

Josephine County Local Work Group Meeting

Location: Fruitdale Grange

Date: 12/07/2017

Time: 1:30pm – 3:30pm

Introductions

David Chain, District Conservationist for Douglas County and the Illinois Valley in Josephine County, announced his retirement. David gave an overview of his 30 year experience working with the NRCS and summarized the successful conservation implementation he was able to facilitate during his 14 years in Douglas and Josephine Counties.

Programs Overview:

- Currently no Conservation Implementation Strategy (CIS) in Douglas or Josephine Counties, only State and National Programs are being administered.
- High Tunnel Initiative (HTI) reviewed, ongoing success in both counties, with ~2-3 contracts per year.
- **CStP:**
 - Conservation Stewardship Program (CStP) reviewed. Program explanation given including description of non-industrial private forestlands (NIPF). Minimum payments, enhancement guidance, and need for landowner initiation were all discussed. Program is open enrollment on any agricultural land. Administered through Farm Services Agency (FSA). Generally profitable for producers. Must convert dysfunctional area to functional area (typically through riparian plantings).
 - CStP has paid out ~\$80,000 - \$100,000 over the last 5 years to participants in Douglas and Josephine Counties.
 - Biochar enhancement has been added to CStP. Biochar initiative received a Conservation Innovation Grant. Biochar group is in process of developing standards for use. Uses include conversion of forest slash materials to charcoal for manure remediation applications. Has been training local forest contractors and arborists. Josephine County Food Bank has purchased a kiln. Kilns are being produced through student employment program.
- **CREP:**
 - Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) explained to group. Success story from Josephine County, 100 miles of streambank affected through installment of fences and watering facilities.
 - CREP typically involves work on pasture land. CREP technician works out of Douglas County Field Office.
- **ACEP:**

Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) explained to group:

 - Wetlands –
 - Primarily administered in coastal areas
 - Payments on pastureland generally not high enough to gain producer buy-in
 - Healthy Forest Reserve-
 - Great for easements in forested land
 - Lots of targeted areas locally but, is rarely funded so often not used

- Ag-land Easement-
 - Typically requires a sponsor (i.e. a land trust with ~50% buy-in)
 - Protection from land conversion
 - Historically there has been little interest in Douglas and Josephine Counties
- **RCPP:**
 - Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) explained to group.
 - Typically acts as an umbrella for other programs (generally just EQIP) in which partner organization(s) ask for a large budget to address specific resource concerns. Funding from programs other than/in addition to EQIP can be requested through RCPP proposal but historically have not been. Program addresses landscape-scale projects (i.e. oak woodland restoration), and may function as a state program or a national program which involves resource priorities spanning multiple states. A partner organization takes on the role of sponsor which can then request funding for administrative oversight. Douglas and Josephine Counties are not currently involved in an RCPP due to a lack of sufficient number of NRCS staff to assist in program administration.
 - Joint Chiefs Partnership
 - Douglas County has submitted a plan for funding and has plans (with inventories) sitting on the shelf ready to go.
 - Jackson County has spent \$3.8 million through program
 - Currently there are talks to cut program, future funding is unknown/unlikely
 - Rogue Forest Collaborative
 - Large group of organizations which has identified priority resource concerns in the west. Developed methodology to sort highest priorities using an elaborate risk model. Looks for continuity of project areas.

Resource Concerns/Opportunities in Josephine County:

- Page and O'Brian Creek drainages - Have potential for a substantial forest fuel reduction program. MSOW has been involved, there is grant money available, and there is a large landowner buy-in. Additionally, Deer and Crooks creeks have potential for work.
- Murphy Dam- Possible CIS focused on wildlife and water quality. Looking at irrigation conversion (flood to pump/sprinkler) and fish passage barrier removal. Similar goals to current 'Bradshaw Drop' project. Historically has utilized OWEB funds. Requires large investment from local irrigation district.
- Williams – SWCD consistently working with agricultural producers (including cannabis producers). Focused on mitigating water quality issues associated with excessive run-off. Is looking to develop projects to address resource concerns in riparian areas. Currently battling local distrust of SWCD due to 'government image'.
- Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP):
Success story in Grants Pass and Illinois Valley. Preparing planting specification this winter. Looking to Oregon Department of Forestry for technical assistance.

Plant Materials Center –

- Can provide soil health tests for dry-land cover crops. Has published a Native Seed Production Guide. Will soon publish a Seedling Identification Guide.

Josephine County SWCD – (additional updates)

- Changed name to Two Rivers SWCD in effort to address concerns from locals that they (SWCD) was reaping benefits from the county through an undisclosed budget item.
- Had comprised 5 zones, consolidated to 3 zones.
- Now has 5 board members, down from 7.
- Illinois Valley SWCD office has moved location.

Other:

- Discussed definition of and additional benefits associated with historically underserved producers.
- NRCS-OR webpage suggested as a good resource for details on NRCS programs scope and availability.
- Additional discussion concerning an all-lands mapping project to show where and when conservation projects have occurred.