

Meeting/Project Name:	Marion County; Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Local Work Group Public Input Meeting		
Date of Meeting: (MM/DD/YYYY)	2/22/2019	Time:	9:00-12:00 PM
Minutes Prepared By:	Jarod Seaman	Location:	USDA Office; Salem, OR
2. Agenda and Notes, Decisions, Issues			
Topic	Decision		
Purpose of Meeting	Provide a forum for NRCS to work collaboratively with its county stakeholders and partners so they can develop a plan that strategically utilizes limited resources to address priority resource concerns in a way that benefits all individuals within Marion County for 2019-2020.		
Marion County Priority Resource Concerns	<p>The attendees were given a survey and asked to rank the top 5 priority resource concerns in Marion County. Water quantity remains top resource concern in Marion County with water quality moving up to number two switching places with soil erosion.</p> <p>1) Water Quantity 4) Wildlife 2) Water Quality 5) Energy 3) Soil Erosion</p> <p>One person added an additional resource concern; Loss of agricultural ground to development. While this is not one of NRCS's SWAPA+HE resource concerns, it's still a important part of managing the natural resources and might be considered in future meetings.</p>		

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Conservation Implementation Strategies (CIS) & other Federal Cost-Share programs	<p><u>Champoeg Creek Watershed CIS:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2018 was the 4th year for the Champoeg Creek Watershed CIS with over 2.3 million dollars being obligated for conservation efforts. 2019 is the final year for the Champoeg Creek CIS. NRCS currently has eight applications for 2019 to improve water irrigation efficiency and improve water quantity. <p><u>Howell Prairie Creek/Pudding River Watershed CIS:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2018 was the 2nd year of funding and \$500,000 of financial assistance for conservation practices was provided to agricultural producers. There was a minor boundary change for 2019 funding cycle and currently there are three applications for water conservation. NRCS will remain Howell Prairie Creek/Pudding River CIN thru 2021. <p><u>Forestry Structural Diversity CIS:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This Conservation Implementation Strategy (CIS) includes 7 counties. This strategy will assist landowners in restoring structural diversity to monoculture timber stands through the use of active management to thin stands, encourage healthy forest soils and to diversify species composition through planting. Prioritization was based both on those forest sites that had the greatest ecological need for increased bio-diversity and areas that include non-industrial private forest landowners who are ready, willing and able to plan and implement forest bio-diversity practices. Marion County has three applications interested in developing a forest management plan in 2019. Marc DesJardin (ODF) Marion County stewardship forester will be assisting NRCS with the development of forest management plans. Marc mentioned that ODF has a grant program to reduce high fire potential areas to reduce fuel loads near or around houses. Local landowners may be interested in this additional funding opportunity. <p><u>State Animal Feeding Operation (AFO) CIS:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This state-wide CIS seeks to address priority resource concerns associated with AFOs by focusing on AFOs that need to develop and/or implement CNMP structural and management practices. Marion County currently has four applications but thru concentrated outreach Marion county NRCS hopes to gather more applications. 		

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National Initiatives:

- Initiatives for the 2018 Farm bill include; Organic, Energy, and High Tunnel. Marion County applications have been selected for funding in each of these initiatives. This year, NRCS has abundant funding and is working hard to obligate.
- With the new 2018 Farm Bill the Organic Initiative increased the payment limitation from \$80,000 to \$140,000 for five years and removing the annual payment limitation which had been set previously been \$20,000 per year. Removing the annual payment limitation and increasing the payment limitation to \$140,000 will allow NRCS planner to better serve larger organic farming operation such as the organic AFO/CAFO operations.
- High tunnel and Energy initiative payment limitations did not change with the 2018 Farm Bill.

Proposed CIS's for Marion County starting 2020:

- AFO CIS: This new proposed Conservation Implementation Strategy (CIS) for 2020 seeks to address the problem by focusing on AFOs that need to develop and/or implement CNMP structural and management practices in a nine-county area. The northwest corner of Oregon's, nine counties (Polk, Marion, Yamhill, Clackamas, Multnomah, Washington, Tillamook, Columbia, and Clatsop) make up a total of 5,027,197 Acres. Rural agricultural land uses account for 1,046,291 acres. The combined demands from all land uses places a heavy burden on water quality as agricultural runoff reaches surface and groundwater resources.
 - *All attendees agreed to move forward with this new CIS to assist AFOs and improve the water quality resource concerns.*
- Marion Middle Willamette Watershed- Water Quantity / Water Quality CIS 2020-2025: Marion County primary resource concern and focus since the 2002 Farm Bill has been to address water quantity issues on inefficient irrigation and have converted highly efficient irrigation systems. The focus area identified will address water quantity and water quality resource issues identified by the Marion County LWG in February 2019. Funding amounts:
 - 1st year = \$500,000
 - 2-3 years = \$700,000
 - 4-5 years = \$600,000
- Group Comments/inputs:
 - *Doug Kraemer: agreed this would be a constructive conservation strategy since he sees lots of big gun irrigation systems still in the Woodburn area.*
 - *Keith Johnston: South Salem/Talbot area would benefit with this new CIS. More efficient irrigation systems are better for the precious water resource for the future.*
 - *Bob Koenig: Good plan to show environmental improvements to the public.*

