

## MIDDLE JOHN DAY

### Agricultural Water Quality Management Area

Biennial Review Report to the Board of Agriculture & ODA Director

Submitted by the Local Advisory Committee (LAC)



OREGON  
DEPARTMENT OF  
AGRICULTURE

**Meeting Date:** May 7, 2025

**LAC Members Present:** Jim Driscoll, John Aaron, Jeremiah Holmes, and Adam Temple. (Jean Hill provided verbal and written input.)

**Reporting Time Frame:** 2018–2023

#### PROGRESS MEASUREMENT

##### Management Area

Measurable Objective: By December 2029, install 32,520 feet of riparian buffer fencing, plant 76.36 riparian acres of shrubs and/or trees, and seed 295,350.82 acres of bare and/or disturbed private agricultural lands.

##### Focus Area: Mountain Creek

Measurable Objective: By 2025, increase weighted average shade to 29.00% and decrease weighted average erosion to 10.00%.

Milestone: N/A

Current Conditions: 2017 assessment results: weighted average shade 15.64% and weighted amount of erosion 22.43%.

##### Focus Area: Bridge Creek

Measurable Objective: By 2035, increase weighted average shade to 49.05% and decrease weighted average erosion to 4.33%.

Milestone: By 2026, increase weighted average shade to 38.55% and decrease weighted average erosion to 7.40%.

Current Conditions: 2023 assessment results: weighted average shade 35.62% and weighted amount of erosion 8.68%.

##### Management Areawide Activities (Wheeler SWCD, MJD Watershed Council, and NRCS)

Activities	No.	Activities	No.
Events That Actively Engage Landowners	18	Conservation Plans Written	201
Landowners Participating in Active Events	4,146	Funding Applications Submitted	201
Landowners Provided Technical Assistance	1,847	Funding Applications Awarded	259
Site Visits	878		

#### LAC DISCUSSION

##### Summary of Progress

- Great progress has been made in Mountain Creek since it became a focal area for Wheeler SWCD in 2010. Not only are improvements of riparian vegetation visibly notable, this has also been documented through assessments that have been repeated at intervals since 2010.
- Throughout the past decade, more than 200 beaver dam analogs (BDAs) have been installed along Bridge Creek. This passive restoration technique is dynamic. Even so, many BDAs remain and have significantly reduced sediment and improved engagement with the floodplain, which in turn has improved the growth and vigor of riparian vegetation.
- Wildfire recovery grant funding is in place for 2025 season to begin assessing and prioritizing needed wildfire recovery work (e.g., reseeding disturbed private agricultural lands) due to vast acreages of wildfires that occurred within this Management Area (and others) in 2024.

##### Impediments

- There is funding and work for staff at Local Conservation Entities Capacity. LMAs are having challenges in finding qualified staff,
- Drought and wildfire across private agricultural lands has caused challenges and altered conservation and management plans.
- The lack of a new farm bill and the pause on federal funding is impacting some farm bill programs (e.g., Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)).
- Wildfires create an immediate need for local government entities, such as SWCDs, to respond and organize not just agricultural landowners, but the rural community in general. There also is a need for implementation

of key wildfire recovery efforts that benefit most from immediate response (e.g., over seeding across wildfire disturbed lands to address sediment runoff into streams).

#### Recommended Modifications and Adaptive Management

- The LAC recommends additional monitoring efforts occur in the Management Area to better understand which watersheds have concerns and where the source is coming from. Sediment/turbidity is of specific interest.
- It is recommended that additional monitoring of photo points and/or drones imagery occur over long periods of time (e.g., over 10, 15, and 20 years after project completion) because landscapes in eastern Oregon often take longer to respond to the benefits of implementing restoration or altering management practices. It can often take 10-20 years post-project implementation for benefits to be fully realized.
- Wildfire response and recovery funding that is quickly accessible is needed so that local conservation and local government entities can be more effective at responding to wildfires to effectively protect watershed health.

#### ODA COMPLIANCE ACTIVITIES

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