

Clatsop County Local Work Group Meeting
February 11th, 2020 - OSU Ext Conference Room

Minutes

The meeting was called to order by Thomas Gehrkins at 10:05 a.m. Self-introductions followed.

Thomas 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. Our programs are focused on the small private land ownership. We address soil, water, air, plants, and animals.

Thomas Gehrkins DC Clatsop Co. presented the topics for discussion:

Thomas is working on developing a new CIS that will be submitted to our state office in May for approval that would begin in the 2021 funding cycle if approved.

Current NRCS CIS's and Initiatives available in Clatsop County

- **Small Acreage Livestock Producers**

Animal Feeding Operation Initiative – this is a state-wide initiative for livestock producers. This funding is available to animal feeding operation (AFO) producers statewide to address water quality and air quality resource concerns, by developing a Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP) to manage manure and organic byproducts, and to implement conservation practices identified in that plan.

The objective of a CNMP is to provide AFO owners and operators with a plan to manage manure and organic byproducts by combining conservation practices and management activities into a conservation system that, when implemented, will control soil erosion and protect water and air quality.

A few of the practices include: CNMP's, composting facility, nutrient management, heavy use area protection, field borders, filter strips, roof runoff structures, etc.

- **Forest Health and Forest Management (Non-industrial, private land)**

This is a basin-wide Forest Diversity CIS for the North Coast/Lower Willamette Basins.

Resource concerns for the forest grounds included: Swiss Needle Cast, Spruce insects, Stump Stands, forest roads and engineering & culverts, crossing streams, road up grades, erosion and surfacing, fire access being impeded by overgrown vegetation.

Practices would include: Forest Management Plans, pre-commercial thinning, roads, culverts, decommission roads, tree planting, brush mgt., herbaceous weed mgt., etc.

- **Wetland Restoration/Off Channel Fish & Wildlife Habitat**

2 WRP and past CREP projects

More opportunities available

- **Seasonal High Tunnel**

NRCS will help provide financial assistance for a High Tunnel up to 2178 sq.ft.

This is to extend the growing season and to assist in plant health/ and plant productivity.

This is one of our most successful programs within EQIP in our county.

Question about how we get the word out on the availability of the High Tunnel program. Word of mouth, the small farm community is well-aware of the program and having high success with installation and use. Send anyone interested in the program to Thomas Gehrrens, NRCS, for more information. Cost-share rate for reimbursement for the high tunnel is approximately \$3.28 per sq.ft. with a cap at \$7725. The difference between a high tunnel and a greenhouse is the high tunnel crops are planted in the ground and not in pots on tables. The plastic is highly durable and will last several years and withstand most storms on the coast range. Teresa gave her personal experience with her high tunnel from beginning of application process through actual crop production and operation. With the high tunnel comes the potential to include pollinator habitat and cover crop practices that will also improve soil health. Lengthy discussion and networking on the many benefits of high tunnels and opportunities to benefit from them. Pamela mentioned that it would be great to have a community farm tour because the farmlands are hidden from the general public traffic patterns and become invisible. Clatsop has reestablished the FFA program in the school system, which is very exciting. We have a successful forestry tour already but would be great for the community and youth to see the active farms in operation in the county. Thomas will work with Pamela to brainstorm and make this small farm ag tour happen. Discussion about how to promote farms and farmlands in the county. Discussion about historical agriculture in the county and how it has evolved and changed over the years. One of the barriers for farmers in the county is access to large scale compost and fertilizer.

- **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

Up to \$20,000 a year and \$80,000 over a 6-year timeline

Must be organic or transitioning to organic

Practices that deal with soil health, pollinator habitats, and livestock operations

The group decided that the main resource concerns in the county were:

Water quality, water quantity, climate change, the lack of current watershed assessments

Other topics from Meeting

Domestic Wells – NRCS can only assist with installing wells for livestock use.

One of the other benefits for small farms that install high tunnels is the practice for water catchment. You must have an existing roof to collect and harvest water from in order for NRCS to provide assistance. Collected water can be used to water crops in the high tunnel.

Discussion concentrated on agriculture and ag-tourism. One suggestion is to speak to the local Chamber of Commerce to highlight farmers or new farms in the same way they would introduce a new small business in town.

There is a huge need in this county to have an OSU Extension agent that covers agriculture.

Watershed councils in Clatsop county have merged – there are now only two watershed councils covering the whole county.

CREST has a drone and an operator for hire that can obtain data for different projects.

What would be the greatest assistance NRCS can provide to the agriculture operators:

- Exposure, marketing

- How to produce more efficiently

- Pollinator habitat creation

- Predators – elk, coyote (contact ODFW; guard dogs, fencing)

What do you like best about Clatsop County:

- Quality of Lifestyle

Recreation Opportunities
Open discussions and community

Would be great to host a Small Farm Conference similar to the one that is being held in Corvallis by OSU, possibly at the Seaside Convention Center.

Oregon Small Farms organization is very interested in assisting small farm operators on the coast.

Meeting adjourned at noon.

Dee Robinson