

Morrow County Local Work Group Meeting Minutes February 20, 2020

The workgroup was attended by representatives from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, US Forest Service, Oregon Wheat League, OSU Extension, Morrow Soil and Water Conservation District and 11 Morrow County landowners.

Jake Calvert, acting District Conservationist presented a PowerPoint showing the number of contracts, funding levels, practices, acres treated, and payments made for each conservation implementation strategy and initiative in Morrow County for the past few years.

Jake also discussed upcoming program deadlines. This led the landowners to bring up concerns over the lack of new enhancements for the Conservation Stewardship Program. NRCS encouraged them to work with extension, wheat league, etc. if they have ideas for new enhancements for coming years.

Facilitator, Damon Brosnan then began a group brainstorming session on resource concerns/problems by land use. The landowners were asked what they are seeing throughout the county and where NRCS and partners might focus time and resources in the future.

Irrigated Cropland

- Remote soil moisture monitoring/IWM
- Use of drones and infrared technology
- Simulated drip – Pivot sprinklers to drag tube

Dryland Crop

- Soil Health – including cover crops, micronutrients, soil amendments, and minimum disturbance. A question was brought up as to why producers are converting back to mulch tillage or even conventional practices and if NRCS could or would incentivize them with programs or reduce their program eligibility all together.
- Alternative crop and companion cropping options
- Technology – Weed It/Weed Chipper. High cost to purchase and implement, cost to maintain, subscriptions
- Herbicide Resistance-some soil types more susceptible, roads & rangelands contribute to cropland weed problems.
- Weed spread from construction and disturbance due to wind farm development
- Cap and Trade – how can NRCS help offset the impacts, carbon trading/sequestration
- CRP tear out or conversion – Habitat Considerations, Grazing/Haying potential -> making CRP palatable for livestock – dryland grasses and alfalfa, infrastructure needs – water developments & fences, mineral firebreaks to help stop wildfire, can CRP be a carbon sink

Rangeland

- Woven wire fence removal and replacement – expand area (why only in Heppner Game Unit)
- Annual grasses – preserve & protect (hold the line), education/identification, reseeding, pre-emergent herbicide treatment
- Water needs for livestock/wildlife - solar pumps, ponds & wells, BAT troughs

Forestry

- Follow up treatment after thinning to control reprod
- Thinning
- Prescribed burning – landowners pay high fire taxes, locally lack of expertise/manpower, ODFW has wildlife concerns
- Seeding of disturbed areas