

**Douglas County Local Work Group Meeting  
Minutes  
December 6, 2017  
ODFW Conference Room located in Roseburg, Oregon**

David Chain, NRCS District Conservationist welcomed the participants, then had each participant introduce themselves around the room. In his welcome address David requested input from all of the participants with regard to the specific resource concerns that Douglas County has historically and currently face. Another main focus area was how to partner with other agencies to specifically target resource concerns and future opportunities that would lead to county-wide improvement. David then announced that he would be retiring from NRCS as of 12/31/2017. David began going through the Work Group Agenda. David gave a summary of the conservation efforts being put on the ground by NRCS and partners this past year. These efforts included:

**NRCS Work and Applied acres in David's 14 years of serving as Douglas and Josephine County's District Conservationist:**

- Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP):
  - 159 contracts
  - 36,311 contracted acres
  - \$4,861,000 obligated to assist implementation of improvements
- Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP):
  - 6 contracts
  - 220 contracted acres
  - \$167,000 obligated to assist implementation of improvements

**NRCS Work and Applied acres currently in Douglas County:**

- Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP):
  - 11 contracts
  - 8,033 contracted acres
  - \$313,000 obligated to assist implementation of improvements
- Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP):
  - 86 contracts
  - 1,245 contracted acres
  - \$127,560 annual rental payments each year
  - 91 total stream miles

**Current Interest and Application Opportunities:**

**Environmental Quality Incentive Program:**

- Douglas Landscape resiliency (aimed toward improving pasture and grazed forestland in focus area from Canyonville to Milo)
  - Next batching period begins March 15, 2018
- Seasonal High Tunnel Initiative
  - The purpose of the "Seasonal High Tunnel" conservation practice is to assist producers to extend the growing season for high-value crops in an environmentally safe manner. The practice has the potential to assist producers to address resource

concerns by improving plant quality, improving soil quality, and reducing nutrient and pesticide transport.

- Douglas County typically has 2-3 signups per year
- Currently there are 3 applications right now

### **Conservation Stewardship Program**

National Program that is aimed at agricultural producers who are operating at a high level, and want to implement additional enhancements to improve their operations within the five year contract period.

### **Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program**

- 86 Current contracts in Douglas County
- 1244.98 total acres approved
- Total annual payments: \$127,560 (not including cost-share and incentive payments)
- A number of contracts have expired without contract renewal, but the wildlife benefits remain

### **Wetland Reserve Easement:**

- Suzy provided specific details of the Easement programs available
- Currently there is one WRP in Douglas County and 5 in Coos/Curry Counties

### **Healthy Forest Reserve Program:**

- Program is only available for privately owned forestland and/or forestland belonging to a Tribe
- Easements including a Permanent Easement, 30 year-contracts and 10-year cost-share agreements
- To be eligible for enrollment, land must be private land or Tribal land which will restore enhance or measureable increase the likelihood of recovery of a threatened or endangered species must improve biological diversity or increase carbon sequestration
- Program currently not funded, the funding for this would be through a RCPP that incorporated this program

### **Ag Land Easement:**

- Programs is to protect ranch and farm land from being converted to other land use
- NRCS may contribute up to 50 percent of the fair market value of the agricultural land easement
- Voluntary signup program, and applications are currently being accepted

### **Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Grasslands:**

- Voluntary program that contracts with agricultural producers so that environmentally sensitive agricultural land is not farmed or ranched, but instead used for conservation benefits
- Participants receive rental payments and cost-share assistance
- Contracts are 14-15 years
- Program emphasizes support for grazing operations, plant, and animal biodiversity

### **Potential Conservation Implementation Strategies**

#### *Joint Chiefs Partnership – Elk Creek*

- Partnership between NRCS and USFS
- Private and Federal land, working together
- Landscape scale treatment

- Implementing fire resiliency through fuel reduction
- NRCS/USFS submitted the proposal and plan in 2017 FY, if funded potential funding could be available by 2019-2020.

*Gorse Control (in conjunction with neighboring counties)*

- CIS strategy for gorse control started 5 years ago at a roundtable discussion in Coos County, OR
- Gorse Action Group (GAG) working in partnership with many agencies and entities to control gorse
- Declaration of cooperation for gorse was signed
- NRCS currently writing a CIS for gorse control in Coos County, that will also include areas of Douglas County

*Conservation Innovation Grants*

- Biochar CIG with SURCP in Tiller
- Ongoing biochar analysis project lead by SURCP and Wilson Technologies (Kelpie Wilson)
- Goal is to turn biomass into a value added products. Creating byproducts from farm/ranch/forest wastes, mixing with manure, analyzing and then applying to pasture
- Wilson Technologies has held biochar workshops in Douglas and Josephine Counties and collaborating with UCC in an effort to refine biochar burner technology

*Oak Restoration RCPP – Willamette Valley & Douglas County*

- Make it a regional program with Lomakatsi taking the lead
- Strategic initiative along the Columbia River
- Great opportunity in Douglas and Josephine Counties
- Douglas County (NRCS) has pulled back, due to lack of staffing
- A region wide Oak Restoration initiative would have a wide range of benefits for wildlife and plant species. Discussion of a Columbia River into Northern California oak initiative is happening

*Soil Water Conservation Districts*

- Douglas SWCD
  - Lookingglass North is the current focus area
  - Primary objective: addressing water quality created by agriculture
  - Focusing on irrigation use, riparian areas as well as water management
- Umpqua SWCD

