The Oregon Legislature passed the Agricultural Water Quality Management Act in 1993. It requires the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) to prevent and control water pollution from agricultural activities.

As a result, ODA worked with local advisory committees to develop Water Quality Management Area Plans and Rules throughout the state. Area Plans are reviewed and updated by ODA and the local advisory committee every two years. The original Inland Rogue Area Plan and Rules were approved by ODA in 2001.

THE AREA PLAN

The Area Plan guides local landowners and their conservation partners on how to prevent pollution. It includes information on agricultural water quality concerns and recommendations for addressing them. The Area Plan does not tell anyone how to farm, ranch, or otherwise use natural resources. Rather, it includes recommended practices from which a landowner can choose. The practices can help meet business and conservation goals, while also preventing water pollution.

Agricultural water quality concerns in the Inland Rogue are primarily:

- Nonpoint pollution
- Degraded fish habitat

THE AREA RULES

The Agricultural Water Quality Program focuses on voluntary and cooperative efforts by landowners and others to protect water quality.

However, the Agricultural Water Quality Management Act also includes enforcement to ensure prevention and control of water pollution from agricultural sources. Area Rules allow landowners flexibility in how they protect water quality. Area Rules describe conditions that landowners must achieve on agricultural lands, rather than practices they must implement.

All agricultural landowners must allow vegetation along:
The Area Plan and Area Rules apply to all agricultural lands. This includes lands in current agricultural use and those lying idle or on which management has been deferred. They also apply to agricultural activities within incorporated city boundaries, urban growth boundaries, and non-federal forest lands.

Landowners should evaluate their agricultural activities and try to determine if they might:

- Pollute streams, canals, or groundwater.
- Prevent growth of appropriate vegetation along streams.

Then change any problem practices to ensure compliance with the Area Rules and to protect water quality.

The Jackson, Josephine and Illinois Valley Soil and Water Conservation districts (SWCDs) are the primary sources of landowner assistance to address water quality concerns. SWCDs are nonregulatory local organizations that can help or direct landowners to additional sources of help.

MORE INFORMATION

Jackson Soil and Water Conservation District: (541) 664-1070
Illinois Valley Soil and Water Conservation District: (541) 592-3731
Three Rivers Soil and Water Conservation District: (541) 474-6840
Oregon Department of Agriculture: Beth Pietrzak, Water Quality Specialist, bpietrzak@oda.state.or.us
Agricultural Water Quality Management Program at ODA: (503) 986-4700, https://oda.direct/AgWQPlans

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