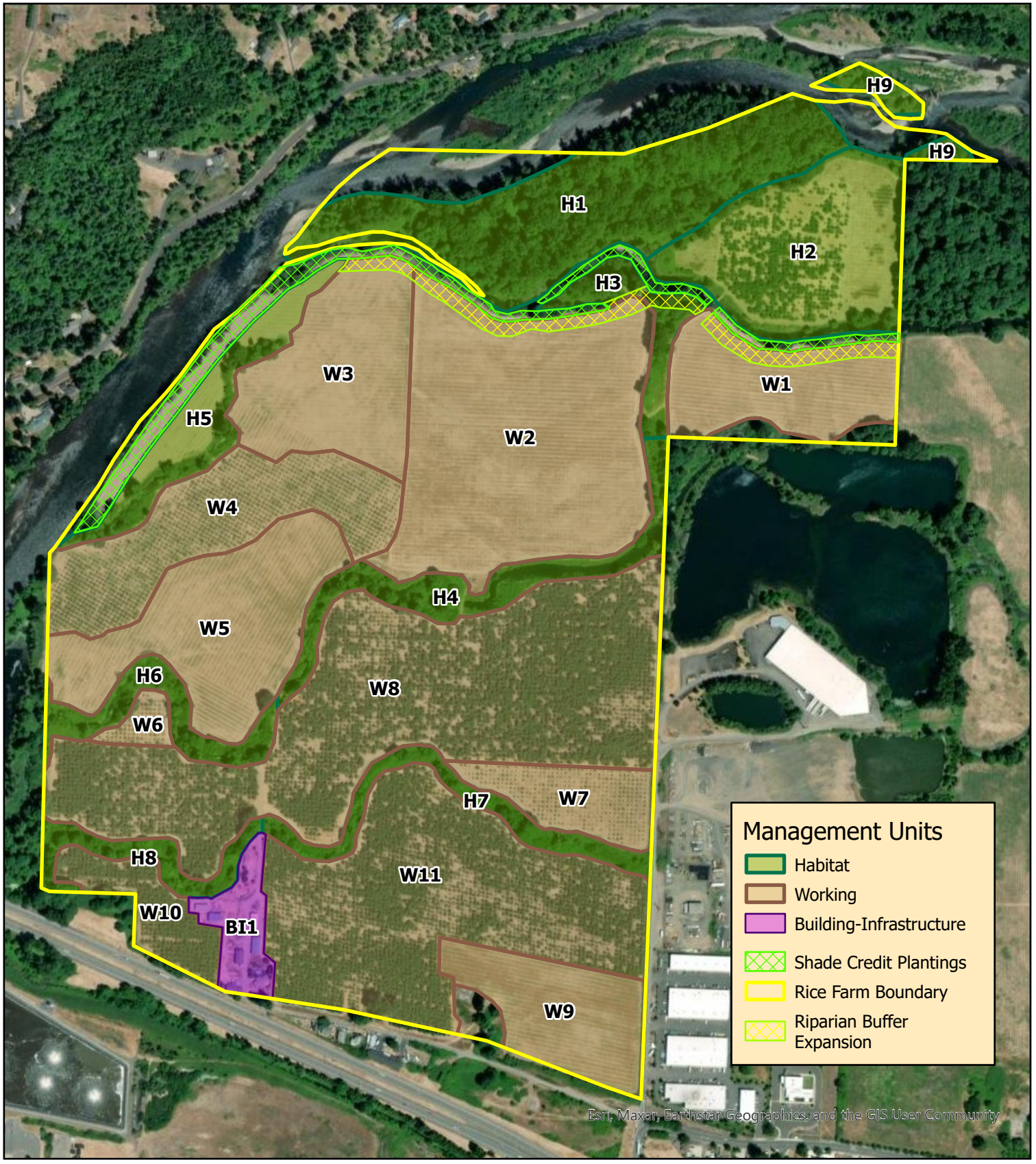
Drainage:

Site Index:

Erosion Hazard:

Restrictive Layer Depth:

Exhibit E: Rice Farm Management Units



0 250 500 1,000 US Feet

Upper Willamette Soil and Water Conservation District

Data: LCOG, The Freshwater Trust, ESRI

Rice Farm Interim Management Plan

N

Exhibit F: Infrastructure Map

From: BB&A Environmental. 2025. Phase I Environmental Site Assessment