



## Working with Oregon's Small Farms

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## How to define a "small farm"?

### Small Farms defined by USDA

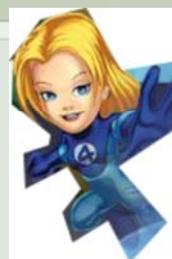
- Economic Research Service has frequently used \$50,000 in agricultural sales as the delineation between large and small farms. "Noncommercial" or small farms had sales less than \$50,000, while "commercial" or large farms had sales of \$50,000 or more.
- The National Commission on Small Farms has used a much higher cutoff in its definition of small farms: farms with sales less than \$250,000. The Commission wanted to include more farm families of relatively modest means.
- Most farm businesses are small businesses. The Small Business Administration (SBA) generally classifies farms as small if they have sales less than \$500,000. By SBA standards, about 97 percent of U.S. family farms are small.

## OSU Extension Small Farm Program

- Farmers self select
- Continuum
  - Commercial small farms
  - Small acreage farms (lifestyle farms)
- Motivation differences
- Often there is overlap, as part-time farmers

## Super Powers Required

- foresee the future
- determine a farming enterprise that will be very lucrative
- requiring little time, infrastructure and investment
- On 7.9 acres



## Number of Commercial Small Farms

Census of Agriculture	2007
Total farms in Oregon	38,553
1 to 9 acres	9,546
10 to 49 acres	14,142
% of farms less than 50 acres	61%

## Commercial Small Farms

- Commercial small farms tend to:
  - Grow specialty crops and livestock
  - Have alternative production systems
  - Be diversified
  - Utilize direct marketing strategies
- 2007 Oregon census shows that
  - Organic sale increased by 900%
  - Farm direct sales increased by 250%

## Historically...

- They haven't found Government programs accessible or applicable to them.
  - Incentive payments
  - Farm loan and cost-share programs
  - Price support program
- They tend to be innovative, go against the norm and think outside the box.













## Small Acreage Farms

- Non-commercial
  - But always looking for opportunities
- Livestock production including
  - Horses
  - Alpacas & Llamas
- Tend to have marginal land with potential resource concerns
- Their bit of Heaven!

## New to the Land

- Need information and technical assistance to help them make wise management choices for production and natural resources
- Many are not aware of government initiatives to improve water quality and the impacts it may have on their operations











## Willing and wanting to learn

- Interested in new and innovative educational programs
- Registration fees & Travel - OK
- Motivation
  - Commercial Small Farms
    - Learn from peers/farmers, specific topics
  - Small Acreage Farms
    - Extension & partners, resources and general concepts







## Growing Farms

- Beginning farmer program
- Whole farm planning
  - Strategic planning and goal setting
  - Farm operations
  - Marketing
  - Farm finances and recording keeping
  - Liability management
- Experienced farmer mentors

## Small Acreage Farms

- Over 12,000 parcels in Benton, Lane and Linn counties
  - with dwelling
  - EFU or Rural Residential zoning
  - > 2 acres
  - < 50 acres

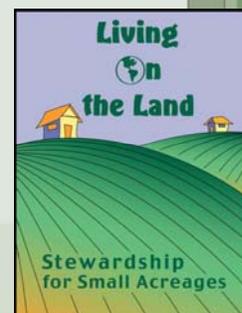


## Addressing the Issues

- The problem:
  - Mismatched horse and livestock pastures
  - Weed infestations
  - Accumulation of manure
  - Soil erosion and runoff
  - Groundwater and surface water quality concerns --including septic systems
- First step in the solution:  
\*\*Education\*\*

## Developed Local Program

- Adapted existing curriculum
- Focused on landowners in specific watersheds
- Rivers were listed on Oregon's 303 (d) list of impaired and threatened waterbodies
- Partnered with logical organizations



## 1<sup>st</sup> Objective

- Enhance awareness and train small acreage landowners about land management practices to benefit water quality in six watersheds

