



**Oregon Soil and Water Conservation Commission  
August 4, 2015, Regular Quarterly Meeting  
Miller Woods  
15580 Orchard View Road NW  
McMinnville, OR 97128**

**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**

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; Renita McNaughtan Ag WQ Program Support

**Advisors Present**

Courtney Shaff, OWEB Grant Program Coordinator; Jim Cathcart, Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) Cooperative Forestry Manager; Jerry Nicolescu, Oregon Association of Conservations Districts (OACD) Executive Director; Ryan Gordon, Network of Watershed Councils (NOWC) Executive Director; Gene Foster, Manager, Watershed Management Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)

**Visitors Present**

Whitney Collins, District Manager Baker County SWCD; Karin Stutzman, District Manager Polk SWCD; Larry Ojua, Executive Director Yamhill SWCD; Jay Udelhoven, Executive Director, East Multnomah SWCD; Randy White, District Manager Jackson SWCD; Tom Salzer, General Manager Clackamas SWCD

**Call to Order**

Chair Barbara Boyer called the regular quarterly meeting to order at 8:35 a.m. on Tuesday, August 4, 2015 and welcomed everyone to Miller Woods; she gave a brief overview of the facilities and then asked for introductions.

**Member Reappointment**

John Byers read the re-appointment letter of Mel Omeg to the SWCC; the term is through August 31, 2019; John read the reappointment letter of Jerry Ward to the SWCC; the term is through June 30, 2019.

**SWCC Chair Selection**

**Tim Kerns moved and Jerry Ward seconded the motion to reappoint Barbara Boyer for the position of Chair on the SWCC. The motion passed unanimously.**

### **Approval of Meeting Minutes**

The SWCC reviewed the minutes from the April 7, 2015, regular quarterly meeting held in Salem, Oregon.

**Marilyn Rice moved and Aaron Madison seconded the motion to approve the minutes from the April 7, SWCC regular quarterly meeting. The motion carried unanimously.**

### **Natural Resources Program Area, Ag Water Quality Management, and SWCD Update**

John reported that the Legislature has recessed and the agency's budget is approved; the Pesticides Program received six new staff positions to support enhancements to the program and Pesticides Analytical Response Center (PARC) has been funded again; the Ag Water Quality Program received three new staff positions to support the new strategic initiatives work. Tim, Barbara, Whitney, Manette, and John attended the Idaho Conservation Commission's Conservation Summit in Boise; the Lieutenant Governor of Idaho was the keynote speaker; commission staff from Washington and Montana attended; Oregon SWCC hosted last year and next year Washington will host. John reported that the Ag WQ Program biennial review process normally progresses well; part of the process is communicating information well; staff have updated the chapter format of the management area plans; the new format has all of the same information as before, but is organized differently; the Farm Bureau was concerned about the new format and will be providing us with their written comments. John reported that \$1 million has been approved by the Legislature for supporting the strategic initiatives program; funding will come through OWEB and the Pacific Coast Salmon Recovery Funds (PCSRF); PCSRF funds are from NOAA and can only be spent in about 50% of the state; most of the 2015 Strategic Implementation Areas (SIAs) have salmon. ODA has two strategic initiatives: Focus Areas and Strategic Implementation Areas; the SIAs will have a monitoring component with the goal to monitor on a reach basis or single landowner basis. ODA will convene the 7+2 advisory group, as well as the district managers of the SIAs, in September to provide input to ODA. The Governor's Natural Resources Office asked ODA to create riparian guidelines; now there is concern that once you document what it's supposed to look like, then you have a baseline for compliance; discussions will continue. Recruitments for the three new Ag WQM Program positions, Landscape Analyst, Operations and Policy 3, and Natural Resource Specialist 3 will be internal recruits; ODA also received a position for the Cannabis Initiative to work with the Oregon Liquor Control Commission, which is responsible for permitting and regulating.

### **SWCD Staff Updates**

Sandi reported the 2015-17 SWCD Capacity Grants distribution based on the OWEB Board approval to increase from \$6.1 million to \$6.25 million; OWEB considers this the equivalent of a cost of living increase for districts and councils. She noted all eighth quarter reports have been processed but one and all funds were used by districts this biennium.

