

BURNT RIVER
Agricultural Water Quality Management Area
Biennial Review Report to the Board of Agriculture and ODA Director
Submitted by the Local Advisory Committee (LAC)



Meeting Date: January 15, 2025
LAC Members Present: Diana Fillmore, Mark Fillmore, Shawn Klauss, Boone Sullivan, Bill Moore, Bryan Hardy, and David Nygard
Reporting Timeframe: January 2022 – October 2024

PROGRESS MEASUREMENT

This was a Light Review; progress toward Measurable Objectives will be reported at the next Full Review.

Activities (Burnt River SWCD)	#	Discussion
Events That Actively Engage Landowners	2	Presented at the Oregon State University (OSU) growers meeting and the Oregon Department of Emergency Management (OEM) meeting.
Landowners Participating in Active Events	84	Landowners participating in the events listed above.
Landowners Provided Technical Assistance*	135	Technical assistance for offstream watering facilities, spring development, irrigation improvements, diversions, and riparian improvement.
Site Visits	36	Site visits for offstream watering facilities, irrigation, and diversion projects.
Conservation Plans Written	2	
Funding Applications Submitted	9	Funding applications submitted for spring development, riparian improvement, irrigation, and water quality sampling projects.
Funding Applications Awarded	3	Funding applications awarded for irrigation improvement, riparian improvement, and spring development projects.

* Number reported likely double counts some landowners due to tracking methods.

LAC DISCUSSION

Summary of Progress

- The SWCD is working collaboratively with landowners and applying for grants to get landowners in compliance with Area Rules.
- All potential violations and compliance opportunities within the South Fork Burnt River Strategic Implementation Area (SIA) have been resolved. The SWCD will continue outreach within the SIA for voluntary restoration.
- The monitoring plan has been approved for the South Fork Burnt River SIA and the SWCD is working on the sampling and analysis plan and will begin sampling in May 2025.
- The SWCDs are planning a large county wide sampling effort to gather data for TMDL implementation.
- Many landowners in Baker County are participating in restoration efforts.

Impediments

- There has been a 200 to 300 percent increase in elk populations this year compared to last year. Impacts on riparian areas and fences has been significant. Elk are now concentrating on private land year-round, and landowners have no control on the elk being driven down. Likely causes include increased wolf populations and hunting.
- Beaver habitat has become a push for conservation work; however, they damage riparian areas, plug culverts, and cause stream flow issues and other water quality concerns.
- There were several wildfires in Baker County in 2024 including the Durkee fire which was the fifth largest wildfire in Oregon History. Finer fuel loads will increase wildfire risk if cattle are kept from grazing due to federal regulations.
- The TMDL for *E. coli* was contentious. The Baker County local government and local landowners completely opposed the data collected and decision, and the Environmental Quality Commission approved the TMDL unanimously.

- Many landowners are unaware of the TMDL, ODA's rules, and the work that the SWCD does.
- Permitting in water work is too difficult. Landowners want to protect water quality, but the permitting process is the biggest roadblock to decreasing bank erosion.
- TMDL temperature replacement standards are unattainable.
- Thinking ahead to the future phosphorus TMDL, some soils are naturally high in phosphorous. Some ground in the Baker Valley does not require phosphorus fertilizer because it is naturally occurring.

Recommended Modifications and Adaptive Management

- Better management of wolf populations by ODFW. Take elk damage into account when recommending solutions for TMDL implementation.
- ODFW should have a stakeholder place within the area plan due to wildlife affecting water quality.
- Earlier grazing should be allowed to reduce wildfire risk on rangelands. Keep the recent wildfires in mind when analyzing water quality data. This could greatly affect water quality and sampling results.
- DNA analysis to determine the source of *E. coli* will be important to ensure that ODA is recommending the correct solutions to landowners.
- The SWCD should collaborate with the irrigation district on water quality sampling.
- There should be more outreach to landowners in the area. Attending other local meetings will create more opportunities to share with community.
- In water work related to post fire recovery, it should be easier to permit to prevent erosion, sedimentation, and other water quality concerns.
- Need to determine if phosphorous is naturally occurring in Baker County soils and establish a baseline.
- Make sure the local SWCDs have continued funding to work with landowners in Baker County.

ODA COMPLIANCE ACTIVITIES

Location	Cases		Site Visits	Agency Actions				
	New	Closed		Letter of Compliance		Pre-Enforcement Notification	Notice of Noncompliance	Civil Penalty
				Already in compliance	Brought into compliance			
Outside SIA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Within SIA	1	1	2	0	0	1	0	0