



MEMORANDUM

Date: February 24, 2021

To: Kristen Sheeran, Director
Carbon Policy Office

From: Alexis M. Taylor, Director

Subject: Progress Update on Executive Order 20-04 Implementation

Thank you for this opportunity to share the Oregon Department of Agriculture's (ODA's) climate change plan implementation accomplishments. Since adopting our climate change plan in 2020, ODA's most significant implementation step has been a review of the ODA-administered Specialty Crop Block Grant program policies and prioritization of work with a climate nexus. Policy review is part of our agency climate change plan's policy element, which consists of four elements: planning, budgets, investments, and policy decisions.

For the 2021 application cycle, ODA added climate change as a consideration in Specialty Crop Block Grants awarding. The purpose of these grants is to enhance the competitiveness of Oregon's specialty crops. In addition, following the completion of our climate change plan, ODA funded a Specialty Crop Block Grant research project from the 2020 application cycle that will look at opportunities to increase carbon sequestration in turfgrass.

Due to the effects of the COVID-19 public health emergency on lottery-funded ODA programs and the need to redirect staff in these programs to other duties, we have not yet conducted a thorough review to facilitate prioritization in all other programs. However, we are in the process of bringing on an intern to reach out to all ODA programs to evaluate these opportunities.

Stakeholder engagement is also featured prominently in our agency climate change plan's planning element. Engagement efforts include conversations within and beyond the agency about additional ways to incorporate climate change considerations into our day-to-day program operations. We have also requested feedback regarding roles for ODA that best complement the strengths of our many partner agencies and organizations that also work

on climate change issues. A list of key accomplishments and upcoming scheduled actions is attached to this report.

Despite the multiple disasters of 2020 and 2021, ODA is delighted that we have maintained and enhanced the allocation of ODA staff to participate in interagency climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts, another element of our plan. We value our partnership with other agencies and have long collaborated on complex and challenging natural resource problems and opportunities. As described on the attached accomplishment list, we have collaborated with the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) to develop and promote a survey about implementation of climate friendly practices on natural and working lands. We are now working with OWEB to evaluate the survey responses and design focus groups to discuss barriers and opportunities to expanding climate friendly practices.

Agency facilities and operations, another planning element, continue to use significantly fewer resources in most cases due to the COVID-19 public health emergency and staff in most programs working remotely. We continue to find innovative ways to conduct our work remotely and are investing in strategies to facilitate long-term remote work. We have purchased two training courses in remote supervision for our managers, and have participated in an interagency forum about teleworking. We also plan to attend more conferences and meetings virtually instead of in person in the future. We anticipate that our post-COVID-19 carbon footprint will remain lower than what it was prior to March 2020.

We are pleased to report a key development related to our plan's budget and resource allocation sections. A request for funding to complete soil health baseline data for Oregon has been included in ODA's Governor's Budget. If funded, this request will allow ODA to contract with Oregon State University's soil health laboratory to produce this data. ODA's budget bill (SB 5502) is the only legislation that we are aware of that will affect ODA's ability to proceed with our climate change plan implementation.

The Governor's Budget also includes ODA's request for domestic marketing support, and ODA plans to use some of these funds to promote Oregon-grown cover crops. We had planned a Midwest trade mission in 2020 to promote Oregon cover crops, and are now working to reschedule the trade mission as an exciting opportunity to market Oregon products, advance soil health practices, and provide long-term climate change mitigation in Midwest cropping systems.

As we start to think about the 23-25 budget process later this year, we plan to have additional discussions with stakeholders, partner agencies, and organizations about resource needs to build climate change into existing programs. We will continue to refine the focus of ODA's climate change work to complement the respective strengths and areas



of focus of other organizations including USDA agencies, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and other state natural resource agencies.

ODA will continue to explore opportunities to address climate change above and beyond our programs' many existing connections to this critical issue. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.



Attachment

ODA Climate Change Plan Outreach and Engagement Accomplishments

- Highlighted the agency climate change plan in a staff newsletter and asked for feedback on additional ways to incorporate climate change into our daily work.
- Scheduled a presentation and discussion at a March 1st agency leadership team meeting, and are bringing on an intern to conduct further outreach and dialogue with ODA programs about climate change.
- A key part of our external engagement has included outreach to other agencies and organizations about opportunities to collaborate to address climate change and leverage our organizations' respective strengths. In January 2021, ODA's leadership team met with the leadership of the Oregon office of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service about opportunities to collaborate to promote cover crops. ODA will continue to work with NRCS to explore opportunities to collaborate on climate change mitigation/adaptation work.
- ODA staff will be presenting to the Oregon Soil & Water Conservation Commission during its next meeting about the ODA climate change plan. ODA will update the commission on our plan implementation, gather ideas for additional opportunities to build climate change into existing ODA programs, and discuss roles for ODA that complement Soil and Water Conservation Districts' work on soil health, irrigation efficiency, energy efficiency, conservation tillage, and other actions that address climate change.
- ODA staff presented on the ODA climate change plan to the Agricultural Water Quality program advisory committee in January 2021 and plans continued dialogue.
- Staff have met with individual stakeholders upon request to gather feedback on additional recommendations for ODA to address climate change.
- ODA worked with OWEB to promote a recent Natural and Working Lands survey to private landowners and agricultural stakeholders. The survey requested information about opportunities and barriers to adopting practices that sequester carbon. The survey also asked for prospective focus group participants. ODA is now collaborating with OWEB to go through the list of focus group volunteers and design focus group processes.
- ODA staff is participating in the Interagency Workgroup on Climate Impacts on Impacted Communities, and completed a climate justice survey developed by the work group. This survey will serve as a baseline to assess the challenges, barriers, opportunities, and successes of how state agencies engage with climate-impacted communities. The intent of the survey is to strengthen the work that agencies are doing around climate justice.
- ODA's marketing team is working with mid-Willamette Valley growers regarding ideas to promote cover cropping both within and beyond Oregon. We are rescheduling a trade mission to the Midwest originally planned for 2020 to promote



Oregon-grown cover crops and will be able to do further promotions with the inclusion of a domestic marketing package in ODA's 21-23 Governor's Budget.

- ODA provided a letter of support to the Oregon Department of Energy for a grant application that would provide energy audits in rural Oregon.

