

UPPER WILLAMETTE AND UPPER SIUSLAW

Agricultural Water Quality Management Area

Biennial Review Report to the Board of Agriculture and ODA Director

Submitted by the Local Advisory Committee (LAC)



OREGON
DEPARTMENT OF
AGRICULTURE

Meeting Date: March 20, 2025

LAC Members Present: Brian Parker, Jan Nelson, Robin Pfeiffer, and Al Hynnyshyn

Reporting Timeframe: Calendar years 2023–2024

PROGRESS MEASUREMENT

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

Activities Upper Willamette Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD)	#	Description
Events That Actively Engage Landowners	3	Stroda Brothers Farm Tour, Living on the Lands Series, Rural Living Night.
Landowners Participating in Active Events	71	33 people attended the Stroda Brother Farm Tour, 10 attended the Rural Living Night, and 28 rural landowners from throughout Lane County attended the Living on the Land Series.
Landowners Provided Technical Assistance*	20	
Site Visits	16	Three of the 16 site visits were to properties identified through the ODA Strategic Implementation Area evaluation process.
Conservation Plans Written	2	Working Lands Program completed a plan, and the conservation technician completed one for a manure storage facility.
Funding Applications Submitted	3	Two applications were for manure storage facilities or manure management and sediment/mud control; one was for dam removal for fish passage.
Funding Applications Awarded	2	The two manure management projects were funded. The dam removal was not funded.

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

LAC DISCUSSION

Summary of Progress

- Row crop vegetable production has decreased in the Management Area. Crop production has moved toward hazelnuts.
- Fertilizer is extremely expensive, causing landowners to be prudent about how much they use each year.

Impediments

- Landowners are unmotivated to care about what they can do to help water quality.
- Water quality impacts after logging are occurring on land above agricultural fields (sediment fallout).
- Hazelnut orchards with bare ground are causing water quality concerns.
- The political climate is impacting funding and programs available. Funding is going away and causing uncertainty. It is a difficult conservation landscape.
- Loss of funding for conservation programs and activities has the potential to erode trust between landowners and conservation entities. It can make them unwilling to participate when the funding returns.
- SWCDs and NRCS are spending too much money on expensive projects (manure storage sheds) rather than educating them on how to change practices first. There is a need in the Management Area for workshops about best agricultural practices. Currently, information about ag practices that protect water quality are limited to brochures and other handouts/mailers.
- As the result of succession/tax laws, land is getting to the point at which the majority is in the hands of private residential and not used for agriculture.
 - Pressure to develop residential housing in the valley/state is causing pressure on agricultural lands.
 - Short-term issues associated with rented land is causing uncertainty.
 - Solar projects are going into farmland and causing more pressure on the ag community.
- Willamette Valley water is a complex system, and the LAC is unsure if agencies are ever going to be able to manage it all for pollution.

Recommended Modifications and Adaptive Management

- Maintain grass border in fields, drainage channels, and creek beds to mitigate fertilizer runoff. Buffers/borders tend to show where/how much fertilizer has run off (more nitrogen will show in the grassed waterways). Filter strips can even be driveable with roads so long as they also act as a buffer.
- Apply fertilizer variably based on soil testing. (How can more soil testing be made available in the Management Area?)
- Succession planning efforts are needed. (The LAC suggests engaging with Oregon Agricultural Trust for workshops/presentations.)
- Leave mulch and detritus on properties after harvest to increase soil organic carbon and water retention.

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	6	7	7	2	3	3	0	0
Within SIA	0	2	5	0	0	5	0	0