253 landowners



## Four In-Class Workshops



## One Field Tour



## 2<sup>nd</sup> Objective

- Educate landowners to be able to identify and assess potential natural resource concerns on their properties



### 3<sup>rd</sup> Objective

- Landowners will be enabled to design and implement conservation land management to help improve water quality and natural resources



### Evaluation

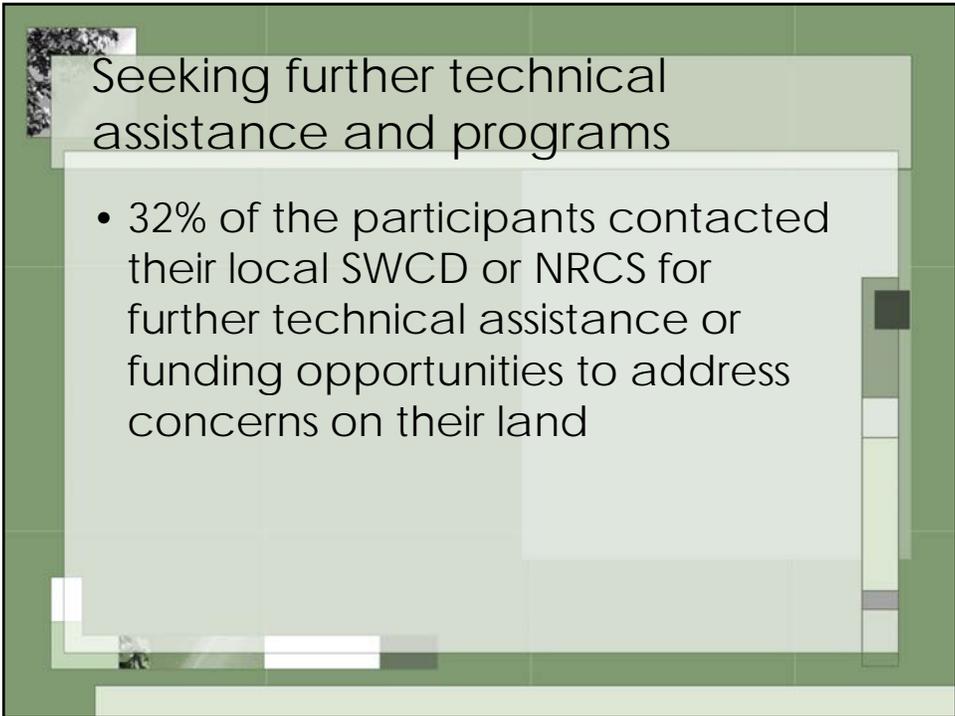
- Institutional Review Board approved study
- Invited participants to complete a questionnaire 7 to 11 months after the workshop series
- 69% response rate





## Implementation

- 91% of the landowners implemented at least 1 new management practice on their farm as a result of the workshop series.
- 61% implemented 3 or more new practices within 11 months of completing the workshop series.
- 85% of the landowners still plan to implement one or more additional practices.
- 89% of the participants told friends and neighbors about practices they learned during the workshop series.



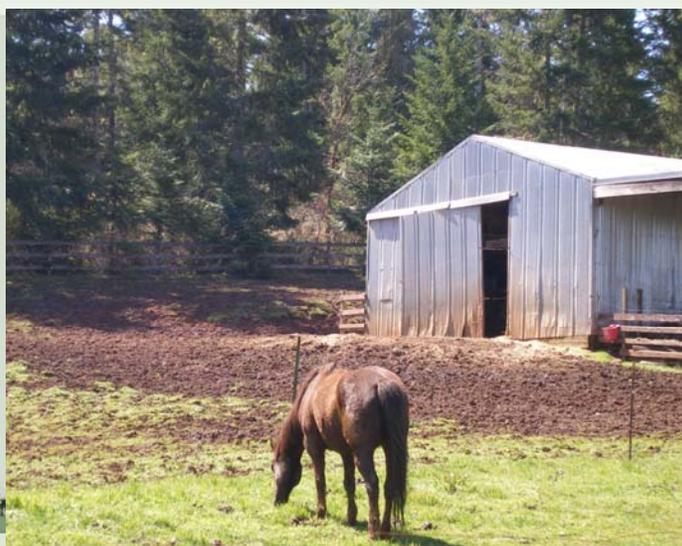
## Seeking further technical assistance and programs

