

Oregon State Technical Committee Minutes
January 30, 2003
Wilsonville, Oregon

Facilitator: Dianne Guidry

Purpose: To update committee members on program changes and receive advice on policy considerations.

Participants:

Bob Graham, **NRCS State Conservationist (co-chair)**; Larry Frey, **FSA Director**; Lois Loop, **FSA**, Bill Braunworth, **OSU Extension**; Jean Wilkinson, **Farm Bureau**; Jeff Rola, **Oregon Association of Resource Conservation and Development Councils**; Sam Asai, **FSA State Committee Member**; Eric Henning, **Pheasants Forever Inc - Region 16**; Ester Lev, **Wetlands Conservancy**; Amy Horstman, **US Fish and Wildlife Service**; Stan Christensen and John McDonald, **Oregon Association of Conservation Districts**; Johnny Sundstrom, **Oregon Association of Conservation Districts**; Pete Gorzalres, **Oregon Tilth**; Larry Ojua, **Oregon Department of Agriculture SWCD**; Tom Paul and Bob Rice, **Oregon Water Resources Department**; Paul Nys, **Oregon Small Woodlands Association**; Ray Abriel, **US Forest Service**; Jim Krahn, **Oregon Dairy Farmers Association**; Steven Zylstra, **US Fish and Wildlife Service**; Ken Bierly, **Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board**; Dale Wilkins, **US Agricultural Research Service**; Mike Barsotti, **Oregon Department of Forestry**; Mike Weinberg, **OR Soil & Water Conservation Commission**; Russ Pinto, **The Nature Conservancy**; Dianne Guidry, Dave Dishman, Bill White, Cec Cullison, and Ian Reid, **NRCS**.

Opening Remarks: Introductions of new employees: **Lois Loop-FSA and Dianne Guidry-NRCS**

Larry Frey-FSA - CRP will have very competitive bidding this time around. DCP signups are in progress and the farmers/ranchers have many decisions to make. Disaster Bill is still in Congress and has a 50/50 chance of passing according to congressional aids. There is approximately 3.1 billion dollars and is directly associated with drought and drought counties for 2001 and 2002. Most of central and eastern Oregon is designated.

Bob Graham-NRCS – Thanked the Oregon Nurserymen for use of their facilities. Lots of issues out on the Farm Bill. Snow pack is an interesting item; it is decreasing and the Klamath has lost 39% of its snow pack since January 1. Bottom line is that we need to get soil moisture up. This summer could prove to be a tough one for landowners who want to irrigate.

Congress is working through the appropriation process. No contracts can be signed until the rules are finalized. Lots of interest and demand for the different

programs. A question for us in the near future will be how to get EQIP to become accessible to those that have not used in the past.

Several of the individuals present today are participating in the Local Work Groups. Working through the process and partnership is important in getting us to a healthy watershed. Craig Schellsmidt, OACD, has done 35 free workshops around Oregon and has worked with many agencies. 5,400 landowners have participated and the feedback indicates that the work that is being done is really making a difference. These workshops continue to be in high demand. We could ask Craig to come into a future meeting and present a demonstration on his sessions. Note that the sessions are free to the public.

John McDonald - A three page list of the local people involved in getting the Small Acreage Workshop Program off the ground has been compiled. Partnership is fantastic.

Jeff Rola – There is a 6-week window in order to get the workshops off the ground. The workshops are changed to target the audience for that area. We want to get the information out in a timely fashion. Calls into the field office have tripled in the past several months. Takes the partnership to get the meetings off the ground.

Dianne Guidry – Minutes from the last meeting were reviewed and accepted.

Dave Dishman – Technical Service Provider (TSP) Update

The TSP process enables 2002 Farm Bill program participants to select NRCS or a certified technical service provider for technical assistance. Alternative application – developing MOUs to actually carry out a certification program. Help get people the training they need to do the job. A sign-up sheet was routed for members interested in being involved in this process.

About 20 Oregon practices that are the most used have been identified.