Eric reported that he has been helping districts prepare their business plans; this is the first biennium that requires SWCDs have a current Long-range Business plan filed with ODA in order to receive funding; all districts but one have a plan in place. He has been providing follow-up training with individual districts for director training. He is developing

management training that will enhance district managers' managerial skills when dealing with employees, time management, project planning, employee coaching, and other skills; watershed council coordinators will be invited to the management training as well.

Manette reported she is working with districts to problem-solve and find positive solutions based on district capacity and skill sets. She is working with the planning team for the OACD/NOWC Fall Gathering. She has been working with John and OWEB on the details for the new grant program. She noted Sandi and the SWCDs worked hard to get all new biennium documents completed and returned by the June 30 due date; all applications but one met the due date; OWEB and ODA have worked together and are on track to have funds available by mid to late August. John noted that he has a tremendous staff.

### **Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) Update**

Gene Foster reported the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) disapproved Oregon's coastal nonpoint control plan because of the private forest issues they identified as not being able to meet water quality standards; the result is EPA withheld Section 319 nonpoint source grant funds for the 2015 grant period; instead of \$720,000 for grants, there will be about \$87,000 which will fund about four projects instead of 20-22 projects; EPA has indicated they are withholding funds now but implying that if there is some positive direction from the state they will likely release funds; DEQ has requested a letter verifying this information. EPA did send a letter to DEQ and DLCD, as the main state agencies responsible for putting together the coastal nonpoint control plan, outlining the additional measures for forestry they would like to see moving forward; basically these are the same issues identified several years ago that they still want to see the state address.

### **Advisor Reports**

#### **Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF)**

Jim Cathcart reported the Legislative session went well for ODF. With the passage of HB 3013 (wildlife food plots), the Board of Forestry will be developing rules so wildlife food plots are recognized as a forest practice under the Oregon Forest Practices Act and as such not subject to the Act's reforestation requirements; the intent of HB 3013 is to allow a landowner to convert a portion of their forest and manage it as forage for wildlife; rulemaking will occur in 2016; ODF will work closely with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife in writing these rules. The Grant Soil and Water Conservation District is taking on a key role in ODF's Model Private Forestland Collaborative Project involving landowners in the Ritter Valley of the Middle Fork John Day River; Grant SWCD has been awarded funds to develop a Strategic Action Plan addressing multiple resource concerns such as noxious weed control, juniper removal and wildfire risk; Oregon State University Forestry and Natural Resource Extension is managing the project for ODF. ODF received new funds for the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program that will allow the Polk SWCD to conduct a mycorrhiza seedling inoculation trial to investigate if seedling inoculation will improve growth and survival after planting. There is increased funding available for cost-sharing the development of forest management plans in the Forest Stewardship program; up to 75% of the landowner's cost in hiring a professional natural resource consultant to develop the plan can be reimbursed; \$100,000 will be available in the fall; if landowners are interested

in creating a management plan, they should contact their local ODF Stewardship Forester.

### **Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB)**

Courtney Shaff reported the OWEB Board adopted the 2015 – 16 spending plan including \$2.8 million for the small grant program; they are re-evaluating the small grant program during this biennium, as well as the outreach program. The federal government made changes to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) super circular; OWEB had to adjust grant administration; on-line training has taken place with another to be held August 12<sup>th</sup>. One change being made is that all grant agreements have to be with legal entities.

### **Oregon Association of Conservation Districts (OACD)**

Jerry Nicolescu reported all but one (Portland) of the planned summer regional partnership meetings across the state were canceled due to lack of registrations; he and Ryan will reassess and think about how to provide information going forward; partnerships are always a big time investment for everyone and they want to make sure meeting time is useful and effective for all. OACD communications are better thanks to Clackamas SWCD, which has allowed Jason Faucera to contract work with them. Work on the sage grouse Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCP) is continuing and OACD is working with the sage grouse districts to apply for an OWEB Focused Investment Partnership (FIP) grant. Districts will be asked to sign a mutual agreement with NRCS; NRCS is bowing out of all operating agreements that they have with districts; current agreements stay in effect until the date stated; they will be going to one agreement for all districts, and they have asked OACD to help negotiate the agreement; he will bring in a committee of district and OACD members to work on it together; the agreement language will be in place by next summer; this may affect the nature of the “shared” office environment; NRCS has to make budget cuts and has decided to put people on the ground rather than provide mortar and bricks; NRCS know this will make a lot of difference for some districts. The National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) SW Pacific Region annual meeting is in Park City, Utah, October 7 – 9, 2015 and the NACD national meeting is in Reno, Nevada, January 30-February 3, 2016.

