



Approved

**Oregon Soil and Water Conservation Commission
Regular Quarterly Meeting
Wednesday, November 12, 2014
Eagle Crest Resort, Redmond, OR 97756**

Soil and Water Conservation Commission (SWCC) Members Present

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

Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) Staff Present

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; Sandi Hiatt, SWCD Grants Administrative Officer; Kevin Fenn, Water Quality Compliance Lead, Mike Powers, Water Quality Policy Specialist Lead.

Advisors Present

Jason Faucera, Oregon Conservation Education and Assistance Network (OCEAN) President; Mark Saelens, Oregon Association of Conservation Districts (OACD) President; Meta Loftsgaarden, Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) Executive Director; Ron Alvarado, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) State Conservationist.

Visitors Present

Dick Springer, West Multnomah SWCD; Emily Ackland, OACD; Dianna Pope, East Multnomah; Whitney Collins, Baker County SWCDs; Tara Wilson, Baker County SWCDs; Jane Keppinger, Marion SWCD; Kari Hollander, Columbia SWCD; Tammy Harty, Deschutes SWCD; Jan Roofener, Deschutes SWCD; Debbe Chadwick, Jefferson County SWCD.

Call to Order

Chair Barbara Boyer called the regular quarterly meeting to order at 2:30 p.m. on Wednesday, November 12, 2014. Barbara welcomed everyone and requested attendees introduce themselves. She noted that this would be a shortened meeting to accommodate attending conference sessions.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

The SWCC reviewed the minutes from the July 17, 2014, regular quarterly meeting.

Marilyn Rice moved and Tim Kerns seconded the motion to approve the minutes from the July 17, 2014, SWCC regular quarterly meeting. The motion carried unanimously.

SWCD and Ag Water Quality Management Programs Update

John Byers gave an Agricultural WQ Program update; he gave a short presentation on Strategic Implementation Areas (SIAs) and discussed concerns, how initial information is obtained, and how each land parcel is ranked for riparian area level of concern: low, moderate, significant, or serious; John showed examples and data from testing SIAs in Clackamas and Wasco Counties; John and Kevin Fenn discussed and described how ODA is developing criteria to help prioritize where ODA will implement SIAs in the future.

Advisor Reports

Oregon Conservation Education and Assistance Network (OCEAN)

Jason Faucera gave a brief update on OCEAN submitting an application for 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status; they expect a final decision in January. He said that OCEAN has developed new policies, a business plan, and a mission statement. Wallowa SWCD will be handling the fiscal aspect of the CONNECT 2015; CONNECT 2015 planning is underway and will take place April 22 – 25, 2015, at the Resort of the Mountain in Welches, Oregon. He said to watch for the new OCEAN newsletter that will be sent out monthly; to subscribe go to OCEAN's website (oceanconnect.org).

Oregon Association of Conservation Districts (OACD)

Mark Saelens thanked the SWCC members for holding their meeting at the OACD/Network of Oregon Watershed Councils Conference. He said that partnerships between SWCDs and Watershed Councils are getting stronger. Mark noted that OACD and others are working on moving initiatives forward to focus on additional funding for sage grouse and other issues. He said the OACD Board is working on a series of OACD bylaw changes, and the election of officers for the OACD Board.

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

Ron Alvarado discussed partnership leadership and how important it is at the state and national level; he said Oregon NRCS had the third largest number of Regional Conservation Program Partnership (RCPP) applications in the nation, only Texas and California had more; Ron explained partnering allows any extra NRCS funding to come to Oregon; he estimated that an annual income of \$10 – \$12 million comes to Oregon because of partnerships; Ron said he truly appreciates the power of partnerships.

Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB)

Meta Loftsgaarden gave an OWEB update; she stated that the OWEB Board is working on priorities for the Focused Investment Program; she said OWEB will continue the open grant program but will be gradually increasing focused investments over time. Meta briefly discussed base funding for councils and districts; she stated that capacity funding has been moved to the grant fund. Meta said that the OWEB spending plan will be discussed in detail at the January OWEB Board meeting, with the final budget approved in July; she confirmed that the Board has stated its continued support for capacity funding for districts and councils.

