



**Oregon Soil and Water Conservation Commission
Regular Quarterly Meeting
November 14, 2017
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Headquarters
4034 Fairview Industrial Drive SE Salem, OR 97302**

Soil and Water Conservation Commission (SWCC) Members Present

Chair Barbara Boyer; Vice Chair Tim Kerns; Stan Dean; Gary Jensen; Ted Molinari; Jerry Ward

Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) Staff Present

Ray Jandl, Natural Resource Program Area Director; John Byers, Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) and Agricultural Water Quality Management (Ag WQ) Programs Manager; Manette Simpson, SWCD Program Lead; Jim Johnson, Land Use and Water Planning Coordinator; Sandi Hiatt, SWCD Grants Administrator; Jason Eck, Ag WQ Support Specialist

Advisors Present

Pat FitzGerald, Oregon Association of Conservation Districts President; Courtney Shaff, Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) Capacity Coordinator; Shawn Morford, Network of Oregon Watershed Councils (NOWC) Executive Director; Gene Foster, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality Watershed Management Manager; Ryan Gordon, Oregon Department of Forestry Family Forestlands Coordinator

Visitors Present

Whitney Collins, Baker County SWCDs District Manager; Jenny Meisel, Marion SWCD Native and Invasive Plant Specialist; Janice Calkins, Marion SWCD Office Coordinator; Fran Molinari

Call to Order

Chair Barbara Boyer called the regular quarterly meeting to order at 8:38 a.m. on Tuesday, Nov. 14, 2017.

Chairperson Selection

Jerry Ward nominated Barbara Boyer to serve as chair for 2018. **Jerry Ward moved and Tim Kerns seconded the motion to appoint Barbara Boyer as SWCC Chair for 2018. The motion carried unanimously.** Chair Boyer nominated Tim Kerns as SWCC Vice Chair. **Chair Boyer moved and Gary Jensen seconded the motion to appoint Vice Chair Tim Kerns SWCC Vice Chair for 2018. The motion carried unanimously.**

Approval of August 2017 Meeting Minutes

The SWCC reviewed the minutes from the Aug. 10, 2017, meeting held in Central Point, Oregon. **Tim Kerns moved and Jerry Ward seconded the motion to approve the minutes from the Aug. 10, 2017, SWCC regular quarterly meeting. The motion carried unanimously.**

SWCD Challenges Update

2015-2017 and 2017-2019 Biennium Update: Sandi Hiatt provided a review of Scope of Work expenses for the 2015-2017 biennium; she explained seven districts had to submit a spending plan with their eighth-quarter funds requests because they had a seventh quarter balance of more than \$16,288; when this occurs, the Intergovernmental Grant Agreement (IGA) requires a spending plan to ensure they will not have to return funds; only one district was unable to spend all capacity funds, with \$7,115.23 remaining, but is on a reimbursement-only status. Manette Simpson explained that ODA tracks district spending to ensure that districts don't over or under spend their capacity funding as any money not spent goes back to OWEB's general fund. Hiatt also presented a copy of the 2017-2019 IGA with track changes to show commissioners how the document evolved. This biennium, district capacity grants for operations and Scope of Work is \$156,976. When any IGA exceeds \$150,000, it must be reviewed by the Oregon Department of Justice (DOJ), an extra step before funding was released. Sandi said 44 of 45 districts have new IGAs signed and in place. One district still needs to provide financial practice information to ODA before moving forward. ODA staff is working with the district on this matter.

Sandi presented a breakdown of district 2017-2019 Capacity Grant first-quarter reporting as of Nov. 9: 15 reported early; 17 reported on the due date; four reported within the grace period; and eight reported late. The districts that report late are typically the same quarter after quarter. John Byers explained that ODA and OWEB worked together eight years ago to get payments out more rapidly and make reporting simpler and have achieved both. OWEB has two weeks to process payments, but currently process within a week. Sandi presented the number of Focus Areas since their inception in the 2013-2015 biennium: 2013-2015, 50; 2015-2017, 54; 2017-2019, 49; the number in the 2017-2019 biennium is expected to increase since several districts have multiple Focus Areas.