- *Who is going to determine what vendor does the work?* Once the conservation plan and contract are developed, there would be a list of scheduled practices. It is going to be up to the landowner to do the practices. Landowners will have a list of TSP that they can go to and get the services that are needed; they will get to choose who will do the services.
- *What about the charges from the vendors?* Looking at developing hold down rates and actual cost not to exceed a particular rate.

Ultimate certification will come from the State Conservationist. MOU would be of good value to have. NRCS needs to have rigorous standards in place. We will need to wait until the rules are out before we progress too far.

Jim Kraun - Oregon Dairy Farmers Association – This process is unique. Many of the districts write good plans, but there are a few that are not good at that process. Private sector has not stepped up because there is not any money in it. Make sure that the plan that is written is good and can be used.

Johnny Sundstrom - OACD – Will not take very long for the providers to find out where the gravy is. Is there some way to encourage people to take on the entire suite of practices instead of picking and choosing?

Larry Ojua- ODA– This is an opportunity to work with the districts and work out an organizational structure.

Technology – Ian Reid Customer Service Toolkit.

A PowerPoint demonstration on the Toolkit and Network was given to the members present. NRCS Oregon completed implementation of the Customer Service Toolkit in 2002. It is now being used in all USDA Service Centers throughout the state.

Toolkit helps natural resource planners provide information to the public, resulting in conservation of the land. The tools incorporate commercial software products from Microsoft and Environmental Systems Research Inc. that let conservationists provide professional-looking natural resource information products. It also provides tools for mapping and analyzing natural resource information. Maps are a traditional method of communicating with customers, and Toolkit makes map development for customers easy. This system can also help keep track of all the technical notes and technical assistance. Land units were developed by FSA for the toolkit. This product has been received very well in the field. Data is only county by county and not linked together from center to center.

Farm & Ranch Land Protection Ad Hoc Subcommittee – Conservation Easements to protect agriculture lands – Update and Discussion – Bill White

Nearly a year ago an ad hoc subcommittee of OTAC initiated an assessment of the use of the former Farmland Protection Program (FPP, now the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP)) to protect Oregon agricultural lands. The presentation was an update on committee activities and related events. Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program name distinguishes it from the former Farmland Protection Program and better describes the land it seeks to protect. FRPP fact sheets and rules posted at www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/farmbill/2002

Current status of FRPP in Oregon

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Committee Members are John McDonald, OACD Larry Ojua, ODA Jim Johnson, ODA Ron Eber, ODLCD	<p>Don Stuart, AFLT Bill White, NRCS Chad McGrath, NRCS</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>Sub-Committee Update:</u>• Subcommittee of OTAC has met several times in the past 6 months.• Committee members have been working to:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create tools and options for landowners• Inform partners and industry in Oregon to build awareness• Explore other state's FRPP programs• Talk with NGOs, trusts, and other potential holders of easements• Explore potential sources for partners & funding for the required match under FRPP.• In November of 2002 an FRPP proposal submitted by OR NRCS for \$1.5 million –<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide protection to 12,500 acres of rangeland of which 5000 acres is prime farmland and 500 acres of cultural resource sites.• Addresses retention of working ranches being subdivided into non-economic ranch units.• Requesting entities: Trust for Public Lands & Oregon Rangeland Trust with the support of the Oregon Cattlemen Assoc.• <u>Next steps for a Statewide program:</u><ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify state priorities, needs & opportunities• Develop criteria for the program in Oregon• Certain High Value Soils• Areas with development pressure• Areas not protected under current land use law• Identify creative ways to apply FRPP in Oregon, e.g., in low-density areas subject to recreational subdivisions, wildlife habitat, etc.• Build awareness of program availability	

Ken Bierly-OWEB – Forest Legacy Program may be a useful tool to see what land would be eligible.

Ray Abriel-US Forest Service – Support for what Ken said about the Forest Legacy Program. Tremendous opportunity to consider and overlap both programs. Statewide assessment – lots of work went into that project. Did prioritize the different locations. Contact Jim Cathcart at 503 945 7380 for more information. Right now the program is on hold. The Forest Service has new leadership under the direction of: Linda Goodman, Regional Forester; Jim Golden, Deputy Regional Forester, and Mike Ash, Deputy Regional Forester.

