



*Clatsop County Local Work Group Meeting
February 16, 2017 OSU Ext Conference Room*

MINUTES

The meeting was called to order by Dean Moberg at 10:05 a.m. Self-introductions followed.

Dean Moberg welcomed everyone to the meeting, and stated that the purpose of this meeting is to work together collaboratively with local partners and landowners to develop a plan that strategically utilizes limited resources effectively and efficiently. These meetings are mandated by policy to be held annually. Even though we only meet annually, we will certainly take comments and ideas at any time. NRCs has changed their approach to broaden scope to include several resource concerns. With decreasing staff numbers, we need to be more strategic in our approach to conservation to the get greatest benefit within a limited area and scope to address resource concerns the most efficiently.

Goals & Objectives – CIS

Angie explained the CIS strategies. CIS's focus on concentrated areas where Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funding can be utilized strategically to address resource concerns.

Clatsop currently has 2 CIS priority areas for EQIP in the county.

- Green Mountain – Forest Health CIS
The goal of this CIS is to address degraded stand structure and species composition that has resulted in increased forest insect and disease risks, excess biomass fuels accumulation, and degraded fish and wildlife habitat in the Green Mountain Area of Clatsop County. A Forest Management Plan must be in place before NRCS can fund implementation practices for a participant. A few of the practices available to improve forest health are: pre-commercial thinning, brush management, slash treatment, site prep, reforestation, forest trails and landings, wildlife habitat improvement, and more.
There are two more years remaining in this CIS. Feedback is welcome on where to go from here after this CIS has expired. Move the area? Expand the area? Ashley volunteered to tour the county with NRCS to show where the need for forest practices are. Kevin suggested that culvert replacement is greatly needed in that area. Road improvement and development is also needed. Kari mentioned that in Columbia County, the SWCD will work with the landowner to partner with NRCS and other partners to address culvert replacement where that practice isn't included in the CIS.

Kari talked about the Coastal Coho group – establishing priorities. Fishhawk and Nehalem where Clatsop and Columbia counties adjoin - habitat features, off channel habitat, forest practices – focusing on how to improve the watershed in

that area. No funding established for this yet, but working on developing a watershed plan, pre-funding. Partners include Watershed Councils, Land Trusts, SWCD's, ODFW, ODF, NRCS, Landowners, and others. Focus will be on watershed basis rather than county lines. Contact Kari if you have any questions.

- Lewis and Clark Watershed - HQ and Pasture – This CIS addresses nutrient and sediment runoff from agricultural areas in lowlands of the Lewis and Clark River Watershed. Practices being covered in this CIS are: Heavy use area, manure storage, nutrient management, roof runoff structures, fencing, watering facility, access roads, weed control (certain situations only), prescribed grazing.

The main thing people seem to be interested in are heavy use areas and nutrient management. If any of the partners know of anyone that could benefit from this assistance, please send them to NRCS. One issue that is common is landowners losing pasture land to streambank erosion. This CIS does not include any practices that would assist with this. DSL may be able to issue an emergency protection permit to install rock for emergency fix. Then the landowner could go to the SWCD or OWEB to address a long term fix. There also needs to be long range watershed plan developed to address streambank erosion on a larger watershed scale rather than individual landowners. Need to look at the dynamics of how the county is changing and what is causing all the effects of change. Need a study of the health of the county resources as a whole and how one thing affects the other.

Question about fencing not being on the list of practices – it is included, and definitely offered in the Pasture CIS, just overlooked on the list prepared for this meeting.

Other NRCS Programs:

- CStP – Conservation Stewardship Program
Helps agricultural producers maintain and improve their existing conservation systems and adopt additional conservation activities to address priority resources concerns. Participants earn annual CStP payments for conservation performance for five years. To participate in CStP, you must be in compliance with highly erodible land and wetland conservation requirements, and have current farm records with USDA Farm Service Agency. You must have effective control of the land for the term of the proposed contract, be actively engaged in the day-to-day management of the agricultural operation and share in the risks associated with agricultural production. You must also be meeting the stewardship threshold of at least two resource concerns at the time of application. CStP is available for farmland as well as forestland.
- RCPP – Regional Conservation Partnership Program
This is a new, competitive program in the 2014 Farm Bill that promotes partnerships across the public and private sectors to tackle high-priority natural resources challenges. As the lead agency for the program, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides assistance to producers through

partnership agreements, program contracts and easement agreements. Several areas throughout Oregon were successful in receiving these RCPP contracts.

Examples of projects that RCPP can do:

- Columbia County SWCD was awarded a grant in 2016 for watershed planning in riparian areas in the forest lands – riparian planting, large woody placement in streams, etc. This will be a 5-year program. SWCD received the grant money for this project, so will hire contractors to do the work, rather than have the local landowners do the work.
- The Pinchot Institute applied for an RCPP grant to do Forest Management Plans and carbon inventories to optimally sell carbon credits. Some dollars will be spent on practice implementation such as pre-commercial thinning, woody residue treatment, etc.
- Washington County SWCD was awarded a grant that will look at water quality in local streams, provide drip irrigation, riparian buffers along the streams, nutrient management plans to reduce waste runoff into the streams. Most of the RCPP funds are processed in conjunction with the EQIP program.