Operations and Training Update: Manette offered a big-picture, national, look at issues and challenges she hopes the SWCC and other partners can work on together. She attended the annual meeting of the National Association of State Conservation Agencies (NASCA) and shared the top take-away messages: 1) nationally, some organizations are promoting the concept that voluntary locally led conservation doesn't work; she said that reinforces how important information from Focus Area and Strategic Implementation Area work is in Oregon because we know districts' work with private landowners does work for land and water quality management. 2) most legislators don't have a direct connection to agriculture any more; if agricultural organizations are not working with their legislators every week, every month, all year long, then agriculture is losing. 3) Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) has position vacancies in every state and Oregon has about 30. 4) all states struggle with district capacity and funding. 5) the Farm Bill is a big topic; John Byers is on NASCA's committee. In 2018 Manette will be Pacific Director on the NASCA board.

Manette then offered a look at the state picture, with an outline of SWCD Program accomplishments. During the 2015-2017 biennium, director training was held statewide but with low attendance; she and Eric Nusbaum continued to work with individual SWCDs as needed; she raised the question of how best ODA can use time and resources directors and staff. Changes to 2017-19 the Intergovernmental Grant Agreement between SWCDs, ODA, and OWEB are a proactive approach for SWCD and ODA accountability; as are the 2017-2019 changes to the Scope of Work reporting and Focus Area funding. She noted the challenge of how to keep SWCDs relevant for the next 75 years. This can occur in two areas: 1) through Administrative/Infrastructure, ongoing and long-term; this can be done through training; capacity building; funding criteria; accountability; development of criteria for functioning SWCDs; and implementation of work on the ground. 2) through Outreach and Partnering, ongoing and long-term; this

can be accomplished by sharing the SWCD story with key stakeholders; and by ensuring stable funding over time. Manette proposed possible next steps could be for ODA and partners to develop a regional approach for SWCDs to share resources; and develop a legislative outreach strategy. She asked the SWCC to consider forming subgroups to work on specific issues such as training, funding criteria, accountability, or others. Barbara said she wants to help with the SIA process as it is unacceptable when a district says it won't do it, especially when there is money this year that may not be in the future; the SWCC should be helping ODA. Manette asked commissioners to be ready to talk about priorities for 2018 at the February meeting.

Water Quality Management/SWCD Program/SIA Update: John announced that Ray Jandl, Director of Natural Resources Program Area, is retiring in March; Stephanie Page, Director of Food Safety and Animal Health, is the new director; her training with Ray will begin the first of the year. The 6 + 2 ad hoc group, made up of representative SWCD staff and SWCC and OACD members, met recently to learn more about the Ag Water Quality Program's new Strategic Implementation Area process.

John updated the SWCC on the Ag Water Quality Program. ODA and DEQ have a current Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) that was created five years ago; a cumbersome document that many parties helped create; ODA is using Focus Area and Strategic Implementation Areas data sets to achieve the goals of the MOA; the MOA is due to be updated every five years; ODA and DEQ have evaluated and don't want any changes to the MOA, but will change the review process; DEQ is required to be part of the Local Advisory Committee (LAC); DEQ staff have attended LAC meetings and provided comments about the program itself and not focused on the Area Plans. ODA will now have two review types:

- 1.) Programmatic review – DEQ/ODA leadership get together and answer question: Are we fulfilling the obligations of the program? Should it change or be adjusted based on questions in the MOA.
- 2.) Area Plan review – John is meeting in December with ODA/DEQ staff and the expectation is going to be set that DEQ and ODA staff are going to communicate with one another prior to LAC meetings to talk about what is expected from the area plan. It is a negotiation, a discussion.

