

POWDER-BROWNLEE

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: Tim A. Kerns, Joel Rohner, Skyler Martin, Curt Martin, Dean Defrees, Dan Forsea, Tim L. Kerns, Ralph Morgan, and Cal Ransom
Reporting Timeframe: January 2022 – October 2024

PROGRESS MEASUREMENT		
<i>This was a Light Review; progress toward Measurable Objectives will be reported at the next Full Review.</i>		
Activities (Baker Valley SWCD, Eagle Valley SWCD, Keating SWCD)	#	Discussion
Events That Actively Engage Landowners	3	Presented at the Oregon State University (OSU) growers meeting and the Oregon Department of Emergency Management (OEM) meeting, SIA tour.
Landowners Participating in Active Events	85	Landowners participating in the events listed above.
Landowners Provided Technical Assistance*	595	Technical assistance for offstream water, diversions, spring development, irrigation improvements, bank stabilization riparian improvement, and grazing management.
Site Visits	215	Site visits for irrigation improvement, offstream water, spring development, riparian improvement, and bank stabilization projects.
Conservation Plans Written	24	
Funding Applications Submitted	47	Irrigation improvements, offstream water, riparian improvement, bank stabilization, spring development, diversions, and water quality monitoring.
Funding Applications Awarded	31	Funding applications awarded for irrigation improvement, riparian improvement, offstream water, and spring development projects.

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

LAC DISCUSSION
Summary of Progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The SWCDs are working collaboratively with landowners and applying for grants to get landowners in compliance with Area Rules. All potential violations and compliance opportunities within the Lower Powder Strategic Implementation Area (SIA) have been resolved. The SWCD will continue outreach within the SIA for voluntary restoration. The SWCDs have been monitoring water quality in the Lower Powder SIA since 2022 and plan to continue monitoring. The SWCDs continue to work in the Lower Powder Focus Area in partnership with the Idaho Power Company Tributary Riparian Re-Vegetation Program. 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. Landowners have been adding tile drainage to fields which has been successful in filtering water.
Impediments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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.

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	N/A (compliance phase is complete)							