



*Washington County Local Work Group Meeting  
March 4, 2021 Virtual Zoom Meeting*

MINUTES

The meeting was called to order by Cory Owens at 2:00 p.m. Those in attendance were:

Cory welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked that everyone please write their name and affiliation in the chat box.

Jessica introduced herself and stated that the purpose of this meeting is to provide a forum for partners, farmers, ranchers, foresters, and conservation groups to share conservation activities and discuss natural resource problems that should be prioritized. The group assists in guiding NRCS where to use farm bill funds for technical and financial assistance in the future. Jessica stated her appreciation of everyone in attendance for volunteering their time to participate. We (NRCS) have the ability to target specific resource issues that are important to the county, and this group helps identify those concerns and focus areas.

Jessica presented a PowerPoint presentation explaining the Local Work Group process, current Conservation Implementation Strategies (CIS's), Farm Bill Programs, and showcased conservation practices that have been implemented throughout the county through various NRCS Programs.

The Annual Local Work Group meetings are required by NRCS policy as a way to obtain local input on ways to make Farm Bill programs work locally, assist with establishing local resource priorities, and identify practices needed to address resource concerns in the county. Although we meet only once each year, comments or suggestions are always welcome throughout the year. Feel free to call or email any time.

Jessica thanked Dean Moberg for all his years of wisdom and dedication to getting conservation on the ground. Dean retired from NRCS right at the beginning of the Covid shutdown so we didn't get to give him a proper send-off celebration. Dean now holds a seat on the Tualatin SWCD, so his legacy continues.

**New Faces in our office and Basin:** Jessica introduced the new NRCS employees in the Hillsboro office and the Basin and had each one provide some background info:

**Michael Taylor** – Soil Conservationist in Hillsboro NRCS office. Been here 5 months. Michael retired from the Navy in 2016 (20 Years) and went to college at the University of Idaho. He earned a double major in Wildlife Resources and Rangeland Ecology and

Management; and received two certificates for GIS and Restoration Ecology. Michael is excited to be here and anxious to get out and meet everyone!

**Corin Pease** – Xerces Society partnering with NRCS, located in Hillsboro field office. Contract position with NRCS to assist with pollinator habitat projects. Background in IPM, insects and pollinators, crop consultant working in berry fields. Available to work with landowners to assist with pollinator seed mixes, hedgerow plantings, plantings, cover crops, etc. Feel free to contact Corin if you are interested in obtaining assistance. Corin.pease@xerces.org

**Stacey Cooper** – Small Farms and Organic Specialist, located in the St. Helens Field Office. Arrived in St. Helens mid-November. She will cover both the North Coast and Lower Willamette basins. Background in farming, vegetable production, organic operations. Assisting customers with high tunnels, cover crops, mulching, pollinators, hedgerows, and many other practices.

NRCS is separated into Basins. There are 8 basins across the state. We are part of the Lower Willamette Basin, which includes Washington, Multnomah, Clackamas, Marion, Polk, and Yamhill counties. We are also grouped with the North Coast Basin which includes Clatsop, Columbia, and Tillamook Counties. Several of our NRCS employees work across both basins.

### **Partner Updates:**

Partnerships make things happen!

**Janelle Huserik**, FSA County Executive Director - covering several counties, also filling in for vacancies. [www.farmers.gov](http://www.farmers.gov) is a great resource to find information about the many USDA programs. Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool can assist you to find which program you might be eligible for. On the FSA website, FSAFarm+ is software you can sign up for that will allow you to access your FSA records. Also on the site is a Programs and Services link that explains all the eligibility requirements for working with FSA, info about County Committee elections, etc. Emergency Conservation Program for the recent winter snow/ice storm is now available – covers all counties from Lane County north. Feel free to contact FSA if you have any questions. [Janelle.huserik@usda.gov](mailto:Janelle.huserik@usda.gov)

**Larry Klimek**, Project Leader, FWS, Tualatin River NWR Complex. Chicken Creek project in Sherwood. 2-miles reopening new creek channel across the area. Tualatin to Chicken Creek. 280 acres will now become a permanent wetland. Taking out drainage structures and water control structures. Larry showed pictures of the ponds located in front of the visitor's center. Trails have been open throughout the pandemic. Seeing a lot of new visitors. Increased usage of the trails, for example, there are 55 parking spaces in the parking lot, and he counted 92 cars parked in and around the parking lot.

Wapato Lake, located in Gaston. Working on restoration work, 800 ac basin. Pumping station used to pump to the lake. Historical artifact. New facility on old dam structure is now in place with new pumps, which will pull water off the lake. The lake will not be drained but pulled down to 1-2 ft of water to maintain a wetland. Project just completed

about a week ago. Working with Clean Water Services among other partners in Gaston. Also setting up the refuge for public use. Pedestrian bridge spanning Wapato Creek is completed. Refuge was open last winter to waterfowl hunters only. 6 blinds, 126 slots to draw from – 1300 applicants. Now in the process of completing a .9-mile walking trail that will be opening soon. 1.8 miles of hard surface trail and 1.5 mile of gravel trail totaling around 3.5 miles of total trail. Eventually, hoping to have 5-mile loop trail. Wetland vegetation is starting to come back now that farming has ended. Native plants are coming back. If you have any questions, feel free to call the refuge.

Dave Vanasche, farms 400 acres in the area – having problems with geese since making this a permanent wetland. The ditch around the outside of the refuge is causing less than adequate drainage because it's no longer being cleaned out. Larry believes that TVID is responsible for those ditches. If it isn't their responsibility, please call Larry and he'll figure out a possible solution. Geese are an increasing problem to adjacent farmlands. Larry plans to plant small grain crops to try to alleviate damage to farm crops nearby.

**Aaron Shaw**