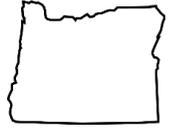




# Oregon Technical Advisory Committee



Meeting Notes for December 3, 2020 – 9:00 a.m. – 12 p.m.  
Virtual Zoom meeting

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## Attendees:

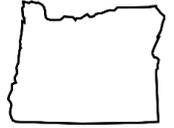
1. Cory Owens, Natural Resources Conservation Service
2. Robert Hathorne, Natural Resources Conservation Service
3. Loren Unruh, Natural Resources Conservation Service
4. Jason Jeans, Natural Resources Conservation Service
5. Julie MacSwain, Natural Resources Conservation Service
6. Kathy Ferge, Natural Resources Conservation Service
7. Catherine Bailey, Natural Resources Conservation Service
8. Lauren Bennett, Natural Resources Conservation Service
9. Amy Fischer, Natural Resources Conservation Service
10. Mary Beth Smith, Natural Resources Conservation Service
11. Chris Chapa, Natural Resources Conservation Service
12. Jericho Winters, Natural Resources Conservation Service
13. Andrew Owen, Natural Resources Conservation Service
14. Tom Miewald, Natural Resources Conservation Service
15. Amanda Moore, Natural Resources Conservation Service
16. Gary Diridoni, Natural Resources Conservation Service
17. Mike Edwards, Natural Resources Conservation Service
18. Josh Hanning, Farm Service Agency
19. Taylor Murray, Farm Service Agency
20. Jeremy Nalder, Farm Service Agency
21. Ryan Gordon, Oregon Department of Forestry
22. Al De Vos, Oregon Department of Forestry
23. Sara Evans Peters, Pacific Birds Joint Venture
24. Mikal Cline, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
25. Tami Kerr, Oregon Dairy Farmers Association
26. Ashley Zanolli, Environmental Protection Agency
27. Nicole Maness, Willamette Partnership
28. Gail Greenman, Oregon Farm Bureau
29. Sam Angima, Oregon State University Extension
30. Adrienne Wojciechowski, U.S. Senate, Agriculture Appropriation Subcommittee
31. Mike Brown, Bureau of Land Management

## FSA Update: Josh Hanning, Taylor Murray

- Had 3 successful sign-ups for CRP, appreciate the partnerships that helped make this happen
- Currently in continuous CRP sign-up, general start up in January to run through Feb. 12,
- National office has started to look at average CRP rates data. If producers don't fill this out, HQ uses a regional rate which brings our rates down. We were able to contest that data and raise rates in Gilliam, Sherman, Wheeler, Wasco, Umatilla counties.
- FSA wildfire assistance sign-up though Dec. 31.
- CRP SAFE program – state acres for wildlife – FSA works with ODFW. Yesterday, they were approved for 40,000 acres for SAFE, expanding the old 4,500-acre SAFE project area to span across Morrow, Umatilla, Gilliam, Wheeler, Sherman, Morrow and Wasco counties.
- SAFE area overlays Conservation Priority Areas, automatically gives applicants 50 points on CRP application
- Put 25% of crop land into CPAs. In the past, CPAs were air quality, water quality and wildlife.
- Expanded the CPA zone across the state from just Wallowa county, overlapping SAFE area.



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- No changes to air quality or water quality zones, but wildlife zone expanded
- Looking for input here – Do people concur with these changes? Want to think about where we would want to put CPAs, how to justify change in CPAs, to make it more beneficial for next year.
  - Loren Unruh's input – we have mule deer CIS' on the eastern side of OR, to potentially add to SAFE zone wildlife habitat. Want to circle back with MB on water quality zones as well.

## NRCS Update: Jason Jeans, NRCS

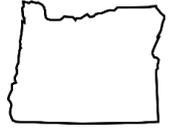
- Ron serving on detail in NHQ, will be back to OR in January
- Went over high-cut information for FY20, top 5 practices
- Had extremely successful partnerships through RCPP and Joint Chiefs
- With the workload from FY20, we hired 30 employees and filled key positions
- Looking ahead to 2021 – lots of momentum with CSP, opportunity to expand across state, new Joint Chief projects, continued RCPP projects, ACEP easements, watershed planning program
- Loren is moving on to the national tech center, this is his last OTAC