For other updates, John said the Ag Water Quality compliance staff is busy. For example, in the Inland Rogue Ag Water Quality Area, ODA received eight complaints in the 2013-15 biennium; that increased to 41 in the 2015-17 biennium, with 20 SIA-related. Eight to 41 in one biennium brings up question of what we take off that area water quality specialist's plate; the main focus of specialists' time is working with LACs. Remote sensing is coming. For SIA mapping, ODA uses Google Earth and what ODA can see from the roads. DEQ is using Light Detection And Ranging (LIDAR), which takes layers and shows stream position, elevation, and channel width. Another layer shows how high and dense a riparian area is and effects on water quality. This can help determine how big a buffer is needed to achieve water quality standards. John said he needs agriculture to know LIDAR is out there, and agriculture will want to be sure it is being used appropriately. The Ag Water Quality Program Advisory Committee meeting is set for Dec. 7 in Salem; it is an annual meeting in which point sources, SWCDs, conservation organizations, and others come together for an ODA Ag Water Quality Program update and discussion.

When a landowner is not in compliance with ag water quality rules, ODA's policy is to work with landowner, including the local SWCD's contact information in the compliance letter as a provider of technical assistance. John said one district, concerned about a heavy workload, has asked ODA to provide a list of other groups that could offer help, such as watershed councils, NRCS, etc. John said this is a slight change in policy, but that he would be willing to work with other districts to provide this information if requested. ODA developed a document to offer grass-seed growers alternatives to help

them achieve what they need agronomically while still achieving compliance; he explained that growers must clean out their tiles but may be violating Department of State Lands (DSL) removal fill laws or their agricultural activity may be impeding the riparian area from growing, which means growers are not in compliance with ag water quality rules. ODA brought the grass-seed industry together to address the problem of removal fill from ditches, which ODA views as channelized streams in many cases. John said this is an example of ODA and DSL working together on a collective problem.

John spoke about the challenges with the shellfish plat leasing program. ODA is responsible for reviewing oyster plat applications. Historically, ODFW would recommend denying applications, citing cumulative impacts of oyster cultivation on eelgrass, a habitat for salmonids and a food source for a protected coastal bird. ODFW now has mapping technology to show areas and why they are not appropriate. ODFW recently said a 19-acre area was not appropriate. ODA, after careful consideration, found a small area (5 acres) that was appropriate based on past decisions. He said the reality is that future approvals are unlikely, despite the fact that the state has made it a policy to promote sustainable aquaculture.

John highlighted a change in the Ag Water Quality Strategic Implementation Program process. The main change is in how properties are designated. Two years ago, designations were “no”, “moderate”, or “significant”. ODA has made a conscious decision to focus on moderate and significant properties. He said the challenge came in questions ODA received on “How does ODA know that’s a ‘no’”? John said ODA doesn’t know without getting on the ground. Therefore, ODA will now use “limited potential for improvement” in place of “no”; “opportunity for improvement” in place of “moderate”; and “potential violation” in place of “significant”. Properties in the middle category, “opportunity for improvement”, are ones ODA has seen from a roadside or aerial photograph or ODA simply doesn’t know. If ODA doesn’t know and can’t quantify a property, the “opportunity for improvement” designation will be used and that property owner will be contacted.

During the 2015-17 biennium, OWEB provided \$1 million for projects inside SIAs. The money was used for building brick and mortar, such as a manure storage facility. A criticism was that this process only got landowners to compliance, but didn’t help them get to water quality standards. Now, in the 2017-19 biennium, the \$1.2 million OWEB funding will provide districts \$100,000 over four years to provide technical assistance, with the goal of “uplift,” or functionality of a riparian area to get to water quality standard achievement. Why the change? To conduct conservation activities in the SIA to:

- a. Meet the goals of the Area Plan (not just compliance).
- b. Provide technical assistance funds for SWCD to build quality grant requests to reach Area Plan goals.
- c. Conduct monitoring to document water quality trends.
- d. Allow ODA to conduct compliance work if necessary following extensive outreach.
- e. Identify “legacy” issues.

The challenge with SIAs is going to places without capacity; John said the money is going to be very helpful in this regard; will have five SIAs this year 2017-18; seven in 2018-19; AgWQ complaints inside the SIA will be addressed through the regular ODA compliance process. Gary Jensen suggested looking at public outreach, media attention to help raise awareness of the SIA process; John said there have been some articles and he emphasized that all landowners in an SIA are sent letters and invited to the open houses; turnouts are good, but not exceptional; he said the SIA process has been successful because all agencies are at the table. Ted Molinari said we need a social and cultural change to make it clear that landowners should want to do such agricultural improvements, that it’s not only the right thing to do but the best thing to do; John agreed and said he knows that agricultural does not like regulation, but

emphasized if this SIA process doesn't work, than landowners will not like the alternative. Ray Jaindl said looking back 20 years he has seen progress in how landowners and the agricultural community fit in to the larger picture and their willingness to make change. Jerry applauded ODA for this program and the cooperation with other agencies.