- 32% of the participants contacted their local SWCD or NRCS for further technical assistance or funding opportunities to address concerns on their land

## Lessons Learned

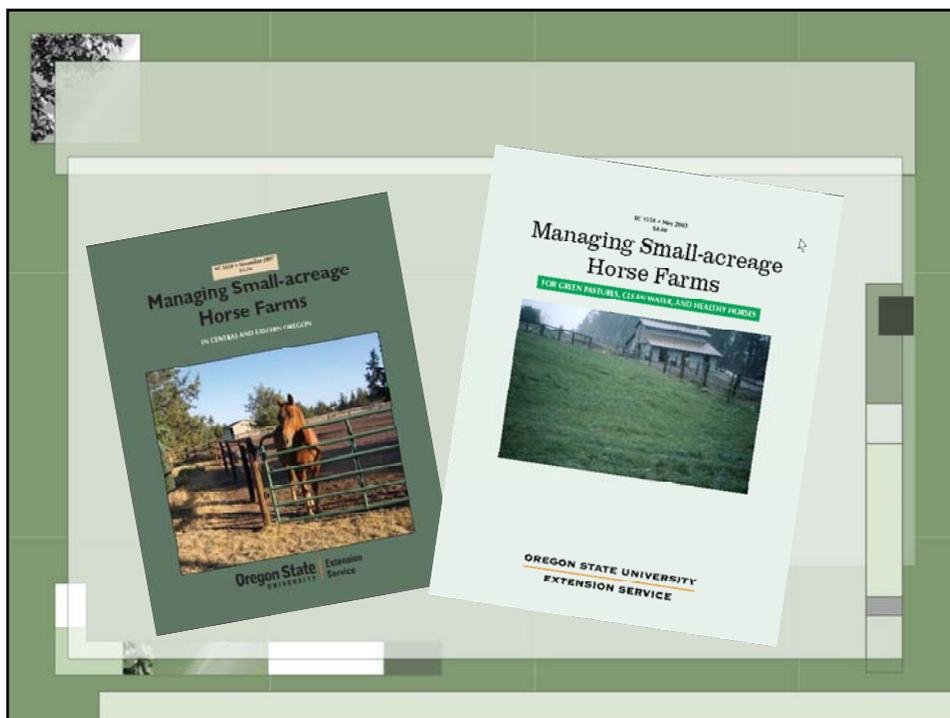
- Small acreage landowners are eager to learn, attend programs and implement practices
- Many motivations for attending  
*"My husband always questioned why I wanted to do certain practices on the farm. NOW HE UNDERSTANDS!"*

## Horses & Mud



## Educational Program

- Designed to introduce horse owners to management practices to reduce runoff from their farms
- 1998, 2000 and 2007
- Primary goal = to educate horse owners regarding potential impacts horses have on the environment and how to mitigate these impacts through implementing sound management practices





## Full-Color Publications

- High and low rainfall regions
- In-depth information about
  - manure management
  - reducing and composting stall waste
  - mud management and options for creating all-weather paddocks,
  - pasture management
  - streamside buffers, filter strips
  - natural ways to control mud, dust and bugs.



## Program Impacts

- 90 % of participants implemented at least 1 or more management practice on their property as a result of the workshop.
- 38 % of the participants implemented 4 or more practices.
- 72 % of the participants still plan to implement practices.
- Also of interest, 66 % of the participants indicated that “protecting the environment” was one of their primary motivations to complete management practices.



## Oregon's Small Farms

- Contribute significantly to Oregon agriculture and landscape
- Creating awareness of local food in the market place
- Eager to learn new info and skills
- Willing to change and adapt
- Fun to work with!