### **Network of Watershed Councils (NOWC)**

Ryan Gordon provided updates from the Network, as well as the NOWC-OACD partnership. The partnership has adopted a new name, the Oregon Conservation Partnership, which is an easier way to talk about the collective work being completed by NOWC, OACD, COLT, and OCEAN. Ryan shared his disappointment about cancelling the regional meetings, as much time and resources were spent on planning; feedback has been that people are burned out on meetings; he and Jerry will need to take a critical look at program offerings. There has been an internal discussion about possibly having the Fall conference every other year, though more conversation is needed. Jason Faucera has been working half-time for the Partnership via a contract with Clackamas SWCD; Jason brings excellent skills, ideas, and energy to the Partnership; the arrangement also helps bring OCEAN more fully into the partnership, which should benefit all programming; Jason is helping with strategic outreach and is the lead for the Fall conference. The fiscal relationship between districts and councils that partner came up at the July OWEB Board meeting in Prineville; for

example, what do we want council-district relationship to look like? NOWC, OACD, OWEB, and ODA will work to answer this question in the coming months, with more discussion planned at the Fall Conference in November. The Annual Fall conference will be held November 2-4 at the Valley River Inn in Eugene.

### **Oregon Conservation Education and Assistance Network (OCEAN)**

Ryan Gordon read Jason Faucera's written report that OCEAN has been taking time to recoup from CONNECT 2015; they are preparing to start the planning process in another month and as always we rely on SWCD employees to make it happen. He noted that two new members have been added to the OCEAN BOARD, Brian Vogt with Monument SWCD and Rhonda Black with Umpqua SWCD. OCEAN is refocusing its efforts on regional representation; we are developing the regional representative roles in order to engage members in those respective regions; OCEAN continues to need input and direction from members and regional representatives are the best way to get feedback to the Board to act on.

### **SWCD Conservation Easement Examples**

Tom Salzer, Clackamas SWCD shared how they evolved to preserve working lands, including working forests; the program is very young and has until now used 10-year temporary easements; they are looking for farmland and have developed a rating matrix to help them decide which lands are the most important; the Board priority is farmland preservation; the Clackamas district has the most small farms and the most women owned and operated farms in Oregon; when they were working on their long-range plan the board decided to take a 50-year view; the concept focused on what kind of legacy were they leaving for their children's, children's, children; they started looking at conservation practices; most are short-lived and potentially transient changes; they talked about the future and how to do that; they are seeking donations of land and have special funds set aside; there are long-term concerns about maintenance; the primary goal is that our best working farms and forests remain available for future generations.

Jay Udelhoven, East Multnomah SWCD, shared that their easement program is called the Land Legacy Program and has three primary components which are Natural Areas, Access Areas, and Working Lands; Access and Natural Areas include partnerships with other entities; the district has taken the lead on the working lands portion since there is no one else seeking to protect working lands; they are working actively on their first easement acquisition; tentative approval for a \$175,000 grant; they will need to do some due diligence before it will go through; the focal area is about 7,800 acres with about 900 parcels; looking to acquire about 20 parcels of approximately 400 acres; minimum parcel size is about 20 acres; the Program Manager is Rick McMonagle, whose sole focus is working on this program; the district established a Land Conservation Fund in 2005, they have been building it since, and is at about \$5 million; they want to accomplish two significant things: 1) affirmative farming conditions within the easement; we want the farmland to be protected from development and continually farmed under BMP forever and 2) they would like to work with an agriculture land trust to manage and maintain these lands for long-term stewardship.

