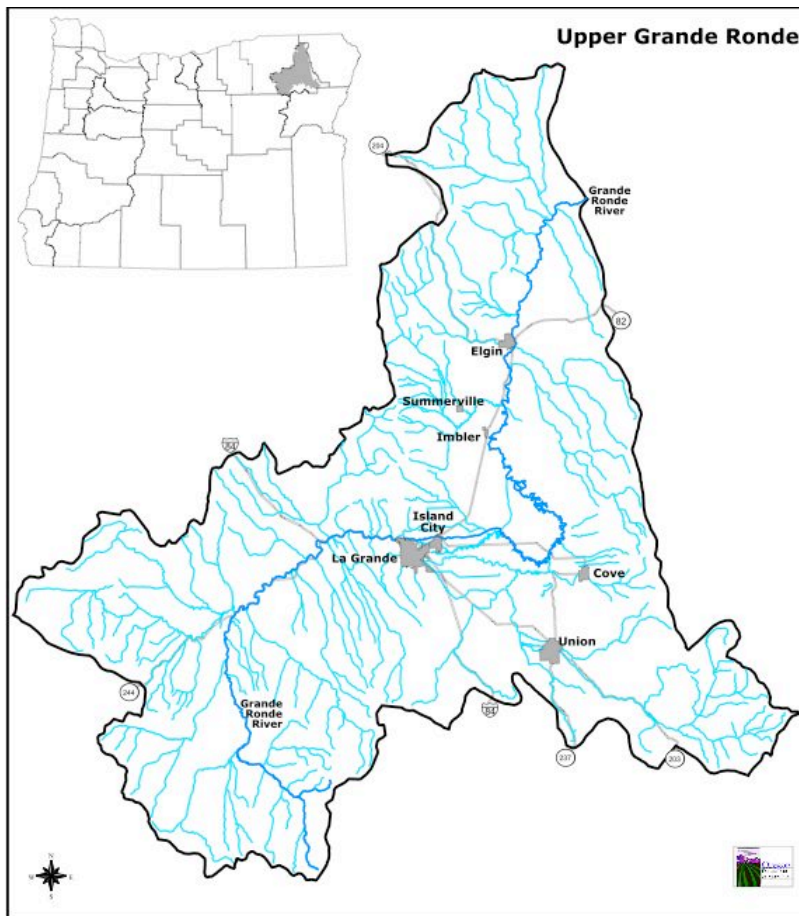


**UPPER GRANDE RONDE
AGRICULTURAL WATER QUALITY MANAGEMENT
AREA PLAN AND RULES**

**BIENNIAL REVIEW REPORT TO THE OREGON
STATE BOARD OF AGRICULTURE**

May 2008



I. Introduction

The Upper Grande Ronde Local Advisory Committee (LAC) submits this report to the Board of Agriculture to summarize and evaluate implementation of the Upper Grande Ronde Agricultural Water Quality Management Area Plan and Rules (Area Plan).

The Area Plan was created following the Agricultural Water Quality Management Act, passed by the Oregon Legislature in 1993 to address concerns about agricultural effects to water quality. This law authorized Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) to work with farmers and ranchers to develop Area Plans for basins with water quality problems.

From 2001 through 2003, the LAC, consisting primarily of affected landowners, worked to develop a management plan and associated Administrative Rules for the Upper Grande Ronde. ODA adopted the Area Plan and Rules in September 1999. The Union Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) assisted in nominating the LAC, supported it during development of the plan, and is the local management agency (LMA) responsible for implementing the plan.

II. Background

When developing Area Plan, the LAC identified several objectives and strategies to protect and improve water quality. The LAC then developed Area Rules that apply to all agricultural and rural lands. Although compliance with the Area Rules is required, landowners may choose the best strategies for their operation to meet the rules.

Summary of the Upper Grande Ronde Agricultural Water Quality Management Area Plan

The Area Plan addresses the following water quality issues and conditions related to lands in agricultural use:

- Erosion and surface water management
- Nutrient management
- Animal enterprises including Confined Animal Feeding Operations
- Near-stream management areas
- Livestock management

Goals of the Area Plan

- Protect economic viability
- Preserve private property rights
- Sustain and/or improve water quality by:
 - Reducing soil erosion from agricultural land in the basin
 - Improving bank stability
 - Improving riparian conditions
 - Improving nutrient, animal waste, and irrigation management
- Promote landowner stewardship by encouraging the adoption of best management practices
- Increase public awareness and understanding of agriculture's contributions to improving water quality through coordinated watershed outreach activities
- Pursue funding for private landowners to implement water quality improvement projects
- Participate in a monitoring program that:
 - Identifies current water quality conditions and assesses water quality trends
 - Assesses the implementation of the Area Plan
 - Assists in delisting water quality limited streams in the Upper Grande Ronde Subbasin

- Assesses compliance with the Undesirable Conditions outlined in the plan

moderate solar heating, and allow infiltration into the soil profile.

Strategies to Achieve Area Plan Goals

Providing information, education, technical assistance, and grant writing assistance to landowners are the primary ways ODA and the SWCD help landowners achieve water quality improvement in the subbasin. The SWCD, acting as the LMA, is the lead organization responsible for implementing this strategy based on education and assistance.

