

UMATILLA

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: February 21, 2024
LAC Members Present: Tom Straughan (Chair), Chris Williams, Marty King, Karl Jensen, Ray Qin, and Jake Madison
Reporting Timeframe: January 2020 – December 2023

PROGRESS MEASUREMENT

Management Area

Measurable Objective: *Pollution from wastes:* By June 30, 2050, fewer than 5% of livestock operations in the Management Area are likely to pollute surface water.
Current status: ODA will work with the SWCD to complete an inventory of livestock operations that are likely to pollute surface water from bacteria and sediment for the next biennial review meeting. Progress has already been made through the McKay Birch and East Birch SIAs.

Measurable Objective: *Soil Erosion:* By 2030, ODA and the SWCD will develop an assessment method that will establish a baseline and track erosion potential on uplands. Objective will be updated during the next biennial review when the assessment is completed showing baseline data.

Measurable Objective: *Riparian Vegetation:* By June 30, 2050, 90% of perennial streams in agricultural areas will have streamside vegetation that likely provides the full suite of water quality functions the site is capable of (i.e., shade, bank stability, filtration of overland flow).
Current status: ODA will work with the SWCD complete a riparian vegetation assessment of perennial streams to identify whether adequate vegetation is present to prevent and control water pollution, based on the site's ability to grow vegetation (site capability).

Lower Umatilla Basin Groundwater Management Area (LUBGWMA)

Measurable Objective: *Inventory non-permitted livestock operations.* By June 30, 2025, the Umatilla SWCD and Morrow SWCD will complete inventory of large and small livestock operations including acreage, irrigation, and drainage paths within the LUBGWMA.

Current status: The database and data input forms are being developed and the Morrow and Umatilla SWCD will begin the inventory in May 2024.

Measurable Objective: *Inventory crop and sprinkler systems.* By June 30, 2025, the Umatilla SWCD and Morrow SWCD will complete an inventory of crop and sprinkler systems in the LUBGWMA including crop type observed, irrigation method/type, cover crop (if any), and rotation crop (if known).

Current status: The database and data input forms are being developed and the Morrow and Umatilla SWCD will begin the inventory in May 2024.

Strategic Implementation Areas (SIA)

McKay Birch SIA (2017)

ODA Measurable Objective: By February 21, 2022, all 6 tax lots identified as a Potential Violation or Compliance Opportunity will be improved to Restoration Opportunity or Likely in Compliance.

Current status: As of June 26, 2020, all 6 tax lots identified as a Potential Violation or a Compliance Opportunity were improved to Restoration Opportunity or Likely in Compliance. The measurable objective was achieved.

East Birch SIA (2021)

ODA Measurable Objective: By February 21, 2026, all 8 tax lots identified as a Potential Violation or Compliance Opportunity will be improved to Restoration Opportunity or Likely in Compliance.

Current status: Four tax lots identified at Potential Violation or Compliance Opportunity were improved to Restoration Opportunity or Likely in Compliance. One tax lot has a drive-by scheduled for spring of 2024.

Management Area-wide Activities	#	Discussion
Umatilla SWCD		
Events That Actively Engage Landowners	7	Covid-19 restrictions limited active events. Tour for water quality stream erosion projects, providing water quality educational information.
Landowners Participating in Active Events	264	
Landowners Provided Technical Assistance*	352	TA includes information provided or assistance with funding.
Site Visits	131	Assist with current projects and technical services.
Conservation Plans Written	2	Riparian plantings and grazing plans.
Funding Applications Submitted	8	Riparian fencing and bank stabilizations.

Funding Applications Awarded	4	Livestock exclusion grant, grant for the Umatilla County Bank Restoration and River Resiliency Guidebook.
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* Number reported likely double counts some landowners due to tracking methods.

LAC DISCUSSION

Summary of Progress

Outreach and Education:

- Watershed field days (fourth grade through high school). Also, outdoor school with natural resource focus.
- Streambank stabilization presentations to landowners.
- Ag water quality high school presentations.

Grant Writing:

- Worked on grants for livestock water development, fencing off waterways, off-stream water, replanting with native vegetation, and bank stabilization.

Technical Assistance:

- Created a bank restoration guidebook that includes pre-engineered bank restoration options for landowners.
- Site visits for landowners needing help with a water quality or agricultural issue (livestock water development, fencing off waterways, off-stream water, replanting with native vegetation, and bank stabilization).
- Because of the recent flood events, landowners are working with Umatilla SWCD to move to off-stream watering because on stream watering is no longer possible.
- 26 drone flights (Invasive weed scouting, erosion mapping, terrain mapping, etc.).
- SIAs
 - Monitored seven sites on within the McKay Birch SIA from 2019-2022.
 - A sampling plan was developed for temperature monitoring in the East Birch SIA.

Impediments

- Management Area-wide assessments were not completed for this biennial review due to staff time and resources needed for the LUBGWMA.
- OWEB grant requirements have become more stringent over time. Every year it requires more information to make a project competitive. Therefore, the Umatilla SWCD is having to submit proposals several years in a row to get awarded.
- OWEB cultural resource requirement will double the costs of small grant projects.
- Capacity is especially challenging as a one-person district.
- Conservation plans from NRCS don't make it to Umatilla SWCD, conservation data is not being shared due to privacy concerns.
- The LAC voiced concerns over regularly changing assessment methods in the Area Plan.
- 2019 and 2020 flood events impacted landowners who were historically in compliance with the riparian rule.
- Weeds are a growing problem since the 2019 and 2020 floods. Issue with weeds being used as a cover crop, especially on parcels not in active production.
- Stream temperature within Umatilla River continues to exceed standards. The 2019 and 2020 floods likely had an impact on the trend.

Recommended Modifications and Adaptive Management

- Recommendation to add Washington State University as a player within Planned Activities for 2024-2027, they are acting in partnership with Oregon State University in the Umatilla Basin.
- Work with NRCS to see if it's possible to collaborate on management area wide measurable objectives.
- Umatilla SWCD to connect with DEQ on water quality monitoring data to compare pre-flooding and post-flooding data.
- Recommendation for DEQ to consider alternative sites for temperature monitoring in the Umatilla management area.
- Relationship building and outreach is needed for Spanish-speaking landowners in the LUBGWMA, currently there is almost zero connection to these landowners.
- Reinvigoration of Tiichám Conservation District may be the vehicle to work with private landowners within reservation. Recommendation to reach out to the district to see if there is potential for collaboration.

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	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Within SIA	2	3	4	2	1	0	0	0