

**Meeting Minutes**  
**OREGON TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING**  
**May 21, 2002**  
**Aurora, Oregon**

**Purpose:** To update Committee members on program changes and receive advice on policy considerations:

**Participants:**

Bob Graham, NRCS State Conservationist; Larry Frey, FSA State Director; Bill Braunworth, OSU Extension; Kate Vandemoer, National Marine Fisheries Service; Ray Abriel, US Forest Service; Roger Hamilton, Darrel Kenops, Governor's Office; Jean Wilkinson, Farm Bureau; Jeff Rola, Oregon Association of Resource Conservation and Development Councils; Jack Hay, Sam Asai, Bob Vander Zanden, FSA State Committee Member; Eric Henning, Pheasants Forever; Timmie Mandish, US Fish and Wildlife Service; John Williams, Agricultural Research Service; Tammy Dennee, Oregon Wheat Growers League; Stan Christensen, Mike Barlow, John McDonald and Johnny Sundstrom, Oregon Association of Conservation Districts; Glen Stonebrink, Oregon Cattleman's Association; Jim Maur; John Poppino, Oregon Small Woodland Association; F.X. Rosica, American Farmland Trust; Dan Edwards, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife; Tom Paul, Oregon Water Resources Department; Mark Stern, Russ Pinto, The Nature Conservancy; Bruce Taylor, Wetland Joint Ventures; Steve Donovan, Ducks Unlimited; Fred Ringer, Farm Service Agency; Dalton Straus, FSA State Committee; Ray Jaindl, Oregon Department of Agriculture; Gayle Norman, Danny Burgett, Bill White, Dave Dishman, Leo Preston, Jim Wright and Russ Hatz, NRCS.

**Welcome and Opening Remarks** – Bob Graham and Larry Frey—Co-Chairs Introductions and Welcome. The purpose of the Technical Committee is to provide advice to the NRCS State Conservationist on technical and policy issues related to implementation of Farm Bill programs. Many decisions need to be made in order to implement the new conservation provisions of the Farm Bill. In Oregon, NRCS and FSA co-chair for the State Technical Committee. The committee is called the Oregon Technical Advisory Committee (OTAC). By Farm Bill statute it is the State Technical Committee, so if you see either reference, it is all the same committee.

**Overview of The Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (Conservation Provisions)**

Handout of programs provided and reviewed in detail.

**Environmental Quality Incentives Program Changes – Bill White**

- Conservation plan required for obligation of EQIP program dollars.
- Signed conservation plan reflects optimized conservation benefits.
- Any one can apply for EQIP funding regardless of having a conservation plan but applicant receives higher ranking if has a conservation plan or committing to have a conservation plan.

- Consider sliding scale of cost share rates based on different levels of implementation. Not bid down buy down. Person willing to put more conservation down will get more cost share. Not money driven, practice driven.

Discussion Summary: Committee members discussed the need for a conservation plan requirement. Landowners need options but care needs to be taken to avoid excluding individuals needing technical and financial assistance.

Advice to State Conservationist and State Director:

General consensus of the attendees is that NRCS needs to use a balanced approach by encouraging conservation plans, but not exclude landowners needing assistance in addressing specific resource problems.

**Effective Investment of Oregon Farm Bill Funding--Discussion**

- OTAC provides advice for Farm Bill program priorities.
- Retain priority areas and one statewide concern, i.e., watershed health
- Allocation process will consider each Basin's funding request with respect to:
  - Built from OACD / SWCD business plans and Basin Work Group priorities.
  - NRCS and SWCD workloads and technical resources.
  - Long-term resource and conservation needs in the Basin.
  - Funding sources:
    - EQIP, WHIP and other Farm Bill funding.
    - Leveraging with non-NRCS funds and assistance.
  - Land Use concerns in Basin
  - "Ready, willing and able – ness" of the people in the basin to utilize the funds.
  - NRCS and the Basin Work Group implement the funding through consideration plans with eligible applicants.

The State Conservationist would like advice on where funds should be allocated. The group recommended that no less than 25 percent of the funding is used on "emphasis watershed needs" and that at least 25 percent are used outside emphasis watersheds.

**Homework:** Think about emphasis areas in Oregon or what that name might be. (Resource concerns and resource concern areas) As we receive more guidance, we will have further discussion.

**Delegation of selected EQIP program responsibilities--Discussion**

- OTAC provides advice for Farm Bill program priorities for conservation on private lands in Oregon.
- Programmatic implementation decisions delegated to the Basin Work Group and the designated conservationist.
- NRCS state conservationist will ensure programmatic consistency within Oregon and with neighboring states.