Area Rules

In addition to the voluntary strategy listed above, there are Area Rules to be used as regulatory backstops if needed. ODA will use these regulatory mechanisms where appropriate and necessary to gain compliance. ODA will take enforcement actions only when reasonable attempts at voluntary solutions have failed. The Area Rules require landowners in the Management Area to:

- Avoid causing pollution or placing waste where it is likely to cause pollution.
- Prevent sheet and rill erosion levels above the Soil Loss Tolerance Factor and prevent gully erosion.
- Prevent streambank erosion beyond natural levels.
- Avoid nutrient applications and timing that exceed specific crop requirements.
- Prevent sediment delivery from construction and maintenance of surface drainage field ditches caused by excessive channel slope or placement of disposed soils.
- Allow development of riparian vegetation consistent with site capability to control erosion, filter sediment and nutrients,

III. Area Plan and Rules Implementation Activities, 2005-2007

The Union SWCD, as the LMA, leads a partnership of agencies to implement the Area Plan. Union SWCD directors and employees have worked closely with ODA, US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and Oregon State University Extension (OSU Extension) to provide competent technicians, coordinators, monitoring specialist, workshop presenters, and conduct mass media campaigns.

Union SWCD Activity Summary 2005-2007

According to quarterly reports provided by the SWCD for 2005-2007, there were:

- 125 Landowners contacted
- 118 Landowners assisted
- 1 Workshop
- 2 Presentations
- 2 Tours
- 1 Display
- 730 Fact Sheets distributed
- 7 News articles
- 40 Site Visits
- 14 Projects for water quality
- 12 Sites monitored for water quality
- 32 Applications for funds

- Clearinghouse of Information— The Union SWCD and NRCS have served the local agricultural community as resources of technical information related to positive management practices.

- Employment of Staff— During this time the Union SWCD has employed a full-time District Administrator, a full-time Watershed Technical Specialist, and a full-time Conservation Technician.

Natural Resource Conservation Service and Farm Service Agency Accomplishments

The NRCS and USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) administer several federal conservation-funding programs and provide technical assistance to landowners who enroll. See Table 1 for a summary of NRCS accomplishments and financial contributions to agriculture and the local communities.

IV. Monitoring and Evaluation

ODA evaluated data from water quality monitoring stations operated by the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality in the Management Area.

Only two sites in the Upper Grande Ronde Sub-Basin were identified on the Laboratory Analytical Storage and Retrieval (LASAR) database that met our criteria for adequate data. The two sites that are representative of agricultural influence are on the mainstem of the Grande Ronde River at Peach Lane and at Highway 82 near Elgin. Neither of these sites had notable problems with the contaminants. There have been many short-term sampling events (i.e. one event or one season) throughout the sub-basin, but little long-term monitoring.

As of March 2008 there were no new monitoring sites in the sub-basin relevant to agricultural use listed on the DEQ LASAR database. Data for the Highway 82 site showed some elevated pH values up to 8.80 (the state standard for maximum pH is 8.5), but no other notable change. The Peach Lane site did not have any notable changes in water quality.

Complaints

There was one complaint during this biennium. ODA staff met with the landowners and a Letter of Compliance was issued.

Table 1.

Union County NRCS Conservation Accomplishments			
	2005	2006	2007
# EQIP Contracts	21	7	16
Obligated \$	\$378,500	\$196,500	\$216,000
# CSP Contracts		76	76
Obligated CSP \$		\$4,949,920	
# WHIP Contracts	1		
Obligated \$	\$60,393		
Conservation Plans Written			
EQIP	2312 ac	603 ac	1999 ac
CSP		62,968 ac	62,968 ac
Misc	36 plans 10142 ac	24 plans 6,965 ac	66 plans 15,607 ac
Practices			
Wetland Restor.	400 ac	180 ac	981 ac
Cons. Cropping System	3669 ac	1958 ac	1351 ac
Riparian Forest Buffer	126 ac	115 ac	78 ac

Notes:

EQIP = Environmental Quality Incentive Program

CSP = Conservation Security Program

WHIP = Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program

V. Upper Grande Ronde Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL)

The Upper Grande Ronde Area Plan and the Upper Grande Ronde TMDL were developed simultaneously. The Area Plan documents the efforts the agricultural community is making to help achieve the goals of the TMDL. It is anticipated that given enough time, the outreach, conservation projects, and other water quality related activities the agricultural community is involved in would make substantial improvements in water quality.

sources have also helped landowners implement projects with significant water quality benefits.

The Union SWCD will continue as the LMA to implement the Area Plan in cooperation with ODA and other partners.

VI. Area Plan Review Process & Recommendations for the Next Two Years of Implementation

In April of 2008, as directed in Oregon Administrative Rules 603-090-0020, the LAC provided the Biennial Report for the third periodic review and update of the Area Plan and Rules. After review, the 2008 Upper Grande Ronde Biennial Report will be submitted to the Board of Agriculture.

The LAC believes the Area Plan and Rules are being implemented successfully. Landowners are more aware of water quality issues because of the numerous outreach activities. The continuing progress in implementing conservation projects has made improvements in conditions on the ground.

Monitoring to show accomplishments and program effectiveness continues to be a challenge. It will take more time and more focused monitoring projects to detect measurable improvements in some water quality parameters.

The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) has been successful in Union County. A variety of other funding