Larry Ojua, Yamhill SWCD, shared that the district started in 2002 with 720 acres from a landowner they had worked with for a long time; his family's goal was to keep this a family working land and was a donated easement; the district has very little responsibility in managing the land; one theme that has emerged is relationship management and long-term conservation planning; he reviewed the conservation investments they have in Yamhill district; Miller Woods relationship started with a complaint about a leaky pond; the Millers had no heirs and years later the property was donated to the district; Willamette Wildlife Mitigation Program was the first closed under this program; the 284-acre easement was established in 2013; they have successfully worked with Polk County in getting an RCPP to restore and protect critical oak and prairie habitat in Yamhill and Polk counties; they will probably find some additional lands for investment and also work with Trust for Public Lands; the Board has taken a position that they will not take any property off the tax rolls.

Larry Ojua, Yamhill SWCD, shared that the district started holding conservation easements in 2002 with 720 acres that was protected for agricultural and forestry working lands; the easement developed after working with the landowner for several years; the family's goal was to keep the land in production, and to establish an easement that provided long-term certainty; the easement was donated, but the family realized some estate and tax benefits; the district is not involved in managing the property, but has annual responsibilities to inspect the property and ensure the provisions of the easement are being followed. Larry talked about the importance of relationship management and long-term conservation planning; the Miller Woods relationship started with a landowner inquiry about a leaky pond; the district worked with the Millers over several years on forest management and other conservation activities; the Millers had no heirs and years later the property was donated to the district. Over the past five years, the district has been able to use the Willamette Wildlife Mitigation Program to secure grant funds for easements and acquisitions; including the purchase of a 284-acre conservation easement in 2013. The district is currently working with the Polk SWCD to implement the new Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) to restore and protect critical oak and prairie habitat in Yamhill and Polk counties; the district anticipates that several projects utilizing the RCPP program will be good candidates for long-term protection; both Yamhill and Polk SWCDs are working with a variety of partners including the Trust for Public Land, The Nature Conservancy, NRCS, USFWS, Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde, and others. Larry mentioned the Yamhill SWCD Board has taken a position that they will not take any property off the tax rolls. He provided an overview of the conservation investments (easements and acquisitions) the district holds.

### **Local SWCD Presentation: East Multnomah SWCD**

Jay gave an overview of the East Multnomah SWCD's organizational structure, strategic goals, and programs.

### **SWCC Member Reports**

**Marilyn Rice** presented materials on pollinators for educational use. Jerry will be sending out the information for acquiring these materials.

**Gary Jensen** reported that Lane County is still moving forward and is dealing with fire concerns.

**Aaron Madison** reported stream miles and river miles of CREP miles. A lot of the contracts are past their halfway point.

**Barbara Boyer** reported that she was pleased to have attended the Idaho Summit , organized by the Idaho Conservation Commission, in Boise last month; she was surprised at the number of EPA staff at the Idaho Summit and learned EPA is funding all kinds of projects with conservation districts.

**Tim Kerns** deferred to Whitney Collins, Baker County SWCDs Manager, to give the report for their area; Whitney reported that Kate Frenyea, Union SWCD Manager, is working on small grants and construction projects; Linda Rowe, Malheur County SWCD has one Site Specific Plan for sage grouse completed and is working on five restoration projects with OWEB; half of Baker County is out of water; the Baker County SWCDs are moving forward with Site Specific Plans and eleven landowners have signed up; they have two OWEB grants recommended for funding; they are working on CREP; they had 40 landowners in their Focus Area contact them; the new NRCS district conservationist is Misty Bennett.

**Mel Omeg** report he was in the process of a relationship with watersheds when there was a blip. From his experience, he suggested districts think about having Jerry, Ryan, Manette, and/or Eric to word things for them appropriately.

**Jerry Ward** reported that in June he and John Byers met with the Columbia SWCD; the SWCD appreciated someone from the Commission attending their board meeting.

### **Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

### **Wrap Up Assignments**

- Review and update the SWCC Strategic Plan.
- SWCC Members bring ideas for training in 2016 to the November meeting.
- SWCC Members bring calendars to schedule 2016 meetings.
- Next meeting in Eugene, November 2-4 at the Annual Fall Gathering.

Chair Boyer adjourned the meeting at 12:33 pm.