Land Use Update

Jim Johnson reported that the Land Use Board of Appeals (LUBA) reversed a decision by Jackson County to site a solar facility on high value farmland; he said the decision has implications for upcoming policy making and rules development by the Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD); state agencies are meeting monthly leading up to DLCD rulemaking, which is planned for spring; Jim said he is concerned this may be too late and that there will be a land rush by energy companies before the rules change; at least two counties (Marion and Yamhill) are considering acting on their own and creating their own ordinances. As the next legislative session approaches, Jim said there is a movement to exempt Eastern Oregon from the state's land-use program; Jim said as a planner this could affect farm value special assessment with taxation, Right to Farm, other protections. A proposal for a new transmission line through dairy land in Tillamook County has area farmers concerned; this case involves a lot of livestock operations that are sensitive to transmission lines; ODA will work with farmers to address problems; there are alternative routes but companies want to go through farmland because it involves working with fewer landowners and is cheaper. Also in Tillamook County work continues on Senate Bill 1517, a pilot project regarding wetlands conversion; the policy process is leaning more toward a conditional-use process for wetlands rather than zoning areas off limits. Jim said he is talking with Tillamook County about oyster plat leasing and the idea of approaching cases from a planning perspective (zoning) rather than on a case-by-case basis. Jim continues to hear from many in the agricultural community about the implications of short-term rentals on agricultural lands, in terms of available housing, labor housing for farmers; hot spots are the Hood River Valley and Sauvie Island; he is hearing concern about a lack of housing in rural residential areas when these are turned in to vacation rentals; it comes down to what is the definition of a single-family dwelling; Jim's advice to jurisdictions is that we don't have to reinvent the wheel; the coast has been dealing with this for years; Gearhart, for example, has regulations on short-term rentals. The Board of Agriculture meeting is coming up; the board will choose members for the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Commission; four farmer positions and one for water quality; the commission will get into rulemaking after the new year. The Willamette Basin Review feasibility study is out for public comment through Dec. 22; the study will be used to formulate a recommendation to the Corps of Engineers on the potential allocation of storage in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Willamette Valley reservoirs; Ray said ODA is very active in reviewing the study; ODA staff have developed an extensive analysis of the ag lands below the dams and what is currently irrigated; developed a demand model along core streams and talked about how that can be enhanced with better flow, better irrigation; also looked at climate change models 50 years out; providing data to the industry; ODA will provide comments as part of an overall state response.

Working Lunch: Marion SWCD Presentation

Jenny Meisel, Native and Invasive Plant Specialist with the Marion Soil and Water Conservation District, offered a presentation about the district. She explained that the district is unique in the diversity of crops that are grown in its boundaries as well as for the urban/rural interface that exists. The district has six full-time staff, with another coming on soon. The district has an opening for a director position in the Woodburn/Mount Angel area for which it is having a hard time finding a candidate.

