# The Agricultural Water Quality Program and In-ground Nursery Growers

#### Is Water Quality a Problem in Oregon?

Yes! Many of our streams and rivers do not meet federal and state water quality standards for beneficial uses. These streams are designated as water quality limited by the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). Examples of beneficial uses include recreation, fisheries, and irrigation.

#### Potential sources of pollution include:

- Contaminated runoff from both agricultural operations and urban areas;
- Sediment from eroding agricultural lands, forest lands, and streambanks;
- \* Erosion and runoff from roads, ditches, and urban development.

**The Agricultural Water Quality Management Act**, also known as Senate Bill 1010 or simply the Act, was passed by the Oregon Legislature in 1993. The Agricultural Water Quality Management Act



requires the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) to help reduce water pollution from agricultural sources.

# The Agricultural Water Quality

Program evolved in response to water quality programs and requirements under the Act and various other state and federal laws, such as the Clean Water Act. ODA, with assistance from Local Advisory Committees, developed 39 subbasin-specific agricultural water quality management plans and rules to help reduce water pollution from agricultural sources. Of the 39 subbasins, 10 are within the Willamette Basin.

Each plan suggests a variety of agricultural management practices geared toward improving, protecting and maintaining water quality, while landowners retain the flexibility to address specific concerns on their own property. If potential pollution problems are reported, ODA will investigate, work with the landowner to resolve any violation, and take enforcement action if necessary.

## Local water quality concerns for in-ground nursery growers:

- Erosion from bare fields during and after winter harvest
- Degraded and non-vegetated ditches, swales, or seasonal drainage areas through fields
- Non-vegetated streamside areas
- Erosion and soil-laden runoff from field roads
- Lack of vegetated field borders causing field runoff to deposit in streams, roadside ditches, or on roads
- Irrigation induced erosion



## Ways in-ground nursery growers can address local water quality concerns:

- Plant between-row cover crops
- Plant filter strips and field borders to keep sediment out of ditches, roads, and streams
- Use cover crops to increase soil organic matter which will reduce the erosion potential of the soil
- Plant and maintain riparian buffers along streams and grassed waterways through fields where needed
- Repair and maintain roads on a regular basis; use practices such as crowning and rolling dips to control runoff
- Convert to drip irrigation to reduce erosion, weed competition, and fertilizer costs



### As a nursery owner or manager, you can:

- Seek technical assistance from your local soil and water conservation district (SWCD) or cooperative extension service agent to implement conservation practices
- Use conservation techniques on your own to improve water quality
- Seek financial assistance for installing conservation practices
- ❖ Share conservation information with your friends and neighbors

## For more information contact:

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