**Eligibility of Large Confined Livestock Operations—Bill White**

- State policy will be less restrictive.

- During the EQIP transition, OTAC provides advice in regard to the eligible size of confined livestock operations and the use (if needed) for waiver.
- Local determination shall consider
  - Availability of EQIP funds and of technical assistance
  - Competing workload
  - Basin priorities and resource concerns
  - Applicant's ability to pay, and
  - Roles of third-party vendors.
- Basin work group shall select practices to be funded, cost lists, cost share rates, incentive payments and ranking criteria to focus on the targeted size and type of confined livestock operations.
- Promote the use of third-party vendors where appropriate.

Advice to the State Conservationist and State Director: During the EQIP transition, Oregon Technical Committee advises that we hold to 1000 animal units, except request for waivers where appropriate. NRCS State Conservationist will approve or reject the waiver.

Third Party Vendor Discussion:

A member expressed concern with third party vendors and how payment would be made for their services. A committee member felt the role should be very specific. Ducks Unlimited is currently working with NRCS on wetland (WRP) projects. Program has been really successful but in essence been working as a third party vendor. Making sure that we are selling the right conservation message.

**Status Reviews for Active USDA Programs Contracts--Discussion**

- Status review annually during implementation of contracted items.
- Self-certification with a five percent random on-site review with the producer.
- NRCS shall develop a self-certification process and form for the producer - electronically available and returned to respective service center.
- Additional status reviews as necessary to ensure accountability for cost share funding.
- Active implementation of spot checks and quality assurance reviews.

**Environmental Quality Incentives Program FY02 and FY03 Transition Procedure/Process Policy--Discussion**

- Use the current FY02 EQIP signups.
- Schedule a new EQIP signup in June (if necessary).
- Continue with current priority areas through FY 02.
- Rank the new and unfunded applications using applications based on optimized conservation benefits as a cost-effective use of conservation practices and addressing conservation priorities.
- Use revised contract lengths.
- Eliminate bid-down option.
- Utilize the higher contract funding limits of the 2002 Farm Bill.

- Allow 90 percent cost share under national guidelines until state guidance is developed.
- Allow expenditure of EQIP funds in first year of contact.
- Continue 1,000-head cap on large confined livestock operations through FY 2002 until we receive national guidance.
- Allow incentive payments for CNMP (determine at the Basin Work Group level).
- Require CNMP for contracts paying for animal waste manure and system.
- Initiate policy development based fully on the 2002 Farm Bill EQIP rules for the FY03 and future years when that policy is released.

NRCS will be working on the development of FY03 to get program in line with rules. First priority is taking the backlog of applications to see if we could get those funded.

Critical issue—funds must be obligated before September 30, 2002 or they will be lost to Oregon landowners.

### **Structure for the delivery of Farm Bill Programs--Discussion**

**Action:** This item needs discussion in a subcommittee setting for presentation at a future committee meeting. The following individuals will be on the working Group: Ray Abriel, Johnny Sundstrom, Stan Christensen, John McDonald, and Rich Vigil as the team leader.

### **Next Meetings:**

June 18, 2002 - Canby Grove Conference Center, Canby, Oregon

The following are the dates for the next set of meetings:

July 23

August 20

September 24

October 22

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

- Address off-stream water storage
- Also, encourage funding local business plan priorities
- Work with OWEB to identify what project are best funded where
- Concerned that Oregon will fall behind in funding
- Liked issue paper format
- Link with /Extension Service on 3<sup>rd</sup> party certification
- Look at economic and environmental impact (cattle)
- Identify natural resource problem
- Use OTAC members to get word out to Oregon landowners
- Need state strategy and locally led tactical delivery
- Need to do planning (missionary work) ahead of time
- Evaluation of on-the-ground work needed
- Use elected officials to get feedback
- Focus on conservation

- Market based conservation
- Dollars needed for small acreage landowners for on-ground improvements
- Streamline system that the farmers
  - trust
  - understand
- Think outside the box
  - Simple process
  - Fair process
  - Timely process
- Conservation outside of the Farm Bill Programs
- Local success

**Closing Comments:**

Larry Frey – FSA’s role is a lot smaller than NRCS. How do we get the word out? It would probably be through our state committee and county committee. SWCDs need to use the state and county committees. We see all the farmers at least once a year if not more. We are working with Bill White to establish statewide meetings. Getting the farmers involved in night meetings when they aren't farming.

Bob Graham – Thanks to the committee and all the good work. Farm Bill funding is not just to NRCS but to everyone in Oregon who wants increased conservation efforts. Thanks to everyone here for the input and ideas. This is a valuable group and all of us are working together. Also thanks to Larry for bringing the state committee to the table.