Natural Resources Program Area Updates

Ray provided several updates. He said there are some current challenges with NOAA and EPA's acceptance of the state's program for CZARA (Coastal Zone Act Reauthorization Amendments); agencies are looking for changes and main issues are related to forestry, but also asked ODA to evaluate agricultural measures. ODA is preparing for the 2019 legislative session; Confined Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO) Program permit fee increases are a focus; meetings with industry are already occurring; no legislative issues with SWCDs or the water quality program are on the table. ODA water quality staff recently met with the conservation community to address questions from an individual about the history, staffing, and accomplishments, and improvements of the program; he said staff did a good job with the presentation and that it appeared he was satisfied with ODA's answers. ODA is working with OWEB on funding for temperature monitoring for SIAs; this would be a 15-year commitment. The 2018 legislative session is a short session and agencies do not forward concepts. He is working with Stephanie Page on her transition to fill his position; ODA is looking to fill her Food Safety Director position by February; Ray said he is working on a director's manual to help Stephanie. The CAFO Program issued significant civil penalties during the past year after discharges occurred; one operator was issued a \$90,000 penalty, the highest penalty ever; the operator was allowing continuous pollution and didn't respond. ODA staff also worked on challenges with the development of Lost Valley Farm dairy in Hermiston area, a 30,000 cow operation; opponents presented many challenges that required multi-agency involvement. The Pesticides Program is dealing with cannabis issues; pesticides are being found in many growers' crops; no pesticides are approved for use by the federal government; crops must be detained and destroyed; process in place to educate the industry on what is legal and not legal; also detecting contaminated pesticides. The Fertilizer Program is finding companies promoting and selling fertilizer products with organisms that are ultimately not there; ODA is conducting unique research that is nationally recognized. CAFO inspectors recently reached out to Tillamook area operators to be sure their lagoons are ready for an influx of water after overflow issues occurred last year. ODA found that 80 percent of operators were ready; ODA is reaching out to the remaining operators. Barbara said she was encouraged to hear that ODA is considering raising CAFO fees as she is hearing support from operators.

Advisor Reports

Networks of Oregon Watershed Councils (NOWC)

Shawn Morford, NOWC Executive Director, said things continue to grow in terms of demands from councils for direct services, both technical and organizational. NOWC has a business model and fundraising strategy to obtain contracts, many from councils themselves. Shawn is providing a lot of strategic planning and survey help for which councils pay a fee; NOWC has membership dues, but dues are small and only about half of OWEB-funded councils are current members. NOWC has focused the past year on improving direct services to councils with the aim of increasing of member councils. As an example of the response, the Network has worked with OACD and the Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts to put on a monthly webinar series; topics focus on administrative to technical aspects; webinars are posted on the Network website; have drawn more than 300 people in the past year from councils, districts, and land trusts. Shawn said the Oregon Conservation Partnership has a bold strategy going in to the new biennium that is reflected in the Partnership grant from OWEB. They are in the process of hiring a communications contractor to help tell the council/district/land trust story and get out to the media. Also, have brought on a conference planner for CONNECT, which is scheduled for April 17-19 in Seaside; this is the first year the Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts will be involved as an equal partner; sessions will involve all three partners. They plan to hold regional meetings among partners as a way to increase networking among partners. Network is in the process of updating its strategic plan and will launch a new website at the first of the year.

Oregon Association of Conservation Districts (OACD)

Pat FitzGerald, OACD President, said planning for CONNECT is well under way with partners, with OCEAN taking the lead; will offer five tracks with breakout sessions; an OACD board member has agreed to present a breakout on tide gates. OACD had a “false start” late in the summer in its search for a new executive director; second attempt identified nine highly qualified applicants; now narrowed down to five for the interview stage; interviews are planned for one day the week of Nov. 27. Candidates are from Washington D.C.; New York (native Oregonian); California; Alaska; and Oregon.; plan on interviewing remotely using Skype. Interviews will be conducted by the executive directors for COLT, NOWC, and OCEAN, as well as the OACD executive team; a second round may be offered to narrow the field to two candidates; hope to select a new director by early December. Pat reported that NRCS and its grant programs were audited by the US Office of Inspector General, including the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) contracts for sage grouse, which are funneled from NRCS through OACD; the audit found NRCS was not retaining original landowner files; the audit found no inproprieties with the work OACD was doing under the RCPP; a December 5th meeting of NRCS, OACD, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, and affected districts is scheduled; this will be an opportunity for NRCS to let the group know what it knows; a final opinion is expected by the end of December. OACD has a rough draft of its strategic plan ready to circulate to its constituency; rough draft was a reflection of input from a statewide survey; the 84 responses received were included in the verbiage of the rough draft; Pat thanked SWCC Commissioner Stan Dean for serving on the committee; the final draft will be timed with the arrival of the new executive director; more input will be sought as part of the traveling introduction of the new director; then one more go-around in April at CONNECT before finalizing.

