

Soil and Water Conservation Commission

August 16, 2016

Regular Quarterly Meeting

Hilton Garden Inn

3528 Gateway Street, Springfield, OR 97477

Monday, August 15, 2016

Field trip to H J Andrews Experimental Forest. The 16,000 acres of forest was designated in 1948 as a US Forest Service Experimental Forest for ecological research and is located in the western Cascades Mountains. No business was conducted.

Tuesday, August 16, 2016

Soil and Water Conservation Commission (SWCC) Members Present:

Chair Barbara Boyer, Vice Chair Tim Kerns, Gary Jensen, Stan Dean, Jerry Ward

Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) Staff Present:

Ray Jaindl, ODA Natural Resources Program Area Director; Manette Simpson, ODA Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) Program Lead; Eric Nusbaum, SWCD Operations Specialist; Sandi Hiatt, SWCD Grants Administrative Officer; Renita McNaughtan SWCD Program Interim Support

Advisors Present:

Courtney Shaff, Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) Capacity Coordinator; Ryan Gordon, Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) Family Forestland Coordinator; Jerry Nicolescu, Oregon Association of Conservation Districts (OACD) Executive Director; Shawn Morford, Network of Watershed Councils (NOWC) Executive Director; Gene Foster, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) Manager Watershed Management; Ron Alvarado, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) State Conservationist

Visitors Present:

Katie Morrison, ODF Partnership Coordinator; Whitney Collins, Baker County SWCDs District Manager; Ralph Perkins, Upper Willamette SWCD Director; Dave Downing, Upper Willamette SWCD District Manager

Call to Order

Chair Barbara Boyer called the regular quarterly meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. on Tuesday, August 16, 2016, welcomed everyone, and asked for introductions.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

The SWCC reviewed the minutes from the May 24, 2016, regular quarterly meeting held in Wilsonville, Oregon. **Gary Jensen moved and Mel Omeg seconded the motion to approve the minutes from the May 24, 2016, SWCC regular quarterly meeting. The motion carried unanimously.**

SWCC Member Appointment and Reappointment

Ray Jaindl administered the Oath of Office for the appointment of Stan Dean; the term is through June 30, 2020. Ray Jaindl also confirmed the reappointment of Gary Jensen; the term is through July 31, 2020.

SWCC Chair Selection

Mel Omeg moved and Jerry Ward seconded the motion to select Barbara Boyer as Chair and Tim Kerns as Vice Chair of the SWCC. The motion carried unanimously.

SWCC Strategic Plan Approval

Barbara gave a brief background of the plan; she then suggested a change to priority task under Goal 1. *“Each Commissioner connects with their represented SWCDs once every quarter.”* After discussion, it was agreed that commission members will focus on one district each quarter but if there is something specific happening in another district, it can also be shared with the Commission. **Jerry Ward moved to adopt the SWCC Strategic Plan 2016-18 as amended and Mel Omeg seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.**

ODF Collaboratives and Family Forestlands

Ryan Gordon gave a presentation on collaborating with and challenges of working with federal, state, local, and private ownerships of forestland with differing objectives; forestland ownership breakdown is 64% Public, 34% Private, and 2% Tribal. ODF programs focus primarily on private and state owned lands; ODF supports active management to maintain a working landscape that produces economic, environmental, and social benefits. Federal Forest Restoration is a newly formed program that Katie Morrison, ODF Partnership Coordinator, helps coordinate; goal is to increase the pace and scale of restoration on federal lands with state - federal partnerships. ODF often builds relationships with landowners through SWCDs and Watershed Councils; SWCDs are key partners and often fiscal agents for forest collaboratives; SWCDs tend to be conveners for discussion of important resource issues.

Natural Resources, SWCD, and Water Quality Management Program Update

Ray Jaindl reported that ODA is in budget development and is very challenging as the Department will be either facing a budget shortfall or excess money depending on the corporate tax ballot measure outcome in November. The 2015-17 Legislature authorized \$1M through OWEB and staff are in the process of allocating those funds; the Department will be proposing a policy option package to continue the funding in the 2017-19 biennium and for two additional positions; one position to implement and manage the grant fund and a Clean Water Partnership Coordinator to represent ODA and work with the other agencies with natural resources programs on a cooperative basis. There have been several meetings with NOAA around CZARA and the Coastal Coho Recovery Plan. The Governor’s Natural Resources Office is supportive of our Strategic Implementation Areas (SIA) approach; John and staff are moving forward with selecting the next SIAs. Sandi Hiatt is working on the SWCD elections. ODA is working on what should be in the rules for using drones for ag activities; there are public

safety challenges such as weed control using pesticides with drones via aerial application.

OCEAN

Jason Faucera was unable to attend but emailed an update that OCEAN is finalizing CONNECT plans, which will be May 2-4, 2017 with more details to come shortly.