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Daniel Keudell: Likes the plan to further conservation but wondered if all the conservation funding isn't used will other areas be able to get the funding.</i> • <i>Gayle Goschie: Everyone should try to do their part and any conservation improvements are important.</i> • <i>Dave Badeau: Good plan for both water and soil conservation.</i> <p><u>The group gave full support to move forward with the proposed CIS with a tweak to the border.</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Hazelnut Cover Crop CIS 2020-2025:</u> Four county CIS (Marion, Polk, Yamhill, Washington) This Conservation Implementation Strategy (CIS) addresses the primary resource concern of soil erosion in orchards. Secondly, vegetative practices that reduce erosion will improve soil quality and pollinator/beneficial insect habitat. Hazelnut orchards in the Willamette Valley are typically managed to control or eliminate orchard floor vegetation to minimize competition with trees and facilitate harvest. Because of these bare soil conditions, many hazelnut orchards exhibit erosion and symptoms associated with degraded soil health (organic matter depletion, poor aggregate stability, compaction). However, some hazelnut growers are demonstrating that establishing orchard floor vegetation and/or applying mulch reduces erosion and improves soil quality. This CIS seeks to build on those efforts and help more hazelnut growers use Cover Crops, Conservation Cover, Mulching, and associated practices with erosion prevention in their orchards. • <u>Group comments/inputs:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>This CIS is a good idea but going to be an uphill battle. Harvesting with ground cover is possible and currently being used on established orchards. A major paradigm shift will need to take place to get producers to adopt this conservation practice.</i> • <i>Bob Koenig: is NRCS in contact with the new landowners installing hundreds of acres of hazelnuts along Marion Road. They don't have any row cover and might benefit from NRCS programs. NRCS plans to work with the SWCD to perform some outreach with the new landowners.</i> <p><u>Full support from the group was given to move forward with the new Hazelnut Cover Crop CIS.</u></p>			

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<p>Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)</p> <p>Wetland Reserve Easement (WRE)</p> <p>Wetland Reserve Program (WRP)</p>	<p>Dani Aleshire, Basin Easement Specialist, provided a quick recap of NRCS' available easement programs. There are two options available under the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP): The Wetland Reserve Easement (WRE) and the Agricultural Land Easement (ALE). The purpose of WRE is to assist landowners with the financial and technical assistance to restore and protect historic wetlands. NRCS is the easement holder and manager and currently manages 13 WRP/E easements in Marion County. In conjunction with the USFWS and their partners for wildlife program, NRCS has been able stretch program funding and technical knowledge that USFWS has brought to projects in interagency agreements on WRP/WRE projects.</p> <p>The purpose of ALE is to protect working farms and ranches. NRCS contributes funding for ALE, but a separate entity is the easement holder. The ALE option may be a useful tool to protect working farms in Marion County as development pressure increases.</p> <p>ACEP was renewed and funding authorized through the new (2018) farm bill. With the new Farm Bill NRCS will be looking for new opportunities with our partners for future restoration projects in Marion County. NRCS is accepting applications for ACEP-WRE and ACEP-ALE.</p>		
<p>Streaked Horned Lark (SHLA) Biologist: Pacific Birds</p>	<p>Niles Brinton introduced himself as the Streaked Horned Lark (SHL) Biologist working with NRCS and Pacific Birds in a Joint Venture program to develop farming friendly practices that assist in the recovery of the listed species. He gave a brief explanation about where the SHL likes to nest, raise their brood and live year-round. Niles has starting on Conservation Initiative Strategy for the SHLA and is looking for an interested party or group interested in a RCPP.</p> <p>Field surveys last year highlighted two separate nesting/brooding areas of near Salem. One area was in the Turner flats in open fields with very little cover and/or bare areas. The second area was in the Silverton hills before and after field burning had taken place.</p> <p>Niles has received a "Working Lands Habitat Conservation" grant to work on a pilot project for streaked horned lark and conservation measures on three different conservation practices. Volunteers are needed for this new pilot project.</p>		