Question: can watershed councils apply for RCPP? Answer: YES! Any organization can partner with NRCS and apply for RCPP grant monies. Objectives and dollars must fit into one of the USDA programs. Organizations are encouraged to work with NRCS while developing proposals. Funds can only be used on private lands.

RCPP has three designated areas of funding that partners can submit proposals under; National, State, and Critical Conservation Areas. Applicants must identify one specific designated area of funding for their proposal. Application information can be found on the Oregon NRCS website. Pre-proposals are due April 21, 2017. RCPP is more Partner driven, with NRCS being one of the partners. The sponsor of the grant proposal is the driving authority for the RCPP implementation. A fifty-percent match is required from other partners within the proposal. This is similar to a grant awarded to a partnership effort to address resource concerns. This is the final year that we know for certain funds will be available, the future of RCPP is unclear at this time. It is our hope that it will continue, as this has been tremendously successful. Funds will be available for any new RCPP proposals beginning in 2018. All proposals must fit in with NRCS's goal and objectives. RCPP allows for partner-led innovative ideas to address conservation.

More information is available on the Oregon NRCS website. Click on Programs, then Farm Bill. You will find information on financial assistance programs, easement programs, and partnership programs. www.or.nrcs.usda.gov

Question about the flooding in Clatskanie? Kari stated that Clatskanie was a part of the EWP area this past winter. They are also a part of the RCPP project in Columbia County through the SWCD. The heart of downtown Clatskanie has been addressed through NRCS and SWCD partnership, either through EWP or RCPP.

Would a watershed assessment be a good fit for RCPP funding? It could be a piece of the proposal, but couldn't be the sole focus.

Land Conservancy interested in exploring funding with forest management in the Necanicum watershed, but that falls outside of the critical conservation area boundary. You could still apply for the National pool or State pool of funds.

Gary commented to be sure to work with NRCS and address all NEPA concerns when developing your RCPP proposals.

If you have a partnership idea, talk to Angie. OSU Extension offers a workshop on how to bring partners together to develop and watershed prioritization plan. Contact Valerie Grant for more information.

- ACEP – Easement program - The Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) provides financial and technical assistance to help conserve agricultural lands and wetlands. ACEP is a new program that consolidates three former programs – the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP), Grassland Reserve Program (GRP) and Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program (FRPP). Landowner holds title to the property, but the agency purchases an easement containing specific restrictions on how the land is managed. Discussion about how the easement programs work.
- ALE – Agricultural Land Easements - NRCS helps Indian tribes, state and local governments and non-governmental organizations protect working agricultural lands and limit non-agricultural uses of the land. Protects the long-term viability of the nation's food supply by preventing conversion of productive working lands to non-agricultural uses.
- WRE - Wetlands Reserve Easements - NRCS helps to restore, protect and enhance enrolled wetlands. Provides habitat for fish and wildlife, including threatened and endangered species, improve water quality by filtering sediments and chemicals, reduce flooding, recharge groundwater, protect biological diversity and provide opportunities for education, scientific and limited recreational activities.

There was a discussion on how that would work on diked land. One thing we have to consider is negative impacts on adjoining lands.

EQIP Seasonal High Tunnel Initiative - high tunnels are unheated, plastic-covered structures that provide an intermediate level of environmental protection and control compared to open field conditions and heated greenhouses. They are easy to build and maintain. They provide an energy-efficient way to extend the growing season, reduce or avoid use of pesticides, and reduce runoff leaching of nitrogen into the soil. Deadline to apply for this year's funding is February 17, 2017, with a third cutoff date May 19, 2017. Larry provided a success story of his high tunnel that was installed through the EQIP program, and asked if there was any opportunity to apply for a second high tunnel? Dean didn't think that was allowed, but will do further research because the flyer states that 'participants can apply for a high tunnel even if they have an existing one on their

land'. It was interpreted to mean if the applicant currently has an existing high tunnel that was not funded by NRCS, but we will check further. Angie followed up with Todd Peplin in the State office and he said that people are allowed to apply for a second High Tunnel as long as there is a resource concern that needs to be addressed.

Organic Initiative - provides conservation funding to organic producers and those transitioning to organic. Financial and technical assistance is available through the Organic Initiative under the EQIP program.

Dean talked about the new Conservation Client Gateway which provides online access to conservation plans, practice implementation schedules, financial applications, contracts, and supporting documents and payment information. Instead of driving to your field office multiple times, Conservation Client Gateway enables you to request assistance, sign documents and interact with NRCS field staff online at your convenience. Contact Angie if you are interested in signing up!

Angie talked about the resource concern questionnaire that was provided. Please fill out the questionnaire and submit to Angie to guide the future direction of NRCS programs in Clatsop County.

Question – can RCPP funds go for land acquisition? No. But it could be used for conservation easements to restore wetlands, focusing on land that is at-risk of losing working land capability to development.

Ashley has a couple ideas of where ACEP could be a possibility. There was a discussion if the land would be eligible or not.

Meeting adjourned 12:05 p.m.
Dee Robinson