

**Oregon Soil and Water Conservation Commission
Regular Quarterly Meeting
Wednesday, February 8, 2017
NRCS State Office, Eighth Floor Conference Room
1201 NE Lloyd Blvd. Portland, OR 97232**

Soil and Water Conservation Commission (SWCC) Members Present

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

Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) Staff Present

John Byers, Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) and Ag Water Quality Management (Ag WQ) Program Manager; Manette Simpson SWCD Program Lead; Jim Johnson, Land Use and Water Planning Coordinator; Helmuth Rogg, ODA Plant Program Area Director; Clint Burfitt, Program Manager, Insect Pest Prevention and Management; Ray Jaindl, Natural Resources Program Area Director; Sandi Hiatt, SWCD Grants Administrator; Jason Eck, Ag WQ Support Specialist

Advisors Present

Jan Lee, Oregon Association of Conservation Districts (OACD) Board; Jerry Nicolescu, OACD Executive Director; Pat Fitzgerald, OACD Board; Sam Angima, OSU Extension Service Assistant Dean; Shawn Morford, Network of Oregon Watershed Councils Executive Director; Courtney Shaff, Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board Capacity Coordinator; Ron Alvarado, Natural Resources Conservation Service State Conservationist; Ryan Gordon, Oregon Department of Forestry Family Forestland Coordinator

Visitors Present

Clair Klock, Clackamas SWCD; Whitney Collins, Baker County SWCDs District Manager; Brian Lightcap, OACD Board; Anne Scheck

Call to Order and Introductions

Chair Barbara Boyer called the regular quarterly meeting to order at 12:04 p.m. on Wednesday, Feb. 8, 2017. Introductions were made.

Member Reappointment

John Byers presented Barbara with a reappointment letter and certificate to the Soil and Water Conservation Commission effective Nov. 30, 2016. The term ends Nov. 30, 2020.

Manette Simpson noted newly appointed SWCC Member Ted Molinari was not present because of adverse weather; she extended his apologies for not being able to attend and said he is looking forward to May's meeting.

Working Lunch – OACD Legislative Process and Issues Update

Jerry Nicolescu presented a handout of bills and legislative concepts significant to districts that OACD is tracking; the list is available on the OACD website. OACD is in the process of vetting the bills to determine if it will support, oppose, or watch various bills; this is a compilation of the first 1,500-1,600 bills/legislative concepts already introduced; expect another 5,000 to emerge

during session, most of which likely won't deal with natural resource or conservation issues. OACD will track OWEB, ODA budgets, and probably ask some districts to testify in favor of those budgets. Two districts, West Multnomah and Clackamas, testified Feb. 7 in favor of a bill to provide \$1 million for the weed program; other districts provided written comment. Every Friday OACD, NOWC, and COLT meet with OWEB to review natural resource bills. He reviewed bills on the handout; they are categorized as District Revenue, Conservation-related Bills, Conservation District Requested Bills, Recreational Liability Bills, District Operations Bills, Land Use Bills, Water Bills, Other Bills, and Tracking by Category in Coordination with Others. He said in terms of the legislative process, starting last fall OACD sent a request to districts for legislative ideas; OACD decides to support concepts and bills through a four-member OACD committee which reviews bills and makes decisions based on what they have heard from districts; they are adding a column in the tracker that will show if OACD supports, opposes, or is watching given bills; OACD may consider changing a position if districts take opposite view of OACD's stance and give a reason why; it's a logistical nightmare to seek district comment for every bill; districts also have the ability to testify on bills if they disagree with an OACD stance; districts may call or email OACD with any comments.

Advisor Reports

Network of Oregon Watershed Councils (NOWC): Shawn Morford thanked everyone for their support since she started in her position as Executive Director seven months ago; she wears two hats, Executive Director of NOWC and part of the Oregon Conservation Partnership; she has developed a brochure for network members that describes what the network does for watershed councils and what they get if you join as a member. She said her job is a balancing act in helping councils have a statewide voice and capacity-building services; there are new council board members all the time so always a need to support capacity of the councils. She has found that councils want more direct services; she is looking to do more webinars, workshops, shared legal services, and templates of contracts and MOUs. She is in big fundraising mode now for the Network; OWEB provides partial funding for salary. NOWC will be renewing their strategic plan in 2017; diversifying funding sources will likely be a major focus of the new plan.

Oregon Association of Conservation Districts (OACD): Jerry said their recent board meeting was very productive; in October, OACD had districts propose changes they would like to see in the association; from that, a new draft of findings will go out to districts, and OACD will use to create a strategic plan; the board discussed the continued formation of the Oregon Conservation Partnership; OCEAN, OACD, NOWC, and COLT now have an MOU in place for coordination of funding, communication, etc. for grant funding with OWEB; the board discussed realignment of basins to get more representation from around the state; modeling after the Lower Willamette basin; the strategic plan will bring many different issues to review all at once, including financing, structure, and communications; they now have the right people at the right time to do this; the board also discussed the Cleanwater Partnership, tidegate issue, sage grouse, and legislation. OACD signed, with other Western states, a letter of opposition to Bureau of Land Management Planning 2.0 because it leaves local entities out of the planning process. First Vice President Pat Fitzgerald, filling in for President Mark Saelens, reported on the recent NACD national conference in Denver; over 90 resolutions submitted, about 10 were referred to the Farm Bill Task Force for review; resolutions passed for protecting funding sources for CREP and EQUIP; and BLM 2.0 is a big issue. Two other issues in Western states: 1.) The wild horse population stands at more than 67,000 head in seven Western states and is growing 20 to 30