Network of Watershed Councils (NOWC)

Shawn Morford reported that she walked into an office that was running well with a shared staff and equipment. She has been in the field getting to know the districts and councils and gaining insight. NOWC is working on defining their relationship with OACD and what it will mean going forward and how they will be working with OWEB. They have deliverables from OWEB and a strategic plan review coming up. Among her priorities is to continue to increase opportunities for networking across councils so staff and board members can share knowledge and learn from each other. There will be a fall networking event by councils for councils at the same time OACD is having their fall meeting. Shawn then shared her background prior to coming to NOWC.

Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF)

Ryan reported he has seen a lot of positive progress working with NRCS in the field – ODF Stewardship Foresters help connect forest landowners with EQIP programs statewide; the program has been very successful in Eastern and SW Oregon, with growing demand in West Oregon. ODF will be leveraging internal funds to support two developmental field positions intended to help build relationships and landowner engagement with NRCS cost-share programs in NW and SW Oregon. The FSA Emergency Forest Restoration Program continues to be a valuable cost-share tool for landowners who have suffered loss from wildfire, drought, or other natural disasters. In addition to ongoing work in Baker, Grant, and Lake counties, a sign-up for forest landowners impacted by drought will soon be opening in Lane, Linn, Benton, and Lincoln counties. Riparian rulemaking for Western Oregon continues, with proposed rules expected to be filed by October 1; a series of hearings will be held throughout West Oregon; final rules should be implemented by July 2017. Bald eagles have been delisted and the Board of Forestry has asked staff to rescind some FPA rules related to their protection; this process will begin as the riparian rulemaking ends. The Forest Pest Detector Network will hold two trainings at OSU on September 13th and October 14th.

Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB)

Courtney Shaff reported that OWEB worked with ODF in the last two biennia to run Forestry Collaboration grants. The July 2016 OWEB Board meeting allocated \$2M of recaptured funds from grants not completed or canceled; the Board voted to restore full funding to the 2015-2017 focused investment implementation (FIPs) grants; the remaining funds went into the open solicitation grant cycles for remainder of this biennium; the Board voted for no new FIPS until January the 2019-2021 biennium with grants awarded in January 2019. The OWEB Board did vote to offer FIP Capacity Building grants in the 2017-2019 biennium with grants being awarded in October 2017. OWEB Legislative concepts will be statute cleanup. They will be adding a non-voting US Fish and Wildlife non-voting member to the Board and removing an

individual's ability to apply for grants. They released the online application after 3 years of development; OWEB provided training on how to navigate the online application and had a good turnout; additional trainings in September; District staff should attend as certain sections are different; they have received positive feedback that the app is easy to navigate and complete. OWEB is also implementing new requirements to grantees related to insurance in January 2017; requirements are broken into two categories, 1) basic level and 2) special projects for complex projects such as aerial applications, operating in a stream, or a levy removal.

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

Ron Alvarado reported that NRCS is working with four other national partners, NACD, the National Association of State Conservation Agencies (NASCA), the National Association of Resource Conservation and Development Councils (NARC&DC), and the National Conservation Districts Employees Association (NCDEA) on the National Conservation Planning Partnership (NCPPI); they are working on updating NRCS' conservation planning policies and training; Oregon NRCS agreed to continue to invest in the conservation three week training, or boot camp, for new employees; they agreed to pay for eight district employees to attend. As part of his recent detail, they have reinvented Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), their largest program; it wasn't always giving them what they needed in outcomes; it will look completely different and more like EQIP with more than one resource concern and conservation planning upfront. he is hearing that there is growing doubt across the country that voluntary conservation works; he can show that it does work – sage grouse, delisting of chub, and the two chiefs projects are examples; he will be working with his staff to communicate examples and tell the story. The national agreement has changed; it was an MOU with the Secretary, each Governor, and each District Chair; now it is an MOA and is being worked on.

Oregon Association of Conservation Districts (OACD)

Jerry Nicolescu reported that he and Shawn are working to provide benefits for both organizations. To provide input on the Oregon Ag Heritage Program OACD set up an ad hoc easement committee regarding succession planning and financial planning. Jerry is working on stewardship statute agreements with ODF and ODA; continuing discussion to see if the districts need to be added to statute; ODA cannot give regulatory certainty on federal ESA listings or provide financial assistance; possibly ODF could provide some. The updated OACD by-laws are ready to go out for the districts to review. There is talk of lawsuits around the sage grouse; nothing has been filed from Oregon but may be before the end of summer; there are ongoing discussions with the state, districts, USFWS, BLM; range land stubble height is the issue. Monthly telephone conference calls with districts are going well; they may bring others (NRCS, ODA) in to talk about questions they get. The Annual Meeting is coming up; he encourages every district to attend the meeting Oct 18-19 at the Monarch Hotel in Portland; it was 2006 since the organization has looked at the mission; need to decide what they want to be; they want partners' perspective – will receive invites to provide their input. Baker County SWCDs provided staff help to update OACD policies. OACD and NOWC are working on a joint work plan which will be expanded to include OCEAN and COLT, but will be focusing on NOWC/OACD partnership initially.

Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)

Gene Foster reported on Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) temperature litigation and Willamette mercury litigation is scheduled for oral arguments in October. Still getting clarification on whether interveners will be given an opportunity to present or whether the judge will rule from the bench. There was a notice of intent to sue EPA for the Columbia River temperature listing by Idaho groups for not developing a temperature TMDL for the Columbia and Snake rivers; WA and OR had developed a Total Dissolved Gas TMDL years ago and a verbal agreement that EPA would develop the temperature TMDL; the TMDL did not get completed due to issues with the dams. The Hood River temperature TMDL is being revised to be consistent with current temperature criteria; allowing additional capacity for point sources, primarily the fruit packing plants. They are moving forward with Coquille TMDL development for Dissolved Oxygen, pH, bacteria, and temperature; they are looking at a plan such as a water pollution control plan to address the temperature impairments; this wouldn't have to be approved by EPA but would be a state plan. There are petitions for reconsideration of the Klamath nutrient TMDL; he anticipates some resolution this fall or winter. CZARA is an ongoing effort amongst state and federal agencies; the penalty for DEQ 319 grants is not as much as the previous year; DEQ is anticipating \$330,000 for 2016. DEQ is also participating in Clean Water Partnership (CWP) and Coastal Coho issues discussions; focusing on outcome-based approach, using science and information, rather than practices-based. He is on the ODF Riparian Rule Work Group.

Solar Installations on Prime Ag Lands

Barbara presented a letter from the Yamhill District Board to the SWCC regarding protecting prime farmland from solar installations; she explained the Board does support solar energy, but they feel there are other sites that could be used; she requested feedback from the members on the issue and whether this should be moved forward. After discussion, **Jerry Ward moved and Mel Omeg seconded the motion to support this issue and forward a letter to Katy Coba at ODA from the SWCC. The motion carried unanimously.**

SWCC Member Reports

Tim Kerns reported that thankfully they have not had a lot of fires yet this year; a lightning storm started 7 fires in Baker City. Wallowa County has been busy with the Fair, Mule Days, and Chief Joseph Days. He then deferred to District Manager Whitney Collins who gave the four Baker County districts' report; their sage grouse technician accepted a position with NRCS, which is a great opportunity for him.

Gary Jensen reported that there have been no issues of fires in his area. Ag has a strong presence at the community fairs. The district has struggled with revenue streams; looking at potential funding sources. Collaborative efforts are going on working with partners. District Manager, Dave Downing, has been working well with the county.

Mel Omeg thanked the Commission and ODA for their support during his recovery time after his rotator cuff surgery. He complimented Gary and Dave on the field trip; it was very fascinating and he was impressed with all of the collaboration of partners.

Jerry Ward reported that Tualatin is going for a tax base. The county does not have a weed board; the district has considered taking up that roll; the county seems to be more focused on development. Tansy has become a real problem and education to landowners is important, especially to small rural landowners; they may not be aware of the dangers of tansy.

Stan Dean reported that Jackson SWCD have been working on an SIA along Wagner Creek; they started working with ODA about a year ago and he feels it's a good process; landowner meetings were well received; eight landowners have stepped up to do projects in their areas; they are also working with Rogue Watershed Council and are going out jointly to the landowner meetings; they are working together to develop the scopes of the projects; he is hearing positive things about the whole process.

Barbara Boyer reported that easements are the hot topic in her area. Benton County got an OWEB organizational restructuring grant to do an assessment for creating a shared office space model including possibly sharing some staff. The Yamhill Board decided to purchase a no-till drill because of all of the hazelnuts going in; there is already a waiting list for rental of the drill when it comes in September. She is pleased to say the county has its first ag Conservation Implementation Strategy in many years.

Barbara shared that Oregon is implementing the REAL Oregon Program, which is a leadership development program; both Idaho and Washington already have the program; it is two and 1/2 days once a month and will begin in November and conclude in March; information is on online.

SWCC Meeting Wrap Up

Follow up assignments:

- Manette will work with Barbara to send a letter from the Commission to Katy Coba regarding solar installations on ag land.

Public Comments

There was no public comment.

Upcoming Meetings

- October 20th 8:30 a.m.
- Jerry Nicolescu suggested the Commission meet in May when the other “business meeting” is also meeting.

Chair Boyer adjourned the meeting at 12:50 p.m.