

Final

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**Oregon Soil and Water Conservation Commission
Regular Quarterly Meeting
Thursday, July 17, 2014
Best Western Sunridge Inn
1 Sunridge Lane, Baker City, OR 97814**

Soil and Water Conservation Commission (SWCC) Members Present

Chair Barbara Boyer; Vice Chair Tim Kerns; Gary Jensen; Aaron Madison; Mel Omeg; Marilyn Rice; Jerry Ward.

Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) Staff Present

Ray Jaindl, Natural Resource Program Area Director; John Byers, Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) and Ag Water Quality Management (Ag WQ) Programs Manager; Manette Simpson, SWCD Program Lead; Eric Nusbaum, SWCD Operations Specialist.

Advisors Present

Jason Faucera, Oregon Conservation Education and Assistance Network (OCEAN) President; Jerry Nicolescu, Oregon Association of Conservation Districts (OACD) Executive Director; Mike Borman, Oregon State University (OSU) Extension Agriculture and Natural Resources Interim Program Lead; Jim Cathcart, Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) Cooperative Forestry Manager.

Visitors Present

Idaho Soil and Water Conservation Commission (ISWCC) members Chair Norm Wright, Secretary Jerry Trebesch, and Leon Slichter; ISWCC staff members Administrator Teri Murrison, Ali Hardy, Terry Hoebelheinrich, and Delwyne Trefz; Baker Valley SWCD Director, Myron Miles; Baker Counties SWCD District Manager Whitney Collins; Baker Counties SWCD staff member Tara Wilson; and OACD Board Member and Marion SWCD Director Emily Ackland.

Call to Order

Chair Barbara Boyer called the regular quarterly meeting to order at 8:01 a.m. on Thursday, July 17, 2014. Barbara welcomed the Idaho Soil and Water Conservation Commission and said the Oregon Commission is delighted that Idaho SWCC is joining the meeting. She reminded everyone that this would be a shortened meeting to accommodate members' schedules during this busy time of year.

Barbara noted one agenda change: to elect the SWCC Chair and Vice Chair for the coming year.

Mel Omeg moved and Jerry Ward seconded the motion to re-elect Barbara Boyer as Chair and Tim Kerns as Vice Chair of the Oregon Soil and Water Commission. The motion carried unanimously.

Oath of Office

Barbara introduced Aaron Madison as the newest SWCC member selected by Director Coba. Aaron will represent the John Day Area, replacing the recently retired John Morris. John Byers administered the Oath of Office to Aaron.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

The SWCC reviewed the minutes from the April 21-22, 2014, regular quarterly meeting.

Marilyn Rice moved and Mel Omeg seconded the motion to approve the minutes from the April 21-22, 2014, SWCC regular quarterly meeting. The motion carried unanimously.

Natural Resource Program Area Update

Ray Jandl gave a brief update on Natural Resources Program Area pesticides, especially neonicotinoid compounds, and bee die-offs are in the news again; ODA is working with the agricultural industry because pesticide application labels are not being followed correctly by applicators; it is the applicator's responsibility to get certified and apply pesticides correctly. The Confined Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO) Permit process is moving forward; the process includes renewal of the five-year federal National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit and, concurrently, approving the proposed state Water Pollution Control Facilities (WPCF) Permit; comments have been received and are being reviewed for the NPDES Permit renewal and the proposed state WPCF Permit; review is expected to be completed by the end of September. The GMO (genetically modified organism) task force, initiated by the Governor last legislative session, has met three times; good conversation and questions are being asked and discussed. Also, wildfire season has begun and there will be an impact to agriculture.

SWCD and Ag Water Quality Management Programs Update

John Byers gave his SWCD and Ag WQ Programs update; the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has a new funding initiative, the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), which focuses funds for conservation projects that have strong partnership support; Oregon, Idaho, and Washington Soil and Water Conservation Commissions historically held tri-state commission meetings; John, Administrator Teri Murrison with the Idaho SWCC, and Executive Director Mark Clark with the Washington State Conservation Commission are committed to working together to submit an RCPP proposal to develop and implement a tri-state coordinating council. The Regional Conversations that the Oregon Association of Conservation Districts (OACD), the Network of Oregon Watershed Councils, and the Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts (COLT) are holding around the state are generating good discussion. ODA was asked to determine a way to focus our water quality work so we can measure and show water quality improvement change; the Ag Water Quality Management Program worked with SWCDs and there are now 45 Focus Areas in the state; a streamside vegetation assessment tool has been developed to help ODA and SWCDs assess vegetation in riparian areas; ODA will re-assess vegetation in these Focus Areas after two years. He explained that the Ag Water Quality Management Program has been complaint-based, but was asked to become self-initiating by the Board of Agriculture; ODA no longer relies on people filing complaints before taking action to solve problems; to address the change in direction, ODA developed Strategic Implementation Areas (SIAs) which focus compliance resources in small geographic areas; ODA will use aerial photos and public right of ways to categorize potential impacts to water quality using these tools; ODA will always conduct a site visit before any compliance action is taken; this approach, used in the two pilot areas, has received positive results; the Board of Ag gave approval for these efforts, and he updated the Environmental Quality Commission at their June meeting; ODA is continuing to work on a SIA prioritization tool as there are thousands of small geographic areas; ODA is trying to show that agriculture isn't the main problem. Ray said there is concern that even with this work, it won't be enough to show water