## 2020 Historic Fire Season Update: Ryan Gordon, ODF

- Historic year for wildfire, burning in areas that don't usually experience wildfire
- There's about 31-32 million acres of forest land in OR, ODF has responsibility for protection on about half of that
- Focusing in on Labor Day fires – had extremely strong, high, focused east winds very late in the season blowing across an area with extremely low moisture levels
- Labor Day fires burned in 13 counties, approx. 1 million acres impacted
  - 4,524 structures lost
  - ODF gross cost: 130 million
- In 2020, 94% of fires were kept at 10 acres or less
- Increased number of human-caused wildfires in 2020
- 5 of the 25 largest fires in OR's history occurred in this last fire season
- FEMA's still working closely on recovery response with state agencies
- State has a recovery plan, this was the first time the plan has been activated
  - Plan was focused more on earthquake or flooding event, but still focuses on resource impacts and impacts on communities
- SRF-7: Natural and Cultural Resources Recovery taskforce – led jointly by ODF, OWEB, DEQ
  - Focused on debris management, recreation, funding, tribal and cultural resources, impact assessments from burn areas
  - Key priority is public safety
- Erosion Threat Assessment and Recovery Team (ETART) – made available to state through FEMA, expands the typical assessments completed on federal lands to apply approach across entire landscape
- Goal was to pair federal SMEs up with state and local partners to train them in the field to complete analyses to fill out picture for entire wildfire footprint
- Goal is to build future capacity to complete these analyses in the future
- Close out reports were completed – recorded and available on [YouTube](#)
- Final reports are forthcoming, looking to collect all GIS data and make that available
- Want to strategically work to coordinate deliberately for recovery efforts and future planning



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- Biggest issue is capacity – important to be coordinating and working together to maximize support and benefits
- Main challenges to recovery: salvage logging, seedling availability, forest sector capacity is stretched thin

## **Navigable Waters Protection Rule Update: Jericho Winters, NRCS**

- NRCS, EPA and USACE signed an agreement on July 17 concerning implementation of Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA) and Food Security Act to minimize duplication efforts for CWA 404 and FSA wetland conservation (WC) provisions.
- Navigable Waters Protection Rule defines “waters of the United States”
- The Food Security Act was revised in two areas:
  - 1. Updates to identification of potentially jurisdictional waters and communications to USDA participants
  - 2. Clarifying NRCS’ role when providing CWA-related Technical Assistance (TA) to USDA customers
- NRCS will use a new icon (green triangle w/black dot) to identify on Certified Wetland Determination (CWD) maps water features not subject to WC provisions but potentially subject to CWA, and NRCS will inform participants of changes through remarks section of CPA-026 and transmittal letter.
- NRCS TA for CWA is updated policy – limited to instances where there is or has been a need to conduct CWD or site visit for FSA purposes
  - Assistance will only be provided upon receiving written permission from appropriate USDA client.
- NRCS will be able to determine applicability for CWA purposes, to include release of info such as:
  - Prior converted cropland (PC) determinations for area in question
  - Previous 5 yrs of info from NRCS conservation plan
  - FSA crop acreage reports
  - Similar info

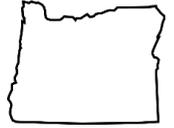
## **Tips for putting together a CIG application: Amy Fischer, NRCS**

- In 2021, we’ve set aside about \$300,000 for CIG
- Planning to announce next sign-up in early 2021
- Clearly state the purpose and approach, how will the project be implemented, what methodologies will be used, what will the outcome be, and how will project benefit NRCS / ag community at large?
- A whole section should state how the project is innovative (nationally, regionally and/or locally)
- Include timeline and milestones, outline how project staff has necessary technical and admin expertise, how will funds be spent?
- Include section on how project work will be assessed, and how results will be transferred to broader audience

## **Beginning Farmer and Rancher Program Update: Kathy Ferge, NRCS**



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- 2018 Farm Bill placed newly focused attention on Beginning Farmer/Rancher (BFR) and Urban producers
- This is the first year we have an outreach plan for BFR audience
- FPAC (NRCS, FSA, RMA, RD) working to provide tools to staff and external audience that will highlight how we can all assist BFR
- Barriers to BFR: start up costs, working w/government, challenges w/ownership or leasing, may not have valid water rights, cost-share costs, cultural differences, language, NRCS staffing workload
- Sent out a release in July introducing related FPAC contacts, highlighting links to helpful materials

## Urban Ag Update: Kathy Ferge, NRCS

- Work is just starting for Urban Ag,
- Nationwide for 2020, there are 4 deliverables
  - Pilot cooperative agreements
  - Competitive grant - planning and implementation
  - National advisory council on urban ag is being formed
  - 10 cities selected for pilot urban ag committees; Portland was selected. We're currently finalizing who will sit on committee
  -
- Types of farms looked at from Urban Ag perspective: Rooftop gardens, hydroponics, non-traditional farming
- National will be building a cohort across FPAC agencies to support one another and stay connected

QUESTION: From Ashley Zanolli – EPA: Hi Kathy. Can you give us a quick recap of initiatives and any outcomes related to reducing food waste (through this program and more broadly at USDA)?

