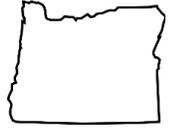




# Oregon Technical Advisory Committee



Meeting Notes for November 9, 2017 - 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.  
Oregon Department of Forestry / 2600 State Street Bldg. C / Salem, OR 97310

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## Attendees (26)

1. Dan LoFaro, Farm Service Agency
2. Robert Wallace, Wy'East RCD
3. Tom Watson, Natural Resources Conservation Service
4. Cory Owens, Natural Resources Conservation Service
5. Tracy Robillard, Natural Resources Conservation Service
6. Scott Oviatt, Natural Resources Conservation Service
7. Dean Moberg, Natural Resources Conservation Service
8. Julie MacSwain, Natural Resources Conservation Service
9. K.C. Van Natta, Van Natta Bros.
10. Tom Makowski, Natural Resources Conservation Service
11. Gary Diridoni, Natural Resources Conservation
12. Mike Edwards, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
13. Don Morrison, WBA
14. Isaac Sanders, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
15. Taylor Murray, Farm Service Agency
16. Todd Peplin, Natural Resources Conservation Service
17. Tom Watson, Oregon Department of Forestry
18. Ryan Gordon, Oregon Department of Forestry
19. Kelpie Wilson, Wilson Biochar Association
20. Jim Johnson, Oregon State University
21. Lena Tucker, Oregon Department of Forestry
22. Karl Dallarosa, U.S. Forest Service
23. Marilyn Van Natta, Van Natta Bros.
24. Michael Powers, Oregon Department of Agriculture
25. Alan Henning, Environmental Protection Agency
26. Sam Asai, Farm Service Agency

## OTAC Meeting Opening / Introduction

**Tom Watson, Assistant State Conservationist, NRCS:** Ron Alvarado is traveling to Washington, D.C. this week and is not able to attend OTAC. NRCS co-chairs this committee with FSA. NRCS still hasn't received its Farm Bill budget for the fiscal year 2018. Julie MacSwain is our new Assistant State Conservationist for Partnership and will be leading future OTAC meetings. She replaced our former partnership liaison, Sara Magenheimer.

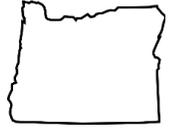
**Dan LaFaro, Acting FSA State Executive Director for Oregon:** FSA has a new appointed director, Peggy Brown. She is from Eastern Oregon and used to be on the state committee a few years ago. She has a background in agriculture and ecology. Peggy starts her new role in about two weeks. FSA is waiting for this fiscal year's budget to come through after the continuing resolution. FSA State Committee Chair Sam Asai is in attendance today.

## Water Forecast and Drought Status

Scott Oviatt, Snow Survey Supervisor for NRCS Oregon



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- Scott provided a summary of last water year (Oct. 1, 2016 – Sept. 30, 2017) as it relates to precipitation levels, snowpack levels, snowmelt/run-off, and streamflow forecasts. See slides for details.
- Currently (as of Nov. 7) Oregon is 139 percent of normal for precipitation levels at snow telemetry sites. All basins are above 100 percent of average streamflow with the exception of the Klamath Basin. Scott also discussed current reservoir levels throughout the state – see slides for details.
- Drought: In 2014, 90% of Oregon was in a drought status. In 2015, 100% of the state was in drought. In 2016, 44% of Oregon was in a drought status. Currently (as of this morning) 33% of Oregon is in drought status, D0. Forecasts show below normal temperatures for the month of November.

## NRCS Programs Update

Todd Peplin, Farm Bill Specialist, NRCS Oregon

- 16 active RCPP projects going on in Oregon. FY18 RCPP Proposals – we have 9 proposals under consideration for funding this year-- 4 of those are in a Critical Conservation Area in the Columbia River Basin; 3 are for the national funding pool; and 2 are in the state funding pool. We anticipate announcing the selected projects by the end of this calendar year.
- Conservation Innovation Grants: We awarded 3 CIG grants in Oregon last fiscal year to the Oregon Department of Forestry; West Multnomah SWCD; and EcoTrust. The FY18 announcement will be coming tentatively in December/January (for grants greater than \$75,000) for the national CIG program; the Oregon CIG announcement (for grants less than \$75,000) will be forthcoming in the next few months
- EQIP FY17 – spent \$7.9 million in EQIP, not including Sage Grouse Initiative. Application cutoff dates for FY18 EQIP is Nov. 17, 2017; and March 16, 2018.
- Conservation Stewardship Program – in 2017 we obligated \$3.7 million for 420,217 acres. In past 2 years, Oregon has contracted about 300,000 acres in CSP, so this year was much higher. All forestry applications for CSP this year were funded (they have a separate funding pool for forestland). Next 2018 CSP sign up date will be forthcoming.
- Agricultural Conservation Easement Program – next cut-off date is Dec. 8, 2017. Includes wetland easements and agricultural land easements.
- RCPP Partner Led Solutions publication produced by national NRCS – publication is available on the NRCS Oregon website and it features an Oregon RCPP project “North Willamette Valley Upland Oak Partnership” project. See handout.