Mike Barsotti-OR Department of Forestry – Easements have a tremendous impact on the neighbors too. An example is the oak woodlands in Lane County. Need discussion and strategy.

Jean Wilkinson-OR Farm Bureau – I have my personal views and Farm Bureau views. People would be able to support the program with some nudging with more information. The garden variety of people is really skeptical. I view this program as different. People have a tug between landowner rights and do what they want versus the protecting the agricultural community in a global perspective. Could cause long-term problems with the infrastructure. It is hard to interface with too many different views.

Russ Pinto-The Nature Conservancy – From the standpoint of the conservancy, one fear is the different concepts around the conservation easements. The rule will be critical. Dollar amount of the easement will drive the interest. You have several neighbor landowners pool together and all get the easements to save their area from sub-development. Rules will be critical. NRCS has not been in land acquisition for that long. This is going to be a challenge.

Jim Johnson-ODA– This is going to be a tremendous tool. See a potential here in Oregon to use strategically. Do not talk about the environmental side of it. It is here to protect agricultural lands.

Russ Pinto-The Nature Conservancy – Clackamas County is where I live. There are urban growth boundaries that keep changing. Can a farm that is surrounded by urban homes be a productive working farm?

Johnny Sundstrom-OACD – The membership of SWCD had given us direction that would want to hold easements authority as districts. Issue here is local character and knowledge and expertise about the local situation.

Issue that some people feel less than comfortable the further away the entity is (government or national organizations). There is an even "kitchen table conversation" by parents to protect their lands even with in their family. Do not know which conservation districts would be able to handle. Need your help and work together to keep working lands where they are. Recommends asking the local people for support in advance.

The members discussed water rights and easements. Agriculture conservation easement and water right would stay with easement. SWCD is the owner of conservation easements. Easement would have to be enforced and if not enforced would fall back to NRCS. There are no requirements that the easement would have to cover the entire parcel of land. The conservation easements have been a recent topic in the Oregon Legislature. SWCDs have the ability to hold easements. Hoping that the next legislature will support SWCDs request.

Forest Land Enhancement Program (FLEP)– FLEP replaces two existing cost share programs and is a partnership between state agencies. Different as for

education, technical assistance and financial assistance program. State has to make the mix between the three. Need to look at what is already being developed. Challenging us to find out what is out there. Meet objectives of the landowner and the program. Like to renew and reiterate the strategy to have our coordinating committee as a subcommittee of this committee. Want to have a common strategy for the state and this is important for the overall coordination. Our group expects to have the program available in March after the draft policy. Reinforce and strengthen and bring what the forestland is thinking back to this group. How do we marry with NRCS and work with the TSP – Different subcommittee working on various issues.

Recommendation from Mike Barsotti – Proposed a Subcommittee under the OTAC, which will be called Oregon Forestland Coordinating Group and will be chaired by the department.

OTAC Advice – No objections to create an Official Subcommittee of OTAC.

Bob Graham, STC, NRCS – Concurred with the advice and Mike's recommendation will be enacted.

Comments Session:

Amy Horstman USFWS – The Draft Bull Trout comment period is open for public comment until February 27th. Critical habitat has been extended another 30 days. Still in need of local comments.

Pete Gonzalves, Executive Director– Oregon Tilth – Oregon Tilth is a private non-profit research and education organization certifying organic farmers, processors, retailers and handlers throughout Oregon, the United States and internationally. Since 1974 Oregon Tilth has brought together individuals working to support and promote biologically sound and socially equitable agriculture. Our mission is to support organic and sustainable food production practices. The world leader in organic certification of food providers from soil to store, and is noted for the integrity of the Oregon Tilth Certified Organic label (OTCO). We have an active research and education program promoting on-farm and sustainable agriculture research, safety, cooperative development, and farmer breeding programs. OT publishes a regional newsletter called "[In Good Tilth](#)", and covers issues on sustainable and organic agriculture.

