



Washington County Local Work Group Meeting February 29, 2024, Tualatin SWCD Office and Zoom

The meeting was called to order by Jessica Wells, USDA-NRCS at 10:00a.m.

Those in attendance were:

Jessica Wells, NRCS	Dean Moberg, TSWCD
Eliot Ewers, NRCS	Emma Scott, NRCS
Ashley Cohn, FSA	Steve Vangrunsvan, Valley Ag
Thomas Dierickx, Dierickx Farm	Emily Matson, Columbia Land Trust
Jake Constans Watermaster Dist. 18	Elizabeth Beechwood, Watermaster Dist. 18
Taylor Johnson, ODF	Tatiana Taylor, TSWCD
Lacey Townsend, TSWCD	Emerson Chase, NRCS
Dave Vanasche, Vanasche Farms	Malyhea Haghshenas, JWC
Brittany Contreras, JWC	Scott McEwen, TRWC
Aaron Shaw, TSWCD	Brandy Saffell, TSWCD
Nick Maslen, ODF	Eric Jacobs, ODF
Elaine Stewart	Stephanie Payne, NRCS Urban Conservationist
Olivia Duren, Freshwater Trust	Tom Nygren, TSP
David Wills-Ehlers, Zephyr Organics	Annie Walker, Consultant
Will Fett, NRCS	Eleanor Kenyon, NRCS
Nicole Ruggerio, TSWCD	

JWC: Joint Water Commission: <https://jwcwater.org/>

FSA: Farm Service Agency: <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/state-offices/Oregon/index>

NRCS: Natural Resource Conservation Service: <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/conservation-basics/conservation-by-state/oregon/washington-county>

TRWC: Tualatin River Watershed Council: <https://trwc.org/>

ODF: Oregon Dept. of Forestry: <https://www.oregon.gov/odf/pages/index.aspx>

TSWCD: Tualatin Soil and Water Conservation District: <https://tualatinswcd.org/>

District 18 Watermaster: <https://www.washingtoncountyor.gov/lut/watermaster>

Jessica introduced herself and employees from the local Hillsboro – NRCS office introduced themselves: Emma Scott – Natural Resource Specialist, Eliot Ewers – Soil Conservationist, Shalako (Shak) Emly – Program Assistant.

After staff introductions, Jessica stated that the purpose of this meeting is to provide a forum for partners, farmers, ranchers, foresters, Federal, State, Local agencies, and conservation groups to share conservation activities and discuss natural resource problems that should be prioritized. The group assists in guiding NRCS where to use farm bill funds for technical and financial assistance in the future. Jessica stated her appreciation of everyone in attendance for volunteering their time to participate. We (NRCS) have the ability to target specific resource issues that are important to the county, and this group helps identify those concerns and focus areas. Local people help drive our programs. Our programs are voluntary, and the success of getting conservation on the ground depends on you.

The Annual Local Work Group meetings are required by NRCS policy to obtain local input on ways to make Farm Bill programs work locally, assist with establishing local resource priorities, and identify practices needed to address resource concerns in the county. The Local Work Group is made up of all who attend the meeting! Although we meet only once each year, comments or suggestions are always welcome throughout the year. Feel free to call or email any time.

Emma Scott – NRCS presented a PowerPoint presentation explaining the layout of Oregon NRCS, the Local Work Group process, our current Conservation Implementation Strategies (CIS's), Farm Bill Programs, and showcased conservation practices that have been implemented throughout the county through various NRCS Programs. Current Farm Bill Programs in Washington County include ACEP, RCPP, CSP, EQIP, EQIP/CIC, IRA

ACEP – Agricultural Conservation Easement Program

ALE – Agricultural Land Easement

NRCS purchases easements on land for agriculture to reduce conversion of those lands to non-Ag uses.

WRE – Wetland Reserve Easement

NRCS purchases easements on ag land to restore wetlands.