ANSWER: Kathy - The programming is new and I don't believe we have statistics on that yet, but I'll look into it and correspond with you afterwards.

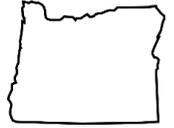
ANSWER: Adrienne Wojciechowski - FYI - the NRCS work on Urban ag has a food waste/compost component

## Oregon Forest Action Plan: Al De Vos, ODF

- 60% of forests in America are owned by private landowners
- Forest Action Plan is a strategic resource plan, updated every 5 years
- Plan looks at threats to Oregon's Forests, opportunities, trends, planning efforts
- Discussed two products from Action Plan - maps looking at Forest Stewardship Program and Wildfire Impacts to Communities across state
- Updating resource strategies to incorporate other statewide resources strategies, innovative strategies, aligning the plan to ODF's operations, incorporate the 3 national themes and 11 objectives
- Goals include: conserve working forested landscapes, protect forests from harm, enhance benefits from trees and forests, enhance benefits
- Reviewed coordination with other statewide plans and programs to update resource strategy



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- Updates from 2010 to 2020 –
  - Shared stewardship – working collaboratively and in cooperation
  - Good neighbor authority
  - Federal forest restoration
  - Landscape scale restoration
  - Climate Change and Carbon, Executive Order 20-04
  - Land water conservation fund
  - ODF strategic initiative
  - Forest stewardship program redesign, new success measures
- 1<sup>st</sup> national priority is “conserve working forest landscapes”
  - Breaks down plan’s related goals, strategies, and partners involved in meeting goal

## Programs Update: Loren Unruh, NRCS

- EQIP Wildfire sign-up, second application period at end of December
- Thanks to Josh with FSA for great partnership, thanks to NRCS OR team
- OR has most RCPP agreements in the nation
- We have new RCPP coordinator – Tom Miewald
- Have new easement specialist – Chris Chapa, new wetlands engineer
- Mary Beth Smith retiring at end of 2020

## RCPP Update: Tom Miewald, NRCS

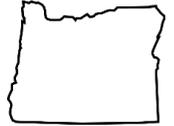
- RCPP is evolving to “version 2.0”
- National is working to make RCPP a more stand-alone program, in the process of developing guidance and tools to make this happen. (Example:) ROIs, how are we going to measure project outcomes?
- From 2015 – 2020, Oregon’s had 27 projects with a sum of \$77 million in NRCS funding, \$103 million in partner-contributed funds
- Reviewed current projects and projects that are ending or extended with map
- 2021 RCPP classic – just closed last week. Review process will begin soon.
  - Received 5 submissions in OR, 180 submissions nationally
- New to RCPP Class is Western Water CCA to look at inadequate habitat, insufficient water/drought, and water quality degradation
- Alternative Funding Arrangement is forthcoming
  - Operates more like a grant
- Looking ahead – there’s a project management workshop on Jan. 14. Increasing communication and outreach to share successes. Partner on innovative working lands conservation.

## ACEP and GARC Update: Chris Chapa, NRCS

- FY21 ACEP – applications can be accepted ongoing. Cannot announce batching or cutoff dates, awaiting guidance from NHQ here.
- ALE program agreements per entity – all eligible entities must submit an “Entity Application for an ALE Agreement”. Intention here is to simplify, streamline and improve ALE process
- ACEP WRE GARC – same as FY20



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- Appraised fair market value of offered land, only potential easement area appraised
- Looking at other considerations like high priority areas, everywhere is not to exceed \$5k per acre, except for Willamette Valley

## **EQIP Source Water Protection, high priority practices update: Mary Beth Smith, NRCS**

- We're charged with looking at local priority areas for drinking water protection
- Farm Bill authorized NRCS to use increased payment rates for practices that protect drinking water within high priority areas
- Source water protection – practices that related to water quality and conserve water quantity
- NHQ requested we identify local priority areas in OR, we worked with DEQ to come up with a three-phased approach
  - Phase 1 – identified land uses, eligible lands, acres in drinking water source area, public water systems, size of population served
  - Phase 2 – identified high risk areas, highlight erodible lands, wildfire risk areas, harmful algal bloom areas, listed areas that don't meet water quality standards, critical habitat areas for salmon, steelhead or bulltrout, ground water management areas, public water system violations, density of domestic water use
  - Phase 3 – identified areas with substantial number of ag producers using our programs and where our conservation partners were also working
- At least 10% of total funds available for NRCS OR will be used for source water protection
- 21 CIS fall within the high priority source water areas (see map in presentation)
- Reviewed conservation practices for source water protection, targeted in CISs
- In FY20, the higher payment rates did not sig. increase the adoption of these practices
- For FY21, we're opting out of higher payment rates

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