Ken Bierly-OWEB – Thanked Danny Burgett for providing the allocation of funds information for each basin. This report provides information as to where the money went the past few years and gives information on what activities and efforts are going on for different federal programs. The information provided really helped make the publication.

Bill White – Farm Bill Update: This year EQIP – working to establish local work groups (LWG). Districts in most locations have convened LWG meetings at the county level. Now each county will get an EQIP allocation and address local

natural resource priorities consistent with the national program rules. Oregon NRCS has created a screening and ranking process.

The SWCD business plans are an important step to identify local natural resource priorities. EQIP application ranking cutoff dates have been set but with no rules they will be extending the dates.

The EQIP proposed rules came out today. When they are posted on the Federal Register all are encouraged to review them and provide your comments. The Federal Register Notice was posted on 2/10/03 and will be open for comment until 3/12/03 (the next 30 days). Before any new EQIP contracts can be signed the rules must be finalized, the FY03 appropriation passed, and funds apportioned to the states

Other programs WRP, CRP, CSP and WHIP do not have any FY03 funding. Still waiting. CSP – moving ahead assuming it will be funded, nationally setting up proposed rules and guidelines. As to the magnitude, not clarified. WHIP – Todd Peplin is on detail working on state plan and getting draft together and out for comment.

Open Comment Session:

Sam Asai-FSA – Congress is waiting to make appropriation, slowly grinding, and it is good to see rules are starting to come down. As a representative for FSA we will be prepared to roll once the rules are set. Several from FSA are going back to DC in March to National Headquarters for national training.

Lois Loop-FSA – CRP and general signup - The difference with this one is that Oregon has been chosen to tap some of its counties and they will be using the GIS system, which is completely different, this time around. FSA will be doing ranking for soils off the web site. Eight counties will do this process using GIS. March will be national training and will provide statewide training sometime after the national training. Looking forward to streamlining this concept.

Ray Abriel - Forest Service – New leadership in Forest Service is Lynn Goodsmith who is the regional forester. In addition we have two vacancies. Jim Goldwin will fill the Cooperator position and the Deputy for Administration is still open.

Dale Wilkins-US Agriculture Research – Involved with the local working group and developing prioritization and screening process. Most of the people do not look forward to more meetings, but have been excited about having input on the local basis and having some control of the watershed and basin. Looking forward to improvements.

Pete Gonzalves -Oregon Tilth – Responses are needed on the Draft Technical Service Provider policy. Noted that the prevention for conflict of interest is absent from the report and will submit comments from Forest Service.

Johnny Sundstrom - OACD – National Association Conservation District meetings are in a few weeks. OMB fight with what to do with TA dollars. Our feeling is that TA has to come out of program dollars. NACD feels strongly and wants to sue OMB and will be addressed at national level. Would like to see improvement made in the whole Oregon Plan delivery system. One improvement would be a clear definition of division of labor and the parties involved. Incentives for cooperation between districts and councils of those involved. Homeland security is dependent on taking care of land and water.

Stan Christensen-OACD – The basin meeting is taking place in a few days and will have a full report as to what happened at the next meeting.

Larry Ojua-ODA - New director of ODA is Katy Coba, who will start February 3rd. Comments are that she is well respected in the industry, experienced with gardening division, and governor's office. This is my first meeting with OTAC and I appreciate being here and getting to know everyone.

Larry Frey-FSA – One comment on technical note and compliance issue is who will make sure everything is done correctly with vendors? How will the compliance part of this work? Will another vendor be able to do that?

Dave Dishman-NRCS – Not a lot of limits for the TSP. Might look into having them do some compliance. We are also going to draft up Oregon supplements to the TSP rules.

Larry Frey-FSA – Good to see the rain and is well needed. Raining over in Pendleton area and hope that the moisture in ground will help the fall seeding this year.

Bob Graham-NRCS – Next meeting March 31st at OSU North Willamette Research and Extension Center in Aurora

Proposed Future Topics:

- EQIP information out
- F&WL – programmatic consultation
- Legislative Update
- Rules
- Dairy
- Craig Schellschmidt – Workshops
- Next CRP Rules
- TSP Status

Meeting adjourned at 3:45pm