percent per year which is not sustainable; federal storage capacity for only 27,000 head; series of hearings set. 2.) New Mexico and Arizona proposed a resolution for a 1,500-mile livestock fence to prevent cattle from moving across the US-Mexico border because there are health concerns; NACD will take a position. NACD is on very firm financial footing; however, are suffering in membership drop, loss of funding; increases have come through grants; the newly elected board represents a youth movement, who are passionate about voluntary conservation.

Oregon Conservation Education and Assistance Network (OCEAN): Jerry Ward, on behalf of Jason Faucera, encouraged people to go to the Ocean website to register for CONNECT.

Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB): Courtney Shaff reported the following occurred at the recent OWEB Board meeting: awarded an additional \$33,000 to the Oregon Conservation Partnership to pay for NOWC support, IT upgrades, CONNECT support, and Executive Director support; and discussed 2017-19 spending plan. OWEB is in a different situation budget wise since Lottery funding has to go to grants; lottery dollars are projected to be up next biennium so the OWEB Board is looking at increasing grant funding for watershed councils and districts; how much won't be known until later; the board will discuss budget with partners during the April meeting; she expects \$1 million for Focused Investment Partnership TA Capacity Building grants for another eight to 10 partnerships. The board kicked off an 18-month strategic planning process with a facilitator; effort will include listening sessions across the state in March and early April. OWEB has a committee working on outreach grants because language in statute doesn't align with the program; and the new insurance requirement will take effect for all applications submitted to OWEB after May 1, 2017. John Byers noted OWEB, ODA, and Yamhill SWCD are working to obtain a grant from the Oregon Community Foundation to survey districts about what has worked and not worked with Strategic Implementation Areas.

Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF): Ryan Gordon provided several handouts. He reviewed the staff organization chart for the Private Forests Division; there have been a number of changes in recent months; Lena Tucker has become the Private Forests Division Chief and Kyle Abraham the Deputy Division Chief. There is an open seat on the Board of Forestry, which may be filled this fall. He reviewed the Governor's proposed budget; the biggest challenge is an 8 percent reduction in the general fund, which will require cutting approximately 4 FTE from the Private Forests Program that impacts 6 positions such as field techs and stewardship forester support; proposed cuts could result losing nine stewardship forester positions statewide; the Ways & Means Co-chairs have released a draft budget framework and are holding a series of statewide town halls. ODF is working on a new, larger five-year agreement with NRCS to provide technical assistance to family forest owners interested in EQIP and other cost-share programs; the FSA Emergency Forest Restoration Program continues to expand in Oregon, with new sign-ups for drought-related damage in Lane and Douglas Counties. ODF's electronic notification system, FERNS, will soon allow people to be notified of forest operations in a given geographic area. Clackamas Tree School is March 25 in Oregon City; another one will be offered in Grants Pass late April. The Defrees family of Baker County earned the National Tree Farmer of the Year award and were honored in Washington, DC last December.

Oregon State University (OSU):

Sam Angima recognized the conservation efforts of partners with faculty members, specifically regarding dry wheat farms in Morrow and Gilliam counties that survive on little water; the no-till

wheat systems have been adopted throughout the Northwest and recognized nationally. He spoke about the 319 Grant in Umatilla County, where 18,000 acres earned Salmon Safe certification, achieved by reducing environmental impacts that affect water systems such as pesticides. Clackamas and Multnomah SWCDs are working with OSU in the metro area to put up a modern interactive integrated pest management website that would be used by everyone in the state. Hazelnut acreage is up 24 percent this year, but in winter seeing much bare ground; Nik Wiman is working on cover crop solutions in partnership with the Yamhill SWCD who have bought a drill for planting cover crops and may lease it to growers. A sage grouse work group met Jan. 23 to find gaps in research across the state. Master Gardener Program is a good avenue to conduct conservation, specifically with pollinator research. OSU is working cooperatively with SWCDs on invasive species and incorporating bees in gardens across the state; SWCD employees also are taking Master Gardener classes to implement at local level, mostly in Western Oregon. OSU is obtaining grants to help SWCDs teach people how to establish rain gardens in urban areas. OSU is working with ODA on revamping the Pesticide Safety Education Program, which covers the Worker Protection Standard; have a new person to run the program, Kaci Buhl.