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USFWS – Conservation Partnership in the Willamette Valley	<p>Chris Seal (USFWS): Chris works as the Conservation Partnership liaison for the USFWS turning marginal agricultural ground into productive conservation land. The SHLA is the newest animal on the threatened and endangered species list (10/3/2013). Reason for listing: change in land use is the primary factor and range wide population decline/range contraction. SHLA is one of 5 wintering ssp. in WV (and one of 21 North American lark ssp.) USFWS is currently focusing on outreach within the Willamette Valley where 2/3 of the overall population resides. Critical habitat has been designated to Refugees only (Finley, Basket Slough, and Ankeny). Important note is the 4D rule doesn't consider weed control on the landscape to be considered TAKE; allows ag operations. More information on the SHLA can be found at http://cascadiaprairieoak.org/documents/StreakedHornedLark-TechnicalNote.pdf</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The USFWS has not established a species recovery team. Research and creativity are needed along with private landowner commitments to make recovery efforts successful. • Landowners/farmers will be key to helping with habitat, but they need to be informed where the habitat is and how to avoid any “take” as much as possible. Best for farmers to voluntarily allow habitat versus being mandated. 		
Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program	<p>The WRE program discuss raised a question/comment from Chris Seal (USFWS) about the State's new Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program. The State Legislature established the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program (OAHP) in 2017 to help address these challenges. The program provides voluntary incentives to farmers and ranchers to support practices that maintain or enhance both agriculture and natural resources such as fish and wildlife on agricultural lands. OAHP was developed by a collaborative of organizations representing natural resource conservation and agriculture, including farmer and rancher representatives.</p> <p>One of the LWG attendees Doug Kraemer is a commission member for OAHP. According to Doug the administrative rules have been written and were approved in January 2019. The statutes have not been completed but are forthcoming. The commission asked for 10 million from the Governor's budget, but none was received at this time.</p> <p>The program focuses on succession planning, easement planning, and funds conservation management plans.</p> <p>Next meeting: March 6, 2019 12-3pm at Broadway coffeehouse</p>		

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Energy Trust of Oregon	<p><u>Ulrike Mengelberg</u>: – Energy trust of Oregon Outreach Manager</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Energy trust has lots of incentives on irrigation improvements with rebates. • There are some pricing changes to certain items and a few items available for financial have been discontinued. • New rebate forms are available online or paper copies if you prefer. • Location of the power usage is important to receive any assistance. To view coverage the map go to www.energytrust.org • Certain energy improvements through energy trust require pre-approval so please check before purchase of equipment. • VFD's are potentially a good fit for cost-share. • Lesa/Lepa conversion for linear irrigation systems to lower boom heights is a new cost-share item through Energy Trust. 		
Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA)	<p><u>Jo Morgan</u>: ODA Water Quality Specialist</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Agricultural Water Quality program continues to work well with voluntary compliance and technical assistance to landowners. • ODA is currently focusing on Strategic Implementation Areas (SIA) to focus outreach and education. Seven areas in Oregon are chosen every year and they have four levels of concern ranging from no concern to serious concern. These SIA's only apply to perennial streams not intermittent. 28 SIA's have been identified and completed. • Three active SIA's currently in the Willamette valley; camp creek, walker/stout creek, and muddy creek. • Soil and Water conservation districts decide on focus areas for education outreach. ODA has provided 100,000 to SWCD's for stake holder outreach and additional leg work. • ODA continues to request more funding (10,500 annual) to monitor water quality with the assistance of OSU extension. • Farmers are tasked to "Do no harm" when farming and to reach water quality goals. Majority of parcels are "of no concern". Compliance goal is predicted to be reached. • Properties with in these SIA areas that do not meet water quality requirements may be subject to further compliance investigation. • Education for Oregon residents regarding water quality is still a primary focus for ODA. <p>Water quality improvements are totally voluntary for landowners at this time.</p>		