Pat said NOAA, OWEB, and ODA are working together on tide gates. The fish-passage structures are old and failing and landowners are looking for assistance to fix them. OWEB is taking the lead on determining how to inventory the structures and how to get the public involved. Oregon Association of Counties is facilitating outreach; meetings are set in December in four locations (Newport, Tillamook, Coquille, and Clatskanie). Courtney said input from these meetings will be reviewed and a determination will be made on how to move forward. There will be a discussion on the topic at the January OWEB Board January meeting. Pat spoke about the strength of the Oregon Conservation Partnership and that all members work together really well; meets four times per year; more than just talk about how we are going to deliver conservation services across the state; lot of cross-pollination and strength of the partnership results in programs such as the Oregon Ag Heritage Program.

Pat publicly acknowledged Whitney Collins for her fortitude, strength, and fiscal knowledge in helping OACD get through the interim period since the retirement of Director Jerry Nicolescu in July. Pat also thanked Tim Kerns for allowing her to split her time. Barbara and Jerry Ward also thanked Whitney and thanked Pat for stepping up in the interim.

Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB)

Courtney Shaff provided updates from the October meeting of the OWEB Board. She reported that the board awarded open solicitation grants; this included restoration and technical assistance grants, capacity building FIP grants, and organization/collaboration grants; two of the organization/collaboration grants involve SWCDS: Benton SWCD and West Multnomah SWCD. The board received a presentation on the Coordinated Streamside Management Program. At its January meeting, OWEB staff will ask the board to make decisions regarding strategic plan priorities; the board is expected to approve the Oregon Ag Heritage Program Commission and adopt new focused investment partnership rules. OWEB will celebrate its 20th anniversary in 2019; became a state agency in 1999; beginning in fall 2018 and throughout 2019,

the agency will work with Oregon Lottery to fund celebrations and resources. Courtney spoke about the risk-assessment process OWEB is now required to complete for all of its grantees based on federal changes; OWEB has completed the process twice in its first two sets of grants this biennium; results are going as anticipated; only one grantee received a high-risk score; that grantee is not receiving grants; all others scored as medium risk (5 of about 80); the remaining are low risk; OWEB is having conversations with the grantees that received mediums, typically for missing project completion reporting and other reporting details; If problems persist in future, OWEB could put conditions in grant agreements; OWEB doesn't have a lot of high-risk grantees because its checks and balances are working.

Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Presentation

Gene Foster, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality Watershed Management Manager, provided a presentation titled "Water Quality Standards, Integrated Report, and TMDLs." He explained that water quality standards are developed to provide adequate water quality to protect the most sensitive uses of water, primarily human health or aquatic life; they were developed for all basins in the state; they are complex and based on fish species in Northwest; standards also based on timing of spawning and rearing, different qualities needed for uses. Every two years, DEQ is required to assess water quality and report to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency on the condition of Oregon's waters. DEQ prepares an integrated report that meets the requirements of the Clean Water Act, Sections 305(b) (which requires a report on the overall condition of Oregon's waters) and 303(d) (which requires identifying waters that do not meet water quality standards and where a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) pollutant limit needs to be developed). He explained that a TMDL is the Total Maximum Daily Load of a pollutant that can be in a waterbody and still meet water quality standards.

Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) Presentation

Ryan Gordon, Family Forestland Coordinator with the Private Forests Division of the Oregon Department of Forestry, provided several updates. He said the 2017-2019 legislatively adopted budget brought fewer cuts to the Private Forests Program than anticipated; it also made the Federal Forest Restoration Program permanent; the Department did take some cuts in Private Forests, Protection, and Administration, but a majority of budget items were funded at service level. The Department held many vacancies until the budget was set – many positions are now open, including 11 Stewardship Foresters. ODF's statewide agreement with the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) continues; helps provide technical assistance for nonindustrial private forestland owners who are interested in NRCS cost-share program; new agreement is for a much larger amount, \$1 million. Rulemaking is complete for Western Oregon streamside protection and bald eagles; rulemaking will commence for food plots; with these new rules, ODF will be releasing an updated Forest Practices Act Rules Guide early in 2018; the Oregon Forest Resources Institute will also be releasing an updated illustrated guide to the Forest Practices Act. Ryan highlighted the e-subscription tool to learn about forest operations; allows the public to receive emails about when forestry work occurs on non-federal lands; online service replaces the paper-based service and allows the public to easily pick the area on a map and the activities of interest. Ryan also provided handouts on updated fire prevention rules. He outlined statistics for the 2017 fire season, in which 45,000 acres burned on ODF-protected lands: 290 lightning-caused fires, burning 24,000 acres; 779 human-caused fires, burning 21,000 acres. In Oregon overall, 1,991 fires burned, covering 710,000 acres with a suppression cost of \$438 million. ODF put a lot of effort and resources in to planning and repositioning along with other agencies for the Aug. 21 eclipse; things turned out well, with no major fires or traffic issues.

