



Siuslaw (West Lane County) Local Work Group Meeting Notes

1/10/2024 10-11:30 am at Siuslaw Watershed Council office in Mapleton

Meeting Recording: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T08s00Gwn_0

Welcome, Agenda Overview & Why We're Here

- There were 11 participants in attendance in person and 8 online via Zoom, including local landowners and representatives from the Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians, Siuslaw SWCD staff and board, Siuslaw Watershed Council, Oregon Dept. of Environmental Quality, Umpqua SWCD, and NRCS.
- **Meeting Purpose:** Provide a forum for NRCS to gather input and work collaboratively with our producers and partners to develop a plan that strategically utilizes limited resources for the most benefit.
- **Objectives:** Update NRCS's Central Coast Long Range Plan to direct conservation assistance efforts over the next five years.
- Importance/purpose of Local Work Groups: Sharing information, Listening – Gathering input for the future, and Connecting – Working together

Update on Current NRCS Programs in West Lane County – Annie Marion, District Conservationist

- Farm Bill Programs Overview – EQIP, EQIP-CIC, CSP, CREP (FSA Program), ACEP, WRE, HFRP, RCPP (Partnerships), CIG (Grants)
- [Environmental Quality Incentives Program \(EQIP\)](#)
 - Conservation Implementation Strategies (CIS) – In fiscal year 2023, there were 5 locally directed focus areas for EQIP funding pools in the Waldport service area.
 - **Upper Yaquina Water Quality** (Lincoln County) – 2023-2026, prioritizing water quality—temperature and sediment/nutrients/pathogens in surface waters
 - **Westside Wildfire Recovery** (2020 Labor Day Fires) – 2021-2023, includes wildfire recovery for Echo Mountain Complex near Otis
 - 1 FY23 contract, \$366,098 (funded through IRA)—99 ac, hazard tree removal, woody residue treatment, site prep, & tree planting
 - **Siuslaw Floodplain Reconnection** (West Lane and Douglas County) – 2023-2027 strategy with focus area in priority sub-watersheds in the Siuslaw and Coastal Lakes basins. The priority resource concerns are aquatic habitat, water quality (sediment), and plant structure & composition.
 - 1 FY23 contract, \$371,885
 - 18 ac wetland restoration, 44 ac riparian buffer, 14 ac wildlife habitat planting
 - **Forest Management Planning** (western Oregon) –2022-2026 strategy that helps landowners hire a Technical Service Provider to develop a Forest Management Plan (FMP) for their property. Priorities are forest structure & composition, wildfire hazard, and terrestrial wildlife habitat.
 - 2 FY22 contracts (1 Lincoln, 1 Lane)
 - 4 FY23 contracts (1 Lincoln, 3 Lane)

- \$12,552 total, 301 ac FMP & Practice Design
 - 5 applications for FY24
 - **Forest Resistance & Resilience** (Lincoln, Lane, Benton & Linn Counties) – 2019-2024 strategy prioritizing forest structure & composition, wildfire hazard, and wildlife habitat to increase forest stand diversity (species & age classes) and promote healthy forests resilient to pest/disease outbreaks, drought, & wildfires.
 - 2 FY19 contracts, 1 FY21 contract, & 2 FY22 contracts
 - No FY23 contracts
 - 7 applications for FY24
 - [High Tunnel Initiative](#)
 - 4 FY23 contracts (Lincoln), \$40,000 total
 - 4 FY24 applications (3 Lincoln, 1 Lane)
 - [Organic Initiative](#)
 - No FY23 contracts
 - 1 FY24 application (Lincoln)
 - [Organic Transition Initiative](#)
 - 1 FY23 contract (Lane) - \$44,163 on 22 ac cropland/pasture
- [EQIP-Conservation Implementation Contract \(EQIP-CIC\)](#)
 - New program in 2021 that acts as stepping-stone between EQIP and CSP and includes annual management payments plus associated practices. CCUW-SW Basin focus is on pasture and nutrient management.
 - 2 FY21 contracts (Lincoln)
 - 1 FY23 contract (Lane) - \$12,786 on 7 ac of pasture planting, weed management, prescribed grazing, and riparian fencing
- [Conservation Stewardship Program \(CSP\)](#)
 - Participants earn payments to maintain existing conservation systems and adopt additional enhancements to address priority resource concerns over 5-year contract.
 - 1 FY20, 2 FY22 contracts (Lane)
 - 1 new FY23 contract (Lincoln) – Forestry – 366 ac, \$58,013
- [Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program \(CREP\)](#)
 - Part of the Conservation Reserve Program run by the Farm Service Agency (FSA) – provides annual rental payments to take marginal pastureland out of production to restore degraded riparian zones and wetlands through 10- or 15-year contracts.
 - 6 active contracts in Lincoln County, 176 ac
 - 6 active contracts in west Lane County, ~24 ac
- [Agricultural Conservation Easement Program – Wetland Reserve Easements \(WRE\) & Healthy Forests Reserve Program \(HFRP\)](#)
 - Protect, restore, and enhance wetlands and forests through conservation easements.
 - WRP: 2 easements (5 landowners) in west Lane County, 385 ac permanent easements on tidal wetlands
 - New outreach flier: “Landowners Can Get Paid to Help Restore and Protect Oregon Tidal Wetlands” (attached)
 - HFRP: 4 contracts in west Lane County, 687 ac permanent easements
- New in FY23 – Inflation Reduction Act (IRA): focus on [Climate-Smart Agriculture and Forestry Mitigation Activities](#)
 - \$19.5 billion nation-wide over 5 years to EQIP, CSP, ACEP & RCPP
 - For FY23, Oregon has \$2 million in EQIP