RCPP – Regional Conservation Partnership Program

CSP – Conservation Stewardship Program

EQIP – Environmental Quality Incentives Program

EQIP/CIC - Conservation Incentives Contracts (Bridge between EQIP and CSP)

IRA – Inflation Reduction Act

What available in Washington County?

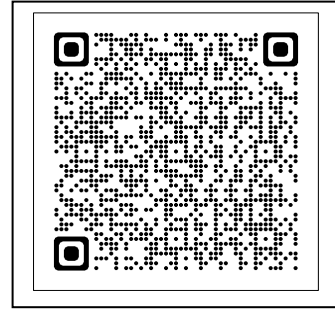
Website: <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/conservation-basics/conservation-by-state/oregon/washington-county>

Oregon Strategic Approach to Conservation – scan code below for more information.



Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) – Main program of focus in Washington County. Provides technical and financial (cost sharing) assistance to farmers, ranchers, forest landowners to address natural resource concerns, such as:

- Improved water and air quality
 - Conserved ground and surface water
 - Increased soil health
 - Reduced soil erosion and sedimentation
 - Improved or created wildlife habitat; and
 - Mitigation against drought and increasing weather volatility.
- Scan QR code to right for more information!



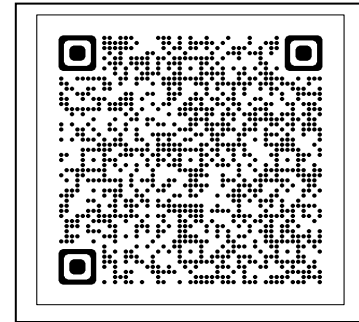
Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) – EQIP to the next level.

Application Deadline: **March 29th, 2024**

Annual payment for conservation – 5-year contract

Helps you build on your existing conservation efforts through enhancements. Dozens of enhancements available to help you:

- Establish pollinator habitat.
 - Establish riparian buffers.
 - Create wildlife habitat.
 - Improve soil health.
 - Reduce tillage.
 - ...and more!
- Scan QR Code to the right for more information!

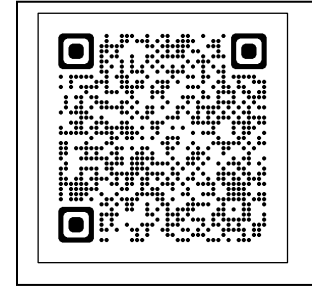


Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) passed in 2023.

- Channeled through the EQIP and CSP programs respectively. **IRA funding must target greenhouse gas and carbon sequestration.**
- IRA conservation funding is in addition to otherwise available program funds, and the voluntary, incentive-based approach is **targeted to support climate-smart mitigation activities** and other conservation activities that help facilitate them.
- EQIP – IRA is designed to help with the application of conservation measures that focus on carbon sequestration, greenhouse gas emissions, reduced energy, and soil health. The program focuses strongly on conservation planning, conservation implementation, and solving natural resource concerns related to climate change.
- CSP – IRA is designed to help with moving operations to the next level of conservation and will focus on carbon sequestration, greenhouse gas emissions, reduced energy, and soil health. The program focuses on increasing conservation implementation and solving natural resource concerns related to climate change.

- Allowed NRCS to bring on more staff to help manage programs.

Scan QR Code to the right for more information!



Stephanie Payne – NRCS, Urban Conservationist covering Portland Metro

(Beavercreek but Lloyd Center)

Akin to District Conservationist but focus on metro

Held 1st LWG meeting February 23rd – PDX Metro Area, three counties and four SWCDs

Building fund pool for Conservation Implementation Strategies specifically for urban

producers – looking for feedback to see where gaps might be in funding where NRCS can come in and help with funding.

Contracting and conservation work as well.

Lot of support from state and national offices to push farming and conservation forward.

Marissa Theve – NRCS Resource Soil Scientist based out of state office but covers nine counties of NW OR.

-Focusing on wetland determinations that are required for Farm Bill benefit recipients along with Highly Erodible Land Determinations.

