



Tillamook County Local Work Group Meeting February 25, 2020 POTB Conference Room

MINUTES

The meeting was called to order by Mitch Cummings at 10:10 a.m.

Welcome and Self Introductions

Mitch welcomed everyone to the meeting and stated that the purpose of this meeting is to provide a forum for partners, farm, ranch, forestry representatives and conservation groups to share conservation activities and discuss natural resource problems. These collaborative discussions with our partners help NRCS develop a local strategy to guide farm bill funding to address resource issues in the future.

Mitch gave an overview of the current CIS's and Farm Bill initiatives available for Tillamook County.

Farm Bill contracting process begins with an application by the landowner, then all applications get ranked. Top ranked applications get funded first, and a contract is developed between NRCS and the landowner. The landowner is responsible for implementing the contracted practices. NRCS provides job sheets and specifications on how the practices must be installed. When the work is completed, NRCS will do a site visit to ensure as-builts meet NRCS specifications, then payment is made to the landowner. If a contractor or TSP has been hired by the landowner to conduct the work, it is the responsibility of the landowner to make payment to them.

NRCS Statewide Initiatives Available in Tillamook County:

- EQIP Seasonal High Tunnel Initiative – This program has been continuous since 2013. This year we have 4 applications so far. In previous years we have contracted with 11 landowners for high tunnels, totaling \$67,069.
- Organic Initiative – We had 2 applications in 2015 that were both contracted, but no applications since.
- AFO Initiative - 21 applications in 2018-2019, some applications were deferred, others fell out due to ineligibility and remaining applications were screened/ranked and competed for the limited state-wide funding. We contracted 1. So far this year, we have received 22 applications.
- Energy Initiative - we received 8 applications in 2018-2019 and contracted 7. This year, we have received 6 applications so far.

- Regional Conservation Partnership Program – RCPP – This program 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 have been successful in receiving these RCPP contracts. We will be exploring opportunities how this program can be utilized in Tillamook County. RCPP is a comprehensive and flexible program that uses partnerships to stretch and multiply conservation investments and reach conservation goals on a regional or watershed scale. RCPP projects last up to five years. For each RCPP project, NRCS invests federal dollars and project partners match the federal award with private or local funds or in-kind services.
- Easement Programs – ACEP, ALE, WRE - The Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) provides financial and technical assistance to help conserve agricultural lands and wetlands. ACEP 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. With ALE, NRCS helps Indian tribes, state and local governments and non-governmental organizations protect working agricultural lands and limit non-agricultural uses of the land. With WRE, NRCS helps to restore, protect and enhance enrolled wetlands.

Lower Willamette/North Coast Basin Strategies:

- **Forest Diversity** – Focus area Little Nestucca, Neskowin, lower Big Nestucca. Practices include Forest Management Plans, pre-commercial thinning, brush management, tree/shrub establishment and many others. A Forest Management Plan must be in place before implementation practices can be applied for.
- **Basin-wide Animal Feeding Operation** – Waste Storage facilities and roofs have been added practices this year. A CNMP is a required before implementation practices can be applied for.

In addition, there are two older CIS programs we are just finishing up contracts on.

- Water Quality Nutrient Management CIS/CNMP: the last year for applications in this CIS was 2016. The last remaining contracts will be completed this year. We were able to contract 43 out of the 55 total applications. We used \$739,245 in this CIS.

- Nestucca Water Quality CIS: This was short-lived. Mostly fish passage projects; 8 culverts and 2 bridge installed. Contracted 6 out of 8 applications, totaling \$339,349.
- Salmon Super Hwy Project - funded by Two Chiefs funding. Set up to fund forest practices, forest management plans, fish passage, and additional practices associated with water quality and riparian work. From 2017-2019 we contracted with 43 people out of 47 applicants, expending \$1,055,275.

