

**Clatsop County Local Work Group Meeting
February 6, 2018 OSU Ext Conference Room**

MINUTES

The meeting was called to order by Mitch Cummings at 10:00 a.m. Self-introductions followed. Those in attendance were:

NRCS	ODFW
ODFW/NRCS	Clatsop SWCD
NRCS PMC	Landowner
Landowner	NCLC
NPS	NCWA
Landowner	

Mitch 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. With decreasing staff numbers, we need to be more strategic in our approach to conservation to get the greatest benefit within a limited area and scope to address resource concerns the most efficiently.

In 2017 – NRCS received 8 EQIP applications and funded/contracted 5 of those. 2 high tunnels, 1 CAP, and 2 in the Green Mt Forest Health Conservation Implementation Strategy (CIS).

There will be a new 2018 Farm Bill coming out in the near future. With the new Secretary of Ag, there are changes coming to our agency and programs, we just don't know what or when.

Goals & Objectives – CIS

Mitch 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 is one year remaining in this CIS. Most of the interested landowners have already participated. Several Forest Management Plans have been developed.

- 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), and prescribed grazing.

There hasn't been a great deal of interest in this CIS. We are currently working with the SWCD to do more outreach. The main thing people seem to be interested in are heavy use areas for small scale horse properties, or other issues that can't be addressed through this program. It was mentioned that dollars can't be justified for a heavy use area for one horse, and concerns could possibly be addressed by implementing other practices. One common issue, is landowners losing pasture land to streambank erosion. This CIS does not include any practices that would assist with this. There needs to be a long range watershed plan developed to address streambank erosion on a larger watershed scale rather than individual landowners.

Looking for new resource concerns and focus areas for a new CIS. There was interest in developing a forestry CIS for the south part of the county.

Two participants are doing projects in the Lewis and Clark area and know of many projects we could partner on.

Other NRCS Programs discussed: (additional information has been edited into this section for the participant/readers reference)

- 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.
- RCP – 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. 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.

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

- ACEP – Easement program - The Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) provides financial and technical assistance to help conserve agricultural lands and wetlands. ACEP is a 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.

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. High tunnels work well on the coast to allow for a more diversified crop capability and growing ability.

Larry and Scott both provided success stories of the high tunnels that were installed on their property through the EQIP program.

Deadline to apply for this year's EQIP funding is March 16, 2018.

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.

Partner and Landowner Projects – everyone in the room got a chance to talk about projects they are working on. There was discussion of how and what additional assistance they could use.

Scott - reported that he purchased property along Bear Creek a few years ago that had been neglected and abandoned. He's been busy refurbishing everything and bringing the farm back to life. The SWCD has been assisting him with streambank stabilization work. He was able to install a high tunnel through the NRCS EQIP program. ODFW assisted with elk fencing and used his property for installation of a fry trap in the stream. CREST assisted with an old tide-gate removal. Working with FSA on securing a farm loan. Currently looking for assistance with brush management and reforestation. He raises nursery products, 5,000 chickens are processed annually, sells vegetables and other products at local farmer's markets. He is the Master of the Wickiup Grange. He's also working to partner with other local farmers to market local products. He's developing a 2-acre orchard. Looking to add pollinator plantings to aid with his blueberry and vegetable production.

Larry - obtained a seasonal high tunnel and improved irrigation practices through NRCS and is also in the process of transitioning to Organic. Close to obtaining certification for being organic. Having issues with well water being high in sodium. Domestic water is very expensive. He also has been working with ODFW to assist with exclusion fence.

Carla – NPS main focus has been restoration. They have restored 80 acres of floodplain in the Lewis and Clark system – riparian health, habitat improvements. Invasive weeds

continue to be a problem - purple loosestrife, canary grass and others. Working on reforestation and, brush management in the uplands.

Chris – attending a course at the community college on how to develop a forest management plan on his property.

Brooke – working on a Chum Strategic Action Plan, riparian plantings, fish passage, forest road removals, riparian restoration, and pollinator projects.

Mike - there is never enough credit given for the past work that has been done in the diked tidelands. Increased off-channel habitat while water quality continues to improve.

Mara – PMC is working with partner agencies to develop pollinator plantings. Cover crop trials, winter cover trial - managing cutting blocks of native species that are available to landowners. The PMC is a part of NRCS and is located in Corvallis. Contact info can be found online or by contacting your local NRCS office. They are also working on developing a native seedling identification guide that will be available soon.

Susana – has minty weed in pastures that she would like to identify. Would also like to obtain owl boxes to increase owl population that could help with gopher control. She has seen knotweed in the Jewell area. She will get in touch with Angie to discuss a possible conservation plan and how she can get assistance.

Amy – the NCLC is working on developing pollinator habitat on restoration projects. Assistance is available with forestland projects. Brainstorming ideas on how to work with NRCS in developing an RCPP for forestland projects.

Troy – ODFW lost 5 staff positions in the last few years leaving existing staff coverage pretty thin across Tillamook, Clatsop, and Columbia Counties. Troy's main focus is fish-centric, working on fish passage, habitat improvements, in-stream work, mainly concentrated on Coho. The Tweedle Creek off-channel habitat project has proven very successful.

Michele can provide technical assistance on uplands and lowlands and not tied to only fish. She can assist with habitat development in forest lands.

Meeting adjourned 12:10 p.m.
Dee Robinson

Edits M Cummings