-Will be shifting focus to outreach for soil health workshops, environmental education outreach, and also write annual soils exam, and help partners use soil data.

-Updates to soils program:

1. NRCS is buying X-ray fluorescence unit for soil contamination such as lead and mercury.

2. Biochar surplus from Mount Hood National Forrest – being created by using slash from the 2020 Labor Days fires. Fee free day coming up somewhere near Sandy. Will provide updates once more information is available.

Biochar Website: <https://biochar-us.org/usda-nrcs-biochar-funding-quick-guide>

Jessica Wells – NRCS shared photos about the following:

Forestry – thinning trees on land while working with ODF and Brandy with TSWCD that can provide answers to you as producers.

Veggies CSA Community Supported AG – high tunnels can help – especially when growing veggies crops for local area consumption.

Irrigation: cost share can help offset costs (especially for large projects like linear), irrigation water management – keeping records of soil moisture via probes, and weather stations for different microclimates.

Transitioning to drip irrigation in berry and orchard farms.

Pics filter systems for drip and variable frequency drives – reduces energy needs of irrigation system.

What other energy savings might be need for the area with regards to water?
Might be options for landowners pumping from river and ponds as well.

EQIP – Current operation

Animal feeding (Basin) – not a bunch in Washington County

Erosion Control in Orchard (Year 5 of 5) – final year of funding, however, new opportunities that look at replacing erosions control. Allows similar practices such as cover and field border.

Organic Program Initiative (Basin Level Funded) – for producers wanting to transition or have transitioned to organic.

On-Farm Energy Initiative (Basin Level Funded) – capture energy savings. A couple new programs are on the horizon and NRCS Hillsboro will be learning more this summer.

High Tunnel System Initiative (Basin Level Funded) – speaks for itself.

Basin Forest Resiliency (year 3 of 5) – heling with thinning and replanting.

Forest Management Planning (year 3 of 5) – available throughout county, so can be deployed in a strategic manner.

Water Quantity and Soil Health Improvements on Agricultural Lands (year 3 of 5) – Gales Creek area: cover crops, reduced tillage, irrigation improvement.

**New – Climate-Focused Sustainable Livestock Production in Oregon – district folks know a lot more than local office and can bring them in to help LWG.

**New – Soil Health Restoration and Management North Coast/Lower Willamette

Please let us know what resource concerns you have or practices you would like, and we can look into what programs might be right for your situation.

2024 Applications in Washington County: NRCS has received 53 applications for EQIP, Cutoff date was November 19, 2023. We tend to focus on the submitted applications, so if we need to focus on other things, we need to hear from them so we can pre-plan and get them on our radar. That is one of the main reasons we hold these meetings!

Teamwork Makes the Dream work! – John Maxwell. Partnerships are how we get things accomplished!

Ashley Cohn – FSA County Executive Director for Washington, Tillamook, Clatsop, and Columbia Counties.

County Committee nominations are due soon for Local Administrative Area (LAA).

Areas up for election:

LAA 3 – East Washington County: Washington County EAST of Jackson School Road

LAA 4 – Clatsop County and North Tillamook County: North of North Fork Trask River and Trask River

If you are not getting applications or ballots to vote, please let Ashley or your local FSA know.

Eligibility to run: anyone affiliated with farming, ranching or production of agricultural products.

Upcoming FSA deadlines:

15 Mar. 2024 – elect a program and enroll in Agricultural Risk coverage (ARC)/Price Loss Coverage (PLC).

31 Mar. 2024 – apply for Marketing Assistance Loans (MAL).

29 Apr. 2024 – enroll in 2024 Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC) program.

Ongoing enrollment – 2022 Emergency Relief Program (ERP) Coverage for Natural Disasters; Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CCRP); Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP); Enhanced Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (ECREP)

Any questions – please visit FSA at the Hillsboro Filed office, or at <https://www.farmers.gov/>

Jessica Wells – NRCS, shared slides of Small and Veggie Farms, Medium to Large Farms, and Orchard and Perennial Crops to get folks in the county know certain program areas and to get folks thinking of services that might be needed.