quality improvement so there is the question of “what happens next”; there is concern with naturally occurring conditions also; John said the monitoring process is the next big conversation; a state-wide task force, with representatives from natural resource agencies, has been created to coordinate state monitoring efforts.

Advisor Reports

Natural Resource Conservation Service and Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board

Barbara noted that representatives from NRCS and OWEB were unable to attend the SWCC meeting because both were meeting with US Secretary of Agriculture, Tom Vilsack in Portland.

Oregon Association of Conservation Districts (OACD)

Jerry Nicolescu presented his OACD Advisory Update; Jerry explained that one reason there is so much support for the Focus Area approach is because ODA brought in what they call “6 plus 2”, which are six SWCD managers from across the state, Barbara as Chair of the SWCC, and himself, to provide feedback; ODA encouraged candid discussion and forming program changes that would work on the ground; to their credit, ODA listened to the good and the bad feedback. Jerry spoke of OACD’s partnership with the Network of Oregon Watershed Councils, and explained that OACD is hosting Regional Conversations with the Network and the Coalition of Land Trusts; there are six meetings scheduled across the state; there is no set agenda, but they will speak of land trusts and easements among other topics; two sessions held already were well attended. Jerry said they are working on RCPP grants; OACD has two working grants currently which will focus on soil and water district funding and money for sage grouse Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAA) areas. Jerry reminded the SWCC that OACD will be hosting the National Association of Conservation Districts Pacific and Southwest Region meeting September 16 – 18 in Portland; the OACD Annual Conference will be November 12 – 14 at Eagle Crest Resort, in Redmond; OACD will be renewing bylaws, fiscal policies, and try to organize a CREP training.

Teri Murrison briefly discussed the RCPP program from her perspective in Idaho and how it affects them. She stated that less than a dozen districts statewide had the capacity to submit proposals for funding this year; and staff will work to better position them in next year’s cycle. With Oregon and Washington, the Idaho Commission explored submitting a tri-state proposal this year but elected to delay joint efforts until next fiscal year when the program is more clearly defined and the tri-state Commissions have more time to develop a competitive proposal.

Oregon Conservation Education and Assistance Network (OCEAN)

Jason Faucera introduced himself as the new OCEAN President as of May 1; he gave a brief description of what OCEAN does to facilitate education and build capacity. He gave an update of the 2014 CONNECT conference; he thanked the agencies and district directors for their support; there were 137 district employees that attended and explained that OCEAN was able to provide scholarships for employees to attend; this year watershed council staff attended, which worked well so they will likely continue to keep them involved. Jason said they are looking into regional and online trainings that are more cost effective and address the need for year-round training; they are working with Jerry at OACD and Ryan Gordon at the Network. OCEAN is working on submitting an application for 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status so they will be able to pursue other avenues of funding. Jason said they are discussing potential realigning of OCEAN Board represented areas; they are also changing their website and online directory to get information out more quickly.

Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF)

Jim Cathcart explained that they are working on two statewide technical assistance agreements with NRCS – one for the East Face project, and another with emphasis on projects for the west side of the state; the agreements will build ODF’s technical assistance capacity for family forestland owners; the agreements allow NRCS to leverage ODF’s strong relationships with private forestland owners with respect to education and assistance under the Oregon Forest Practices Act and outreach and assistance under the USDA Forest Service Forest Stewardship Program. ODF is preparing for a long and active fire season; last year set a record for acres burned and dollars spent in 60 years and this year is expected to be just as challenging. Jim said he would like to present the Large Fire Toolkit at a future SWCC meeting; it is intended to proactively engage landowners for management of forestlands affected by wildfire. He briefly discussed the After the Fire funding concept that may be introduced for the 2015 Legislative Session. The Stewardship Coordinating Committee is meeting in October and November in Salem, dates to be determined. Dan Logan has been the representative for SWCDs but a new representative is needed. Jim explained that the Board of Forestry held a workshop with other agencies and landowners to discuss proposed new state forestry water protection rules for small and fish bearing streams. Jim discussed Blue Mountain Heritage Project, being funded under the USDA Forest Service Forest Legacy Program, and explained that it is developing a model for working on forest conservation easements for family forestlands; and there are several additional Forest Legacy projects under consideration on the east side.