Tillamook Strategies:

- Water Quality/Fish Passage – Two Chiefs (finishing projects)
- Forest/Soil Health – Two Chiefs (finishing projects)

Historical Tillamook Program Participation Summary

Water Quality Nutrient Management CIS/CNMP (Closed out final contracts this year)

		Applications	Contracts	Dollars
2011 - 2016	FINAL TOTAL	55	43	\$739,245

Nestucca Water Quality CIS (Fish Passage/WQ)

		Applications	Contracts	Dollars
2013 - 2016	FINAL TOTAL	8	6	\$339,349

Nestucca/Tillamook Watershed Function (Two Chiefs/Salmon Super Hwy)

(Fish Passage/WQ)

2017	17	15	\$237,216
2018	15	13	\$444,920
2019	17	15	\$373,136
TOTALS	47	43	\$1,055,272

High Tunnel Initiative

Year	Applications	Contracts	Dollars
2013	5	3	\$ 9,485
2014	2	0	0
2015	3	3	\$19,606
2016	1	1	\$ 7,732

	2017	2	1	\$ 7,080
	2018	4	3	\$23,166
	2019	1	0	
Sign-up in Progress	2020	4		
	TOTALS	17	11	\$67,069

Energy Initiative

	Year	Applications	Contracts	Dollars
	2018	7	7	\$22,720
	2019	1	0	
Sign-up in Progress	2020	6		

Organic Initiative

	Year	Applications	Contracts	Dollars
	2015-2019	2	2	\$34,447
Sign-up in Progress	2020	0		

AFO Initiative

	2018	12	1	\$ 8,930
	2019	9	0	0
Sign-up in Progress	2020	22		

Mitch provided brochures on several Farm Bill programs and Oregon NRCS’s Strategic Approach to Conservation.

Future Possible Conservation Implementation Strategies

Tide Gates - A group from NRCS went to Coos County and the Coquille area to tour the local tide gate projects including some muted tide gate regulator projects. The group developed a “White Paper” about important considerations NRCS should be aware of if we move forward to implement tide gate projects in Oregon. Some of the challenges include development of partnerships, permits, engineering, funding, etc. There is also a working group with OWEB to see how we can partner with these culvert projects. Rudy asked if we can contract with drainage districts, or does it have to be individual landowners. We don’t know the answer to that yet. There are eligibility requirements that must be met, and not quite sure how that would be determined with a drainage district. Tide Gate replacement is complex, especially for NRCS as a federal agency. There will no doubt continue to be more studies and exchanges of information in order

for the Oregon Leadership Team to feel comfortable in making any decisions about involvement. OWEB is hiring a person that will deal with the permitting process that will make it easier for the landowner.

Forestry – we have a current Forestry CIS that is part of a basin-wide funding pool. Most of our forestry contracts these past few years have been covered under the Two Chief’s CIS. The basin pool is for “Forest Diversity” and the CIS has two more years of funding. When this one ends, another CIS will be developed that will concentrate on “Wildfire Suppression” rather than diversity. Forest Landowners must have a current Forest Management Plan in place before applying for implementation type projects.

Water Quality/Fish Passage – Two Chief’s ended last year. One of the biggest challenges was getting the inventory work and the participation by the landowners. Several attempts at outreach had very few results. Rudy mentioned an issue with gravel bars in the lower Kilchis. What can we do about it? It affects temperature, fish passage, and others. The Grande Ronde Tribe is interested in fish passage work on streams adjoining their ownerships particularly. Work has been done in the upper reaches by Tribes and agencies but seems to get bottlenecked in the lower areas with individual landownership. If other agencies and entities are out working with landowners, you can direct them to NRCS to gain more information on what assistance is available.

Discussion about the Jewell Creek project. Initial partnership started with the watershed council. Partnership included NRCS, landowner, Nestucca, Neskowin, Sand Lake, Watershed Council, USFWS, USFS, ODFW, Tillamook SWCD.

Two Chief’s funding has been invaluable to the county and partners to implement projects that would otherwise not have been accomplished. Discussion on the validity of continuing these types of projects in the county, and what partnership support is out there.