Olivia Duren: Are oaks likely to be current or near-future NRCS programs?

Answer: Jessica Wells – Other counties within the basin are doing oak, but that might be something to look into, other partners are taking lead on oak habitat in county. NRCS Conservation Stewardship Program might be used for oak projects.

OAK CIS or future RCPP

Oak habitat currently covered at level needed?

Aaron Shaw – bare amount of resources for Oak in WA County – hopeful some of the new programs provide additional resources to break down some of the barriers to conservation; conserving oak practices can be expensive. A CIS for oak would be worth exploring.

Elaine Stewart – fuels reduction funding as a shared cost, climate resilience, can cobble together resources

Dean Moberg – broadening overall view to other forest systems and not just oak – fish passage RCPP program Gales Creek, Start think about oak and other forest land for timber for next RCPP. Transition is difficult – what programs might be available to help private forest owners manage fuels, carbon sequester as climate changes, longer harvest rotations. Instead of every 30 – 40 years, look at harvesting every 70 – 80 years. Start thinking about RCPP now, rather than wait until two or three months before deadline – allows for a more focused plan to manage forests.

Thomas Dierickx – stance on being funded to do grid sampling for soil health across a field? Sample every acre, apply right amount of nutrients in the correct spot

Jessica Wells – 590: nutrient management soil testing was rolled into new activity 217 Conservation Evaluation and Monitoring Activity (CEMA):

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2022-11/FY22-CEMA-217-Soil-and-Source->

[Testing-for-Nutrient-Management.pdf](#)

217CEMA – grid sampling support right time, right place, right time, right rate
Working with the individuals in the community that can assist both the producers and NRCS with sampling.

Climate Smart Agriculture and Forestry (CSAF) under IRA for grid sampling – NRCS will research CEMA217 this summer.

Thomas Dierickx – Coated fertilizer assistance to mitigate off gassing – possibly by NRCS?

Jessica Wells – some products are supported by NRCS, others are less supported. Best answered by NRCS state agronomist.

Dave Vanasche – coated fertilizer worth looking into. Referenced Hermiston, OR and the issues with nitrogen cloud that area is experiencing. Inhibitor theory should be explored more.

Jessica Wells – wants to continue conversation regarding grid sampling and use of inhibitors on fertilizer in very near future.

Malyhea Haghshenas, JWC – National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI) assessment of drinking water source area and agricultural inputs that could potentially affect the drinking water source. All most done with 1st phase and final draft available end of this year or early 2025.

Guidebook is now out for controlling algae bloom due to grant funding from TSWCD. Any landowners that have a pond or other water impoundment can get the guidebook or reach out to get guide. Guidebook link: <https://jwcwater.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/TREE-Grant-Final.pdf>

Dean Moberg – Joint Water Commission owns the Hutchinson Easement (Hwy 47 between Springhill and SW Seghers Rd) – keep weeds controlled on perimeter. Discussion ensued about weed control and more funding becoming available to assist with that.

Dave Vanasche, farmer – land use – everyone loves farmers. WA county rapidly going from rural to urban. Can the LWG work together to get an increased public education plan in place to help farmers and other producers when it comes to equipment moving on county roads along with the increase in cars? EFU zone is experiencing more and more traffic. Public relations for ag operations in the area such as more signs regarding farm equipment on roads?

Nicole Ruggerio, TSWCD – signs that TSWCD, Farm Bureau and, Oregon Ag Link have had in the past and extras are available. County Land Use Transportation reached out to TSWCD about rural road safety and combining efforts to get word out to a broader audience.

ALE program – TSWCD is looking into grant funding under ALE if a large enough project is out there. Grants are very competitive.

Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts is looking into easements to get more funds into state especially Washington County.

Steve Vangrunsven, Valley Ag – option though NRCS to help with valuation if farmland is absorbed in boundary?

