Strategic Implementation Areas

ENSURING COMPLIANCE WITH AGRICULTURAL WATER QUALITY REGULATIONS

History of the program

In 1993, the Oregon Legislature passed the Agricultural Water Quality Management Act, Senate Bill 1010, directing the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) to develop plans and associated regulations to prevent and control water pollution from agricultural activities and achieve water quality standards. The legislation also required the involvement of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) as much as possible.

Since 1997, program staff have worked with Local Advisory Committees, which include farmers, ranchers, and stakeholders, to develop water quality management plans and adopt regulations in Oregon's 38 water quality regions. The plans give local agricultural landowners a framework in which to comply with the rules. Compliance is required by state law.

Partnerships

"Strategic Implementation Areas" are chosen by ODA after discussions with partners, and review of local information and water quality data when available.

- SWCDs are a key partner in making Oregon's Agricultural Water Quality program a success.
- SWCDs work with willing landowners to complete voluntary agricultural water quality improvement projects.

Partner agencies and organizations support SWCD projects with technical and financial assistance to make additional water quality improvements. The Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB), USDA Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), Natural Resources Conservation Service, and watershed councils, among others, provide substantial resources to improve Oregon's agricultural water quality.

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Agricultural Water Quality Violations

Before

After

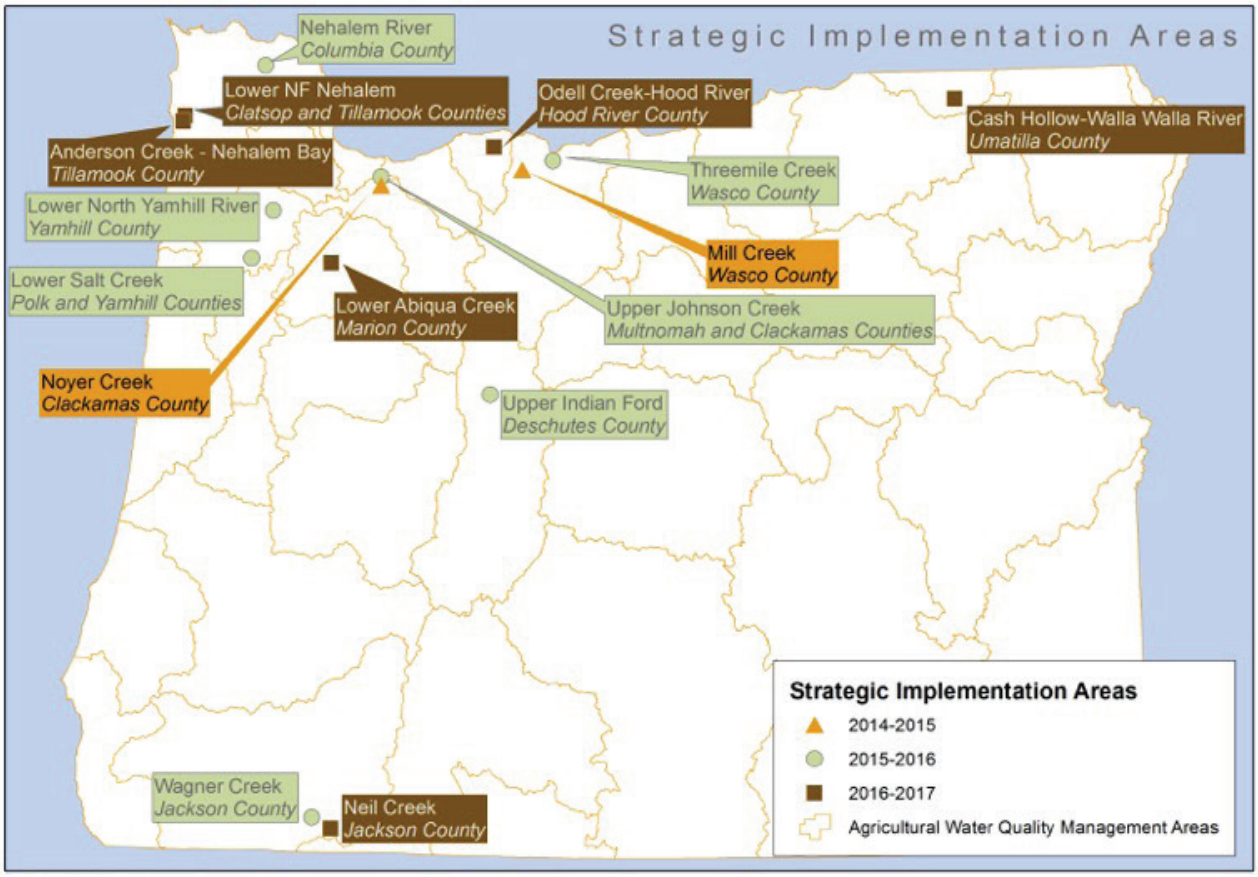
Before

After

Implementation

In the early 2000s, ODA's focus was to implement as many agricultural water quality improvement projects as possible and document those accomplishments. Efforts focused on outreach and technical help to create projects that would achieve immediate water quality benefits and build the foundation for strong partnerships in the future. Oregonians have made tremendous investments to protect and improve our water quality.

Scientific studies and technical documents from university researchers, the USDA, and other federal agencies show the types of projects implemented improve water quality at the farm scale. However, it has been a challenge to document the benefits of these projects on a larger scale and to measure what percent of the area is in compliance.



Strategic Implementation Areas