*Umpqua and Smith River Estuary Tidegate Restoration: rearing habitat*

- Continued focus area in Otter Creek and Brainard Creek (tributaries to the Lower Smith River in Reedsport)
- Extended the focus area across Lower Smith River to Camp Seven Gulch to Finger Board Slough
- Small focus area located along Providence Creek, on an urban growth boundary, with several small, condensed farms
- Working on applying for small grants to fund and implement practices to improve water quality through fencing, off-site watering facilities, stream crossings, tidegates, ag bridges and culverts
- Developing strategy for improving tidegates. Replacing old, poorly functioning tidegates
- Replacing failing culverts associated with the tidegate headgate in the interest of better fish passage and off-channel fish rearing habitat
- Currently working on a design for these improvements

*Umpqua and Smith River Estuary Tidegate Restoration: rearing habitat*

- Primary focus: water quality

- Technical Assistance Grant has been submitted to OWEB to complete the designs for this improvement
- Developing strategy for improving tidegates. Replacing old, poorly functioning tidegates
- Replacing failing culverts associated with the tidegate in the interest of better fish passage and off-channel fish rearing habitat
- Currently working on a design for these improvements
- There are numerous partners involved with this project including PURS, Umpqua SWCD, NOAA Fisheries, USFW, Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw
- 63 tidegates were identified in the Umpqua and Smith River Estuary
- A strategic implementation plan has been developed and is being finalized

#### *Sudden Oak Disease*

- Senator Merkley allocated \$750,000.00 to Curry County, Oregon to create the Sudden Oak Death Task Force to work collaboratively to look for more and better solutions to fight the pathogens.
- The Sudden Oak Death Task Force is currently taking a hiatus due to the Chetco Bar Fire that occurred during the summer of 2017
  - A large number of acreage suffering from Sudden Oak Death were burned in the fire
  - There was also a large number of fire personnel that drove through infected areas, so there is concern that Sudden Oak Death may have been spread
  - New concerns in the area include the tips of Douglas Fir trees dying, which is thought to be a strain of sudden oak death.

#### **Summary of participant resource concerns and conservation efforts:**

Fire resiliency  
 Improved Pastureland  
 Salmon Habitat Improvement  
 Site specific Native Plants in Restoration Areas  
 Oak Savannah Restoration  
 Rehabilitating Cooper Creek and Plat I Reservoir dams in Sutherlin, Oregon  
 Invasive Species Control  
 Gorse Management  
 Tidegate Replacement  
 Irrigation Improvements

#### **Round Robin of Resource Concerns:**

Local Ranch Manager who works in Douglas County

- Develop a program aimed at providing cost-share to protect forestland from forest fires
- Provide demonstration of the benefits of fire resiliency
- Cost share needs to pay well both in the short term and long term

NRCS

- How to create a successful CIS to provide cost share on improving pastureland in Douglas County, county wide (versus focus areas)

- Improved pastures by installing fences for rotational grazing, livestock water facilities for improved water quality and provide clean drinking water for livestock, and brush management
- CIS strategy for gorse control started 5 years ago at a roundtable discussion in Coos County, OR
- Gorse Action Group (GAG) working in partnership with many agencies and entities to control gorse
- Declaration of cooperation for gorse was signed
- NRCS currently writing a CIS for gorse control in Coos County, that will also include areas of Douglas County
- Potential of irrigation improvements, and how to package for internal funding irrigation CIS countywide

#### Elk Creek Watershed Council

- Salmon habitat improvements as an entire watershed focal point
- Focus on bringing agricultural and small woodland owners together within a watershed to collaborate and become involved with salmon habitat restoration on their personal property
- Break down watershed for specific landowners to show them what stage of the salmon life cycle occurs in the stretch of stream that runs through their property
- Educate landowners that even small changes can have huge, positive effects on salmon habitat.
- There is funding available for stream improvements

#### OSU Plant Material Center

- Providing technical assistance to landowners by recommending native plants in restoration areas
- Currently working with vineyards to suggest native species to plant between rows of grapes

#### Sutherlin Water Control District

- Rehabilitating Cooper Creek and Plat I Reservoirs that were built 50 years ago
- Funding for planning, design, and construction is obligated for Plat I reservoir
- Funding for planning and design are obligated for Cooper Creek
- Funding is being provided by PL-566, which is a flood prevention program funded by USDA
- Interested in putting together a strategy for private landowners to manage invasive woody species, which includes multiple treatments

#### Partnership for the Umpqua Rivers (PUR)

- Currently working on developing a 5 year goal plan internally, to plan better for grant writing and project funding, separating specific projects into multiple phases, and improved coordination to prioritize specific contractors to implement work on individual projects
- The last two fire seasons have dramatically decreased the amount of time to implement stream restoration projects during the time period when in-stream work is allowed. This is due to industrial fire protection shut downs in the woods, and contractor unavailable due to wildfires
- Working in coordination with Umpqua SWCD and NRCS on the Umpqua and Smith River Estuary tidegate Restoration
- Actively working in the Cow Creek Watershed, to get funding to complete a whole watershed restoration project. Partnering with BLM in Medford to create a multiyear watershed restoration initiative for Cow Creek
- PUR is always looking to build partnerships

OSU Forestry and Natural Resources Extension Agent

- Fire resiliency
- Forestland owners care about protecting their land, but don't necessarily take the action to protect it from wildfires
- Need ideas to entice the public to gather to offer education on fire resiliency

Umpqua Soil and Water Conservation District

- Believes that the fire wise program is outstanding in wildfire prevention for protecting personal properties
- Reiterated the importance of partnerships among agencies and entities to work together to find solutions and gain funding for restoration work
- Working on writing small grants to install livestock crossings to improve water quality