Siuslaw Soil & Water Conservation District Program Updates – Seth Mead, Watershed Conservationist, Contact info: siuswcd@gmail.com, <https://siuswcd.com/>

- Seth provided updates on the District’s main programs: watershed restoration, agricultural water quality, education & outreach, and invasive weed control.
 - Watershed restoration program – stronghold approach, very active program
 - Bessey’s NF Siuslaw & McCloud Creek Floodplain Restoration (2019-2021)
 - Funding/collaboration from many SCP partners
 - Created ~10.36 ac of inset floodplain along 0.42 stream miles; placed 65 key pieces of LWD, planted 17 ac native veg, seeded 16 ac of disturbed ground, built 5,000 ft of exclusion fence
 - Ag water quality program – planting and fencing riparian areas
 - The ODA Focus Areas are Fiddle Creek and Maple Creek (Siltcoos Lake drainage).
 - Bear Creek Habitat Enhancement Phases I-III (2017-2024)
 - Large wood placement, fencing (livestock and wildlife exclosures), planting
 - Grant Creek Stream & Wetland Restoration
 - LWD placement, native tree/shrub planting, culvert replacement with bridge to improve aquatic organism passage
 - Beavers moved in and started flooding county road – had to install two “beaver deceiver” pond levelers (worked w/ Jacob Shockey, Beaver State Wildlife Solutions)
 - Education & outreach program – getting kids outside and excited about the watershed
 - Noxious weed control program – integrated approach focusing on target species
 - ❖ Question regarding coastal native seed availability and success of reed canary grass control
 - Seth has used Willamette Valley seed on his projects
 - Annie noted the [Coastal Native Seed Partnership](#) efforts to get more coastal genetics available, but limited quantities/species available so far
 - RCG control is good where it’s flooded; it responds well to integrated approach of spraying and mechanical treatment, but more challenging in drinking watersheds where Seth doesn’t spray. Eventually the trees grow up and shade it out.

Other USDA Programs

- [Farm Service Agency](#) – emergency/disaster relief programs, crop insurance, Organic Certification Cost Share Program.
- [Rural Development](#) – housing loans, community grants, value-added producer grants, etc.
- Contact: Eugene Service Center, 780 Bailey Hill Rd, Eugene, OR 97402, (541) 465-6443

Priorities for the Future

- Updating the Long-Range Plan for the Central Coast
 - Major Issues Identified in 2020 LRP:
 - Water quality – sediment, temperature, nutrients, aquatic habitat
 - Forest health – stand composition, vigor, density
 - Wetland and riparian habitat loss and restoration
 - Weed management (pastureland and forests)
 - Ray Kinney noted the omission of alkalinity testing/monitoring from ongoing water quality testing efforts. Regulatory agencies are ignoring it. Important for toxicology and salmon habitat.
 - Question from Seth about eligibility of restored streams/wetlands for Wetland Reserve Easement or CREP?
 - Answer: once they’re restored they’re no longer eligible for WRE/CREP

- Follow-up: is there another easement program that could help protect restored sites into the future given possible land transfer? Answer: probably look to local land trusts, eg. McKenzie River Trust.
 - Comment from David Waltz, DEQ: cyanobacteria are another important water quality concern, particularly in coastal lakes.
 - Oregon Health Authority does the actual testing and posting if there are issues, but there's virtually no funding available.
 - If you could get only one thing funded/accomplished by NRCS in the next year, what would it be?
 - David Waltz: Riparian planting
 - Comment from Mike Kennedy, CTSI: add wildfire prevention/resilience to forest resource concern.
 - Seth Mead seconds that need. Mentioned that the priority map for the Forest Resistance & Resilience map looked odd, maybe missing some more non-industrial private forest lands in upper Siuslaw that should be included. We can look at updating this for FY25.
 - Mizu Burruss: maybe starting to look at prescribed fire as a tool?
 - Ray Kinney likes the focus on Local Food production – important to continue this work.
- Native Olympia Oyster Restoration – Washington NRCS has been working on Olympia oyster restoration for several years with the Puget Sound Restoration Fund. Potential for Oregon NRCS to do something similar, but we still need to evaluate if we have enough interested participants and a partner to lead the charge, possibly through an RCPP project.
 - Seth Mead: Yaquina Bay seems like the best choice for partnerships with Hatfield, various agencies. Land ownership may be an issue.
 - Mike Kennedy: Stan has been working with Oregon Oysters in Yaquina and would be interested in participating.
 - David Waltz: Yaquina Bay and others have been drastically transformed by historic and ongoing dredging, so we'd need to account for that in any restoration plans.
 - Ray Kinney: importance of freshwater inputs and salinity on oyster production/survival.

Thanks again to everyone who participated in the Local Work Group process this year, and thanks to Lauren Bennett, NRCS Public Affairs Specialist, for helping to facilitate the meeting.

Contacts:

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