Nicole Ruggerio, TSWCD – valuation is set by appraisal. NRCS provides cash to producers that can help with farm practices.

Dave Vanasche, Washington County is a hub of Ag infrastructure in NW Oregon – if Washington County loses land and infrastructure to urbanization, more than just farmland will be lost. Ag loss would lead to more job loss due to the loss of implement, chemical, and other ag service industries.

Dean Moberg, SWCD Strategic Plan – importance of keeping ag land and infrastructure.

Dave Vanasche – Soil and weather is best in world for over 200 crops and climate is conducive for grass and clover seed.

Will Fett, NRCS – Outreach Coordinator and Tribal Liaison awareness about safety working with Oregon Conservation Education and Assistance Network (OCEAN) and SWCD to focus on Social Media. Plans in place to hire social media outreach coordinator is in the works. Hopefully by harvest time something might be in place.

Dept. of Transportation be used to assist with traffic management?

NRCS – plan hedgerows to help dust mitigation?

WA County Farm Bureau paid for radio PSAs at one point – where is the coordination and money for programs to assist farmers get the word about entering ag zone.

Farm Bureau – might be partner?

Jake Constans, Watermaster District 18 – More and more difficult to get water rights – discussion ensued regarding surface water rights and ag water rights and how to manage water supply overall for users.

Does NRCS have programs to assist with water management? – Possibly under CSP.

Clean Water Service – getting master plan together and looking into water reuse. What chemicals might be in effluence?

Oregon State received funding from the legislature to research water in the Willamette Valley.

Brandy Saffell, TSWCD – Small woodland management – new buyers have property issues that don't comply with Forest Practices Act. Now having a hard time managing the forest and weeds that have grown unchecked.

Can NRCS help with getting land back on track after timber harvesting? NRCS walks a fine line with cost share for established forest land.

NRCS – ODF: brush management with weed management and planting plan would be helpful

Slash – ODF fire protection boundary. ODF can regulate some parts of slash burning and treatment with the district. ODF does not manage fire protection barrier in most of Washington County – that falls to DEQ.

Need for slash management for large and small forestland management. Is there any opportunity where partners can assist landowners with economic burden of overall management?

Biochar pyrolizer – way to use in slash management?

More intentional effort to plug NRCS and ODF to help property owners maintain tax deferral status for real estate?

Any farmer interested in or talking about Biochar? Main issue – cost prohibitive.

Maybe a community event to reduce transportation costs?

Set up pyrolizer to process the burning.

Carbon amendment that might help offset transportation costs?

Practice code 336 Soil Carbon Amendment: <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/resources/guides-and-instructions/soil-carbon-amendment-ac-336-conservation-practice-standard>

NRCS can share additional information if contacted.

CSP has biochar amendment – USDA will look into those further. Practice code E384A

Biochar – adding organic matter acts like lime or other nutrients but can also be detrimental dependent on feed stock and other inputs.

Test any Biochar before use in agricultural application. Rice hulls can add acidity, while Douglas fir and hemlock have a liming effect.

Do not place raw Biochar on land unless treated properly with a microbe or nutrient.

Cost of Biochar direct from Rogue Biochar Solutions based in White City, OR:

Dry – \$675/ton – usually used in water filtration

As shipped – \$450/ton – usually used in agriculture soil.

Further discussion needed about Biochar types, testing requirements, and costs of application.

Eleanor Kenyon, NRCS entered into an interagency agreement with USFWS from 2023 to 2027 with regards to Hutchinson Easement

Improvements will include mowing, chemical, weed control, prairie seeding, additional plug and bulb planting along with oak planting.

Dean Moberg – thinning needed in Hutchinson Easement in some areas.

Want to share your voice but not in this format?

Email: jessica.wells@usda.gov
eliot.ewers@usda.gov
emma.scott@usda.gov
shalako.emly@usda.gov

Office Phone: 503-207-7959

Stop in: 1080 SW Baseline, Hillsboro

We would be happy to come to you!

Meeting closed at 11:52 am.