

# Benton/Linn County Local Workgroup Minutes

Meeting Location: Linn County Extension Office  
(33630 McFarland Rd, Tangent OR 97389)

Date/Time: Wednesday, January 18, 2017, 3:00-4:30 pm

**Goal: NRCS works with private landowners and conservation partners to addresses natural resource concerns on private land. This Local Work Group will help NRCS set priorities for Benton and Linn Counties.**

Thomas Snyder (Benton/Linn District Conservationist) opened the meeting explaining the goal of the meeting and that there would be breakout sessions for different land uses. Discussed current Conservation Implementation Strategies (CIS)

Thomas covered the Linn County Water Quality CIS. This strategy is focused on improving water quality in identified water quality limited streams. This strategy also overlaps the Linn SWCD Focus Area. This strategy is intended to improve irrigation efficiency, enhance riparian buffers, and control contaminated runoff from animal grazing operations.

Dan Olson discussed the Oak CIS that currently covers Benton, Linn and Lane Counties. This strategy is focused on restoring and enhancing existing oak woodland and savannah habitats.

Dan also introduced the forestry CIS currently under development. This strategy will look at improving overall forest diversity and early successional habitats. This strategy is not currently funded, but anticipated to be funded in 2018.

Wallace Jennings discussed the Local Food CIS. This strategy is focused on improving soil health on farms producing food for local markets.

Tom discussed the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) and how both the Wetland Reserve Easement Program (WRE) and the Agricultural Land Easement Program (ALE) are under the ACEP umbrella. There has not been any recent application for WRE, which is the new version of the Wetland Reserve Program (WRP).

Nathan Adelman discussed the Conservation Stewardship Program. The program has been revised and now it is clearer how payments are calculated. The new program also has more options and better compensation for forestry practices.

Dan discussed the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). The CREP restores riparian buffers and wetland buffers. The CREP program continues to be popular in both Linn and Benton Counties.

Tom and Nate Discussed Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG). CIG is for new innovative practices that could be included in the Field Office Technical Guide, or other innovative strategies for addressing local resource concerns. The grants are not for research, but could be a good way to demonstrate new techniques that are not adopted locally.

Tom introduced the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). This program is for NRCS partners to request additional program funds to address specific resource concerns. Donna Schmitz (Benton Soil and Water Conservation District) described the proposal she is working on with partners to request additional funds for oak woodland and savannah habitat restoration.

Donna then discussed her Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) Focus Area in the Jackson/Frasier Watershed. She has had some interest in riparian restoration in this area, but would like to increase the participation.

Kevin Siefert discussed the Linn Soil and Water Conservation District focus area in the Crabtree Creek Watershed. He said he would like to move the priority area to the Bear Branch Watershed because there is some new momentum in restoration efforts in this watershed.

## **Break Out Sessions**

### **Forestry/Wildlife**

There is continued support for oak restoration work. It is however the converse of timberland. Invasive species are a significant concern in forestland. CStP could possibly assist for weed management on forestland.

Pre-commercial thinning required on most private non-industrial timber stands.

There needs to be some marketing for smaller sized timber  
Agroforestry-Fruit Trees, grazing oak woodlands, improving pollinator habitat.  
Forest Management plans continue to be a helpful tool to landowners.  
Could incorporate food plots for wildlife that are comprised of native species.  
Wet Prairie is an important habitat type in Benton and Linn Counties.  
Timing of management activities could be planned to increase benefits to wildlife.  
Snags could be created in older timber stands.  
Stock water ponds need permits if it is 10ft tall and holds 9.2 ac ft. Would also benefit wildlife. Could be used for fire suppression.

### **Cropland**

Cover in hazelnut orchards. With the wet fall, having some cover assisted with harvest when soils were wet.  
Not all new orchards have water rights. Especially if coming from grass seed.  
There are no available instream water rights for new users. New users need wells.

Muddy Creek in Linn County has a potential concern with livestock in the riparian zone.  
Farmers are struggling to compost effectively. Would like to have a concrete floor on compost facilities to prevent symphyllans.  
Much of the Groundwater Management Area (GWMA) in Linn County does not participate in USDA Programs.  
Mostly due to wetland conversion issues.  
Would like to more widely adopt precision ag in the GWMA.  
Slugs continue to be an issue in no-till systems. Pasture renovation is also challenging due to slugs.  
Interseeding into existing pastures would increase quality and diversity.  
Look at the Lawson Machine for pasture renovation.  
Buffers create a lot of habitat for beneficial insects and pollinators.  
Wildlife structures, like bat and bird boxes, could be incorporated into buffer designs.  
Assistance with irrigation continues to be a priority for the Linn SWCD and NRCS.  
Linn SWCD moving to the Bear Branch Watershed in 2018.  
Hazelnut orchards would benefit from irrigation assistance because new orchards are still using old systems such as big guns.  
Oregon Department of Water Resources has financial assistance up to %25 of the cost for new more efficient systems.  
K-line on pastures is helpful.  
Need more watering facilities, heavy use areas and infrastructure to facilitate prescribed grazing rotations.  
Cropland has fertilizer field reps, but nothing like that exists for grazing land. Would be helpful to have more nutrient TA for grazing operations.  
Linn SWCD's focus area will change to the Bear Branch Watershed.  
Benton SWCD's focus will continue to be the Jackson Frazier Watershed.  
Both districts strongly support NRCS having a CIS that covers their focus area. It allows them to have a more complete and robust program to offer residents.