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS): Ron Alvarado reported that Sonny Perdue is the nominee for US Secretary of Agriculture; Leonard Jordan is NRCS Acting Chief; a permanent chief will be named as the transition with the new administration is complete; timing of this is uncertain. Ron said there will be a learning curve for the new administration and NRCS staff. Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) awarded three additional proposals: The Nature Conservancy Wallowa County, Grant County SWCD, and Three Sisters Irrigation District. The Two Chiefs process is continuing; a good example of a locally led process. Ron recognized the good working relationship NRCS continues to have with the Oregon Department of Forestry. Hiring freeze was expected with the new administration; 25 vacancies in Oregon, the majority in field offices. Ron introduced two new delivery systems NRCS is using; CDSI, a planning and mapping software tool used in field offices; Client Gateway provides online services for farmers and ranchers. Commissioner Ward thanked Ron and his staff for working with OACD and the districts.

Invasive Species and SWCD Collaboration

Helmuth Rogg presented an overview of the Oregon Department of Agriculture's Plant Protection and Conservation Program Area. Clint Burfitt offered an overview of ODA's eradication plan for Japanese beetles, set for spring; information about the plan is available at www.japanesebeetlepx.info.

Agriculture Land Use Update

Jim Johnson met with Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Department of Land Conservation and Development, and Department of Energy recently regarding solar facility siting on exclusive farm land; this issue is important to ODA and ODFW; ODFW is concerned about wildlife corridors being affected by such facilities. Jim presented a copy of the Department of Land Conservation and Development 2014-15 Farm and Forest Report; he said some big trends in agriculture are missing in the report: land transactions, especially in the irrigated land areas; increase in terms of processing and preparation of agricultural products on small scale; and cannabis, specifically related to right to farm issues, not agronomic issues. As far as numbers, Jim pointed to the high number of replacement dwellings across the state in the exclusive farm use zone, especially in the Hood River Valley; farms are being turned into rentals; farmers are

concerned because it is resulting in no housing for farm workers. State Parks have created a new process to identify streams that may gain scenic waterway designation. He presented a handout of 45 bills he is tracking; he is most concerned with Senate Bill 499, the Right to Farm bill; it is problematic because it says any activity that results in serious harm to human health and to loss of residential property or domestic drinking water is not protected by the Right to Farm; applies across the board to agriculture and he is concerned because terms are not clearly defined.

Natural Resources Program Area Updates

Ray Jandl announced that ODA has a new director, Alexis Taylor; she plans on taking first six months to learn about agency programs. The water quality program is focusing on telling the story of how projects are improving landscape conditions and water quality; working on process to evaluate water quality temperature and land condition.

SWCD and Water Quality Management Updates

John said he had received a request for funding of drones for riparian assessments on farmland; ODA is not interested in funding such efforts as enforcement is conducted from public viewpoints and with permission to be on properties; he said SWCDs should be hesitant to allow such efforts without land owner approval. New Strategic Implementation Area (SIA) Open Houses are set; Hood River was canceled because of weather, Nehalem is set for Feb. 9th; \$455,000 is still available for SIA implementation. He provided a handout showing the increase in compliance cases in 2016, primarily caused by the introduction of SIAs.

Manette introduced the ODA 2017-2019 Biennium SWCD Support Grant Funding Distribution Recommendation document. **Gary Jensen moved and Jerry Ward seconded the motion to approve the recommendation with a wording change to the first sentence of the background section, Part 1. The motion carried unanimously.**

SWCC Member Reports

Mel Omeg said the Hispanic community is worried about the use of undocumented employees; this issue is a concern to agricultural businesses. The new administration has not yet provided direction as to how it is going to address the issue.

Jerry Ward reported that he attended a OACD Lower Willamette Basin meeting; it was well attended by district managers and directors and offered good discussion.

Stan Dean reported that he attended a Curry County SWCD Board meeting in January; he was energized by what the group achieves and think they do a tremendous job; the SWCD and two watershed councils partner to offer many projects and a full range of programs.

Gary Jensen reported that the partnership between EWEB and the McKenzie watershed partners is progressing; funding is the biggest challenge. The group is working with US Forest Service on the sale of forest land; he said extensive damage was suffered in oak savannah areas and plantations in his area of the state; federal disaster funds are being sought.

Barbara Boyer reported that she recently attended ODA Director Training in Redmond; she said it was well attended, interesting, and she always learns something new.

Tim Kerns said Eastern Oregon is really struggling with adverse winter weather, particularly Ontario and the Treasure Valley; millions of dollars of damage to onion facility infrastructure causing onion prices to go way up. ORE-IDA Ontario potato processor facility is damaged and not working. Subzero temperatures have caused problems with stockwater; weather also has caused havoc with mail delivery.

Public Comment

Clair Klock, Clackamas SWCD Conservationist said there were many funding challenges during his tenure; he is pleased to see programs he dreamed of coming to fruition today; it is encouraging to see people stepping up to do good conservation.

Approve October 2016 SWCC Meeting Minutes

The SWCC reviewed the minutes from the October 20, 2016, meeting held in Clackamas, Oregon. **Gary Jensen moved and Mel Omeg seconded the motion to approve the minutes from the October 20, 2016, SWCC regular quarterly meeting. The motion carried unanimously.**

SWCC 2017 Meeting Dates

- May 1 – Pendleton, Commission will meet before CONNECT
- August 10-11 – Southern Oregon, TBD
- November 14-15 – Salem area, TBD

Chair Boyer adjourned the meeting at 4:28 p.m.