As the Agricultural Water Quality Program matures, we must adapt and gather more data, and document accomplishments to meet Oregon's water quality goals. Comparing the scale of accomplishments within a larger scope will help ODA and its partners better track progress and estimate the costs of treating remaining areas. Water quality goals can be achieved by promoting voluntary cooperation among landowners and natural resource partners to address management concerns, and by ODA enforcing water quality regulations.

ODA is applying the Strategic Implementation approach, where selected areas around the state will receive outreach and education to address priority water quality concerns. Following an ODA-led Compliance Evaluation, ODA and its partners will work with agricultural landowners to concentrate technical and financial help to change agricultural activities that may be reducing water quality. Following outreach and assistance, ODA may enforce regulations where problems persist.

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ODA and program partners believe that strategic, focused, and systematic delivery of outreach and technical assistance will lead to greater Program effectiveness and allow ODA and SWCDs to make better use of limited resources.

Where can I find the Plan and Regulations for my Area?

Go to oregon.gov/ODA/programs/NaturalResources/Pages/AgWaterQuality.aspx
or call ODA at (503) 986-4700

What's next?

1) ODA will conduct a Compliance Evaluation to identify potential sources of pollution from agricultural activities.
2) ODA will contact landowners who might need assistance. The sooner landowners contact our partners, the more likely they will receive help because partners have limited resources.
3) After landowners have been given a chance to make changes, ODA will track progress toward reducing agricultural sources of pollution.
4) Properties that do not meet the requirements established in the local Area Rules (regulations) may be subject to a compliance investigation and further action by ODA.

What should I do?

Because agricultural pollution comes from diffuse and diverse sources, the program focuses on lands conditions and management that supports clean water and healthy watersheds.

You should evaluate your agricultural activities and try to determine whether they might:

1) Pollute streams, canals, and groundwater, or
2) Prevent growth of appropriate vegetation along streams to stabilize streambanks, provide shade, and filter potential pollutants.

Where can I find...

The Plan and Regulations for my Area?
oregon.gov/ODA/programs/NaturalResources/AgWQ/Pages/AgWQPlans.aspx

My local Soil and Water Conservation District?
oacd.org/conservation-districts/directory

The ODA Water Quality Specialist for my Area?
oregon.gov/ODA/programs/NaturalResources/AgWQ/Pages/AgWQResources.aspx

Oregon Department of Agriculture Water Quality Program

Oregon Department of Agriculture

Agricultural Water Quality Management Program
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