Oregon State University Extension Service (OSU Extension)

Mike Borman reported OSU is thinking through budgets and would like input for critical issues and work that need staff and resources; Barbara mentioned that Yamhill SWCD sent a letter requesting slug control and no-till drilling research for the west side; Mike said the letter has been vetted and more requests for solving issues are needed.

Local SWCD Presentation

Whitney Collins gave a presentation of several Baker County SWCDs’ recently implemented conservation projects in the county; off-stream watering, fencing, and juniper projects were highlighted; good discussion of project benefits and challenges followed. Barbara and SWCC members thanked Tim, Whitney, and district staff for the informative tour on Wednesday.

Special Presentation: Idaho Soil and Water Conservation Commission

Idaho SWCC Chair Norman Wright, members Jerry Trebesch and Leon Slichter, staff members Teri Murrison, Ali Hardy, Terry Hoebelheinrich, and Delwyne Trefz introduced themselves; Norman said that Idaho SWCC values working with other states and appreciates Barbara inviting them to this meeting; he explained that Idaho SWCC members are appointed by the governor and that they are a small state agency with 16 staff members. Teri began her presentation by explaining that Idaho believes the best way to accomplish conservation is through voluntary, locally led projects with landowners; they call implementing conservation in this manner “The Idaho Way”; their agency focuses on three core functions, which are technical services to conservation districts, conservation programs including a low-interest loan program, and district administrative services. Public and stakeholder outreach, including newsletters, is an important component of their work; each of Idaho’s 50 SWCDs get a base payment of \$8,500; they use an incentive-based matching formula to calculate additional state funding for SWCDs that secure operating funds from local governments, organizations, and individuals; they are responsible for developing agriculture Total

Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) implementation plans and working to address ground water contamination issues in nitrate priority areas around the state.

SWCC Member Reports

Aaron Madison thanked ODA and Director Coba for selecting him as the new SWCC member and for the opportunity to represent districts as a commission member.

Jerry Ward reported his Tualatin SWCD is continuing on and expanding their work with Clean Water Services, the local wastewater and stormwater management utility, for improving water quality.

Tim Kerns noted the Capital Press had a positive article on Marty Suter-Goold, Harney SWCD Manager, and Harney SWCD's work on sage grouse issues; most SWCDs with sage grouse habitat will use Harney's work to develop templates; he appreciates all of the behind the scenes work that has taken place for federal, state, and local efforts to develop CCAAs.

Barbara Boyer said the Fender's Blue Butterfly was also mentioned in the Capital Press article; her district, Yamhill SWCD, is working to improve habitat for the butterfly in Yamhill County.

Mel Omeg said he appreciated how well ODA works together with SWCDs.

Marilyn Rice said she saw how partnerships apply well to the Baker County SWCDs' project work that was toured yesterday. She noted the patchwork of federal agencies with different agency missions and regional boundaries impact SWCDs and partnering efforts. Marilyn thanked ODA staff for working well with SWCD staff. The OSU Extension Service has a new tax base and will help with statewide support for genetically modified organism (GMO) issues. The NACD photo contest for kids and adults is an important education and outreach project.

Gary Jensen said he appreciated Tim and the Baker County SWCD staff hosting the meeting and the tour yesterday. He reported it is dry in his area too; wildfire is an issue. He likes the positive relationship with ODF, NRCS, and the McKenzie Watershed Council; the Eugene Water and Electric Board work on the McKenzie River is continuing; the Upper Willamette SWCD has hired a new Watershed Technical Specialist to help with the McKenzie River project.

Public Comment

Emily Ackland introduced herself as Marion SWCD Chair and OACD Executive Board Member; she said partnerships are important; she was glad to see the Idaho SWCC attending the Oregon SWCC meeting because communication will identify common issues that unite us.

Follow Up Assignments

- SWCC members will be attending their represented SWCDs' board meetings.

Upcoming Meetings

- November, Redmond, Oregon; in conjunction with OACD Annual Meeting and Convention.

Chair Boyer adjourned the meeting at 10:47 a.m.