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Marion Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD):	<p data-bbox="483 319 699 352"><u>Jane Keppinger:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="532 373 1484 506">• The Landowner Assistance Program (LAP) remains to be the SWCD's primary funding source for conservation improvements with an annual project about up to 7500/project and 20,000 in five years. The SWCD is currently in the 3rd funding cycle for the LAP program. <li data-bbox="532 527 1484 594">• In 2018, the LAP program allocated \$196,000 within 29 projects. 92% of those projects were for irrigation efficiency improvements. <li data-bbox="532 615 1484 747">• The SWCD hosted the first ever water right boot camp in November for large and small agricultural producers interested in learning more about water rights. Over 200 people attended the event which was the largest turn out ever for a SWCD conservation event. <li data-bbox="532 768 1484 835">• Working with ODA on a focus area in the upper Mill Creek watershed for outreach and education on agricultural areas with riparian habitat. <li data-bbox="532 856 1484 989">• Ron Crouse retired in December and the Marion SWCD has a new outreach coordinator; Jenny Ammon. Jenny has been putting on conservation workshop on first Fridays. March 1, 2019 is the last one for the year, <li data-bbox="532 1010 1484 1430">• Other SWCD news: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="678 1052 1279 1085">- Continued conservation education for K-12 <li data-bbox="678 1106 1409 1173">- Weed mapping funding for 2019 weed board grant in upper Mill Creek area. <li data-bbox="678 1194 1484 1287">- Approved for a grant working with the North Santiam watershed council to initiate a weed management program along the main stem of the North Santiam. <li data-bbox="678 1308 1008 1341">- Working with partners <li data-bbox="678 1362 1268 1396">- Assist landowners with resource concerns <li data-bbox="678 1417 1182 1451">- Annual native plant sale is in March 		

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<p>Anna Rankin: Pudding River Watershed Council</p> <p>(Note: couldn't attend so a statement was given to NRCS)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Rethink Your Watershed – Annual meeting 2019 (Pick up a postcard.) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. Wednesday March 13th 6:00 – 8:30 PM B. Evergreen Golf Club, Mt Angel C. Live music and beer D. Derek Godwin and Gayle Goschie are speaking. 2. Pesticide Reduction Focus Group <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. Please consider joining the advisory team for the ODA Pesticide Stewardship Partnership. B. Contact Anna Rankin at cleanpuddingriver@gmail.com C. Pesticide monitoring continues in Abiqua, Butte, Zollner and Pudding at 99E. 3. Abiqua Creek Salmon and Trout Large Wood Project <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. Seeking partners to contribute 18"-20"X40' logs and 3' boulders B. Weyerhaeuser and Abbey Foundation are landowners C. Implementation in 2020 4. PRWC Governing Board <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. Nine active members but more knowledge, skills and abilities are needed B. Seeking one representative for soil and water conservation and one for education C. Meet monthly on the second Wednesday in Woodburn 		
RECAP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marion County NRCS has worked well with its county stakeholders and partners so they can develop a plan that strategically utilizes limited funding, and limited resources to address priority resource concerns in a way that benefits all individuals within Marion County for 2019 and beyond. 		

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Final Comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Bob Koenig</u>: Thanks, Bob always enjoys the meeting and seeing what's being done in the county. • <u>Marc DesJardin</u>: ODF and NRCS just had a joint meeting to discuss the forestry program and how ODF will be working with the program and how they can assist NRCS. • <u>Doug Krahmer</u>: Seeing lots of diversity in the county. • <u>Niles Brinton</u>: Did the Marion SWCD fill all their board member positions? • <u>Marion SWCD</u>: Great to work with partners and Les/NRCS. Watershed councils are really doing good things in the county. • <u>Gayle Goshie</u>: Well organized meeting, good to hear local happenings. Changes in weather patterns highlights water conservation for the future. • <u>Dave Budeau</u>: Thanks; good to hear from everyone and learn about all the diversity for conservation in the county. • <u>Meredith Hoffman</u>: Be sure and refer folks to the district if they are interested in conservation assistance. • <u>Brandon Bishop</u>: The Marion SWDC is going gangbuster to improve conservation in the county. Keep up the good work! • <u>Jo Morgan</u>: Thanks • <u>Chris Seal</u>: Thanks to the NRCS for the support with conservation. • <u>Cameron King</u>: Continues to see idle ground (fallow) that could use conservation work. Cameron has noticed lots of federal employees at LWG meetings. Is interested in tapping into other funding for conservation. • <u>Daniel Keudell</u>: Thanks, great meeting and thanks to Les • <u>Ulrike Mengelberg</u>: Energy Trust can help with irrigation improvements and maintenance for energy savings. If producers make any improvements, all they must do is fill out a rebate form and send it to Energy Trust. VFD and Drip improvements require vendor pre-approval on any Energy Trust financial assistance. Spread the word! 		
	Les Bachelor – NRCS Thank you all for coming; Adjourn 12:00 PM.		