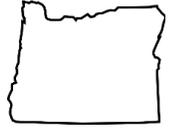
## Overview of 2018 NRCS Conservation Implementation Strategies

Dean Moberg, Acting Chief of Technology for NRCS Oregon

- NRCS changed its business process in 2009 to focus EQIP dollars more strategically so that we can demonstrate results on a landscape and watershed scale.
- District Conservationists work with local partners at the county level to identify specific natural resource concerns. We develop locally-led “Conservation Implementation Strategies” that use EQIP dollars to address those resource concerns.
- New website tools available – Visit the NRCS Oregon homepage [www.or.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.or.nrcs.usda.gov) to see the new interactive GIS map that shows all current Conservation Implementation Strategies across the state where producers can apply for EQIP funding. Also, click the “What’s Available in My County” icon on the homepage to see a listing of each new county webpage. Each new



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county webpage now includes the Long Range Plan, Conservation Implementation Strategies, and Local Work Group Schedules for each county.

## Stewardship Committee Database

Ryan Gordon, ODF and Tom Watson, ODF

- The Oregon Forest Owner Database is a tool to give forestry educators and assistance providers the ability to create lists of forest owners with specified attributes that can be used in mailings for education and outreach programs; and to give forestry managers a tool for gathering statistical data on private forest ownership.
- The tool allows users to filter their categories, counties, property class and other filters to download data for forest owners that they can then use to do mailings or other outreach. It includes only parcels 2 acres and larger that are NOT owned by state or federal government for all 36 Oregon counties. The data is updated every 3 years. The data is consolidated by owner by 'unique owner'
- New "forest cover" data is being completed, so far in 16 out of 36 counties.
- The database is managed by the Family Forests of Oregon. ODF will be hosting webinars to help train folks in how to use the database. The work has been funded by the Forest Service to this point. The database is not publically accessible, it's only open to the partner agencies.

## Highlights from the Conservation Innovation Grant Program: Biochar

Kelpie Wilson, Wilson Biochar Associates

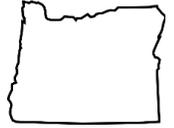
- Objective is to combine two waste streams to create value (forestland and forestry residue; and livestock manure)
- Deliverables would provide input into a biochar enhancement for CSP 384
- UBET – Umpqua Biochar Education Team
- Landowners currently participating in field trials in Jackson, Josephine and Douglas County
- Kilns designed and produced by Umpqua Community College. There's several different kiln designs based on producer's needs.
- Biochar is like 'activated carbon' – biochar can increase the temperature of a compost pile and complete the process in a quicker amount of time, but that only happens if you have the right carbon to nitrogen ratio.
- Did 4 field trials (pot trials and field trials) in 2016 – 2017. Two of the trails have been included in OSU's Oregon Biochar Atlas <http://www.pnwbiochar.org/case-studies/>
- Looking for best tests to evaluate the long term impacts of biochar on the soil. Challenges are costs, labor, evaluating benefits (time required to demonstrate benefits).
- Kiln technology transfer is happening in various states
- They lent a kiln to OSU to be used for juniper slash in Eastern Oregon

## NRCS Watershed Planning Update

Tom Makowski, Assistant State Conservationist for Water Resources and Planning, NRCS



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- Tom leads a recently re-established NRCS team that focuses on watershed projects through the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program (PL 83-566), authorized by Congress in 1954.
- Congress appropriated \$150 million to the program in FY2017-18. Oregon's share of that is \$25 million. To qualify for this funding, Project Sponsors must have an NRCS Authorized Final Watershed Plan, which includes public input and meets the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).
- This program helps other units of government protect and restore watersheds up to 250,000 acres.
- Interest in the program exceeds capacity. NRCS is focused on educating and enabling sponsors to do watershed planning and lead the public involvement process to secure USDA funding.
- Current PL-566 projects in Oregon are:
  - Lower Columbia Watershed in Columbia County (improving water quality and fish habitat, through the RCPP)
  - Deschutes Basin Board of Control – includes 7 irrigation districts (focused on water conservation, security, public safety, and reliability)
  - Dam Rehabilitation – Clear Branch Dam – Middle Fork Irrigation District, and Cooper Creek & Plat I dams, Sutherlin Water Control District
- Marc Thalacker with Three Sisters Irrigation District played an important role in helping Oregon secure the \$25 million in PL-566 funding for the central Oregon projects. The Oregon partners expressed thanks to him for his efforts.

## FSA Update

Taylor Murray, FSA

- Before Oct. 1, we had 23.5 million acres of CRP nationwide. 2.5 acres have expired, now we are down to 21 million acres nationwide.
- Over the next year in Oregon, we have about 13,000 acres coming out of CRP. The following year, we have about 10,000 acres coming out of the program. The acreages coming out of CRP increase after that. Once acres come out, they aren't allowed to go back into CRP. However, some of this may change with the new Farm Bill.
- Emergency Conservation Program helps producers respond to flooding and wildfire. We are out of funding for ECP right now. Presidential Stafford Funding is still available (for disasters with a Presidential disaster declaration).
- Emergency Forestry Restoration Program – This program helps non industrial private landowners recover their forests due to a naturally caused wildfire or ice. \$17 million in EFRP nationwide.
- CRP considerations: 1) maintenance – landowner required to maintain minimum specs in the contract. 2) management – landowner has to conduct management activities in the life of the CRP contract.
- Some of those mid-contract management activities were taken away in April; but have since been reinstated as options for landowners with CRP. However, mowing and grazing have been taken away from mid-contract management activities and are no longer incentivized for producers. Taylor is working with OTAC partners to come up with a justification for why producers and partners need those activities to maintain CRP sites to submit to FSA national office as a potential amendment. Updates will be provided at future OTAC meetings. Taylor will send an email with more details to solicit feedback from the committee.



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## Closing Comments

Tom Watson: NRCS thanked Dan LoFaro for stepping up into the acting FSA Executive Director role and continuing the partnership with NRCS. We try to hold an OTAC meeting 3 times a year.

- END -

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