SWCC Member Reports

Gary Jensen: Gary mentioned that he was at the SWCC meeting at the same time as his Upper Willamette Soil and Water Conservation District meeting; John Byers left this meeting early to speak to the board about its Strategic Implementation Area. The district continues to work in collaboration with Eugene Water and Electric Board (EWEB) for McKenzie River watershed protection for the Eugene community. South Willamette Valley did not have real bad fires this season; a couple east toward Oakridge and near Dexter on federal land that the U.S. Forest Service fought. He spoke about the evolving problem of districts' inability to elect directors that represent the agricultural foundation of their communities; there is a reluctance because many are working young people raising families and therefore don't have the time to commit and don't last; he said this is a challenge all districts face going forward.

Jerry Ward: Jerry reported that he finished visiting all of his districts after recently attending the Tillamook SWCD annual dinner; he now hopes to start the cycle over and reconnect with districts in his area. Tualatin SWCD has moved in to its new facilities; the annual meeting was Nov. 14; an open house is planned; hiring of staff and development of programs is under way with the new funding the district is receiving. He continues a quarterly breakfast meeting with West Multnomah.

Stan Dean: Stan said he is still trying to visit all of his districts; he recently met with the Coos SWCD director and attended its board meeting; he really finds it fascinating to see the different issues and challenges each district faces; for example, in Coos, he obtained information about tide gates and the balance between preserving agricultural land and fish. He said the OSU Land Steward Program is seeking grant funds to expand to other parts of the state as a pilot project; the program would be best suited to an SWCD with capacity; contact him if interested. Stan said he is working with the district manager and board on an advocacy policy that deals with lobbying at the state level; policy has been reviewed by counsel and is ready to take to district board; then will share with SWCC; he thinks it is going to be useful for others to see.

Ted Molinari: Ted said he had staff contact all of the agencies in his jurisdiction. He heard from Harney SWCD, which was seeking information about Senate Bill 416 which relates to public contracts on private property; district needs more clarification on this; Manette will followup.

Barbara Boyer: She said she often finds herself in Salem advocating for all districts; went to Polk SWCD board meeting in October; plan on going to annual dinner in January; she is keeping in contact with Benton SWCD about its collaboration with OWEB. Attended the Ag in the Classroom harvest dinner in Corvallis and is excited about the full-time Ag in the Classroom contact that Tualatin SWCD is funding. Yamhill SWCD hosted 150 guests for its annual dinner; ODA Director Alexis Taylor was guest speaker. Commissioner Mel Omeg has put on notice that his seat will become vacant. Mel was not present at the meeting as he has surgery planned; he plans to attend February's meeting. Barbara said she would like to see the commission do some outreach for the commission seat; Manette said ODA has a process for filling SWCC vacancies; commissioners can only be elected directors at time of appointment; a nomination and vetting process follow.

Tim Kerns: Tim said developments with the sage grouse effort have really put the brakes on things and is very disappointing; he said the momentum that had been built is starting to erode.

Public Comment

None received.

SWCC Meeting Wrap-up

Future Meeting Dates and Locations

- Feb. 13-14, 2018, in Salem. Location TBD.
- April 16, 2018, in Seaside prior to CONNECT, which runs April 17-19).
- July 24-25, 2018, Port of Morrow/Sage Center, Boardman.
- Fall, TBD

Chair Barbara Boyer adjourned the meeting at 3:45 p.m.