Oregon State University Extension Service (OSU Extension)

Barbara stated Mike Borman was not able to attend this meeting but he did submit a written report which she summarized; the College of Agricultural Sciences is interviewing for an Associate Dean to replace Stella Coakley and for an Assistant Dean for Extension to replace Mike. OSU Extension has an agreement with USDA Farm Services Agency to collaboratively provide workshops to producers related to the 2014 Farm Bill; they are working with three Farm Bill Programs which are the Dairy Margin Protection Program (MPP- Dairy), the Agricultural Risk Coverage/Price Loss Coverage (ARC/PLC), and the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP); the MPP- Dairy workshops are currently being conducted, the ARC/PLC workshops are being planned, and the NAP workshops will be conducted probably during winter or spring 2015.

SWCC Advisor Invitation

Barbara asked the SWCC members to include the Network of Oregon Watershed Councils (NOWC) to be an official advisor to the SWCC.

The SWCC members approved the addition of an NOWC advisor to give updates at future commission meetings by a consensus yes vote.

Local SWCD Presentation

Jan Roofener from the Deschutes SWCD gave a presentation to the group regarding the history of the Central Oregon Canal, as well as projects that the Deschutes SWCD is currently working on.

Debbe Chadwick from the Jefferson County SWCD gave a brief presentation regarding the work taking place in that district, including the Trout Creek project and the Farm Fair held in February.

SWCC Member Reports

Marilyn Rice gave her member update and discussed new board elections and new staff members. Marilyn said that southern Oregon has had severe drought conditions and emphasized the importance of water storage across the entire state, but especially in southwest Oregon. She said the economy has struggled as well, and is hoping the new Farm Bill programs can make a positive impact.

Mel Omeg stated that he was able to visit the Yamhill SWCD and was very impressed; he said they are a very progressive district with some great demonstration farms. Mel stated that Wasco County is in a Strategic Implementation Area with ODA, and he is impressed with how well it has gone and is very proud of his staff. Mel explained that there are five watershed councils in his district, so they have formed a Coordinating Board; he said this has worked out very well, and allows the district and councils to work together, partner cooperatively, and have a team approach.

Barbara Boyer said that a woman in her district was recognized at their Annual Meeting for over 4,000 volunteer hours donated to the district. Barbara stated she has been working on the SWCC Strategic Plan task to travel to her represented districts to talk about the SWCC; she said that most folks don't know about the SWCC, so it's important to spread the word.

Tim Kerns stated that the drought is a big issue for all of us in the Snake Basin; he said there was stock water cut off in July and that animals are literally being moved away while there is still good feed; Tim said there is a definite need to provide assistance to a very large population of livestock operators in the Baker Valley area as thousands of cattle are affected.

Jerry Ward said he has attended Marion, Yamhill, and Clatsop's Annual Meetings and is very impressed with the directors and staff dedication; he said that district funding is being spent wisely in all of these areas.

Aaron Madison said he has been a member for about four months and is focusing on familiarizing himself with the districts in his area. Aaron said the Hermiston area is heavily irrigated and a state designated groundwater management area; he sits on the Irrigated Ag Sub-Committee for the Lower Umatilla Basin, and they are trying to fund a research project on best management practices and nutrient efficiency; Aaron said they received some ODA fertilizer tax funding for this project; he said Umatilla County and Morrow SWCDs are doing research on cover crop systems and how they might fit into the Pacific Northwest, as there is a lot of dry land farming in that area in particular; they are interested in working together to use existing partnerships with a farmer approach and using real data.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Follow Up Assignments

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

Upcoming Meetings

- February 24 - 25; Salem area
- April 7 - 8; Salem area
- July 28 - 29; Miller Woods, Yamhill
- November TBA; with OACD/NOWC Conference

Barbara reminded the SWCC members that there was a member at all of the ODA Director Training sessions in 2013 and she would like to do so again. Members selected upcoming training(s) in their represented areas to attend.

Chair Boyer adjourned the meeting at 4:29 p.m.