

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



<b>Meeting Date:</b> November 16, 2022
<b>LAC Members Present:</b> Eric Horning (other members were not in attendance, though about half RSVP'd 'yes')
<b>Reporting Time Frame:</b> Calendar years 2020-2021

**PROGRESS MEASUREMENT**

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

<b>Activities (Benton SWCD, Polk SWCD)</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>Discussion</b>
Events That Actively Engage Landowners	16	Fairs, farmers markets, plant sales, courses, classes, workshops, social night, webinar, native plant sale
Landowners Participating in Active Events	779	Focused on agricultural water quality and funding availability; workshops
Landowners Provided Technical Assistance*	112	Pasture management and other topics
Site Visits	97	
Conservation Plans Written	7	179 acres
Funding Applications Submitted	6	Four Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board small grants; technical assistance with soil health
Funding Applications Awarded	4	Riparian restoration (2), manure composting (2), soil health (1)

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

**LAC DISCUSSION**

**Summary of Progress**

**Benton Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD):**

- One hundred eighty acres of ag land newly in Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP).
- Benton SWCD partnered with Upper Willamette SWCD, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and Long Tom Watershed Council to develop and implement a strategic plan for the Southern Willamette Valley Groundwater Management Area.
- Conducted monitoring in the Upper Muddy Creek Strategic Implementation Area.
- Developed “building soil communities” outreach and implementation plan; interviewed landowners and identified three priority areas for building community soil health via NRCS funding.

**Polk SWCD:**

- Polk SWCD monitored water quality, weather, and soil moisture in the Salt Creek Focus Area to use as information/demonstrations for future landowner workshops promoting irrigation efficiency.
- Polk SWCD continued helping landowners in spite of reduced capacity via educational articles and videos on best management practices.

**Impediments**

- LAC members see the mercury TMDL’s goal of 97 percent reduction of deposition as unattainable as atmospheric deposits cannot be controlled by Oregon. Members also are concerned with:

- Using the pike minnow as a harbinger species, as they are highly sensitive. Members suggest a less sensitive means of measure.
- The narrow focus of sampling. Members wonder if sampling methods will change or stay the same.
- Naturally occurring erosion. It was addressed in the mercury presentation that sediment deposition from natural erosion was accounted for in baseline data.
- Local representatives are concerned with Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) potentially enforcing rules in the future. The local preference would be to continue to work with ODA and the SWCDs.
- DEQ has lumped all nonpoint sources together (e.g., county road erosion, urbanization) without identifying the contribution from each one. This makes it harder for ag to address its issues.
- Limited knowledge or understanding by local residents of the existence and extent of the Agricultural Water Quality Program and Rules, and that SWCDs are available for site visits, technical assistance, and other resources.
- Limitations to education and outreach include landowners who are too busy to see, notice, or respond to announcements of events, and the stigma of federal programs and funding.
- Polk SWCD has been dealing with staffing issues and much of its capacity has gone toward identifying and hiring new employees including its district manager.
- Because of a lack of staff capacity, streamside vegetation assessment has not been analyzed.

### Recommended Modifications and Adaptive Management

- Collect baseline data for shade on all streambanks in the districts to better measure progress after implementation to mitigate temperature TMDL.
- Work in least-impaired areas where methylmercury can be completely eliminated from streams, then compare that to lowland or agricultural areas as a baseline for improvement following implementation.
- Incentives for converting cropland into riparian areas via CREP and enforced/required buffers.
- Most effective strategies to engage landowners: events advertised as “growers’ meetings” to reach a larger audience; cold-calling farmers and landowners; and engaging landowners by talking to them at local restaurants or places of business.
  - DEQ needs to identify the percent reductions needed from each of the nonpoint sources. DEQ may need to survey sediment in streams to determine sources.
  - SWCDs and conservation partners establish a baseline of total suspended solids to compare agricultural progress against.
  - Work with Beaver Partnerships to garner landowner interest in beaver coexistence and include more language about the benefits of beaver to watershed health.
- Suggested changes to the Plan:
  - Add climate change language, including 1) drought impacts on water quality, and 2) the harmful effects of the emerald ash borer on riparian trees.
  - Identify other nonpoint sources of pollution related to TMDL implementation, e.g., county road erosion and urbanization, and indicate that DEQ needs to partition the load allocations appropriately.

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	6	4	11	2	2	6	0	0
Within SIA	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0