Soil Health – Nationally and in Oregon there is a big push in NRCS for soil health. Encouraging no-till and cover crops. Thomas asked if corn is here to stay in the county. That would be a driving factor for soil health. ODA is going to start working with the producers to make sure that the ground is being utilized and taken care of to the full potential. Pre and post soil samples will be a requirement to test soil quality and determine the amount of manure that can be applied. ODA has other concerns with soil health where nutrients are applied, other than just nitrogen. Phosphorus and Copper among others.

Animal Feeding Operation – The North Coast and Lower Willamette Basins have our own funding pool under this initiative. This will be the first year we can utilize this. Several applications have been coming in. ODA is starting to take focus on small hobby farms. They are not large enough to require a permit, but still need guidance to stop polluting streams. ODA is sending these folks to NRCS for guidance. Now that funds area available to help address these issues, ODA will be more focused on this. Tillamook SWCD is also trying to work with these folks to educate them on proper manure management.

Partner and Landowner Projects – Current/future focus and how can NRCS help.

Tillamook SWCD – Rudy stated we need tide gate funding. The majority of funds are going to southern Oregon. We need to plan to be ready to move when funds are available. Working on riparian plantings, weed control, fencing, etc. Ray mentioned that the high tunnels are invaluable. Manure Management is crucial to this county – streams are getting cleaner because of manure management. Fish passage is the most important issue in the county. There is a great need for storage facilities.

ODF – happy to see the FMP's being developed and will be happy to explore opportunities with new wildfire suppression CIS in the future.

Kristy Foster - Tillamook Estuaries Partnership (TEP) Backyard planting program is ongoing. Invasive species removal. Tree/shrub establishment to help with riparian areas and erosion control. Working on salmon-based project that would put large debris in streams for habitat. When TEP knows what programs are available they can be an outreach partner.

Big opportunity to reach small woodland owners and get FMP's in place.

ODA – happy to hear that NRCS is bringing back waste storage facility funding which will help landowners meet nutrient management requirements to keep them in compliance. These facilities were made available through the current Basin AFO CIS.

Nutrient Management – Waste storage facilities. Landowners will have to have a current CNMP to qualify for funding for structures. Engineering assistance is going to be a challenge. TSP's may be utilized through this process.

Food Roots – working with small landowners and vegetable growers. Many of these folks have taken advantage of the high tunnel initiative with positive results. Food Roots has a local retail food store in town that sells local produce.

ODFW – working on fish passage. There is now a habitat restoration person that is available to assist with planning and coordinating projects.

Eric Allen – interested and concerned about protection of the local in clam stocks.

Salmon Superhighway - working on fish passage throughout the county. There is a gap in the lowland ag lands and looking to identify landowners where culvert replacement projects could be implemented. Also looking for tidegate opportunities.

Don Aufdermauer - ditch cleaning is greatly needed in the county. Permitting is an issue. Need to get the water off the land. Funding is needed to assist with this.

TBFID – Tilda - worked with private landowner to repair tidegate. Need to establish a consortium with the drainage districts to streamline funding and permitting. Briefly discussed the consortium developed up in Washington State that basically developed a BO type agreement with the various regulatory agencies. This agreement lays out side-boards within which, the drainage districts can conduct work in their areas.

Grand Ronde – mostly working in timberlands – salmon are culturally important to the tribe; fish passage is crucial.

Garshaw - NNSLWC – inventoried tidegates last summer. Will be working with landowners to repair/replace tidegates. Sand lake basin – identified restoration needs and working on habitat restoration.

York Johnson - Need to keep the momentum going with water quality in the county. Need to relieve the burden on the private landowners. The results of EPA’s Nitrate sampling in Tillamook county rivers is still not available as a final report to the public.

Mitch invited everyone to please reach out to NRCS if you want to talk about any opportunities or resource concerns in the county. Partnership is crucial in getting conservation on the ground.

Meeting adjourned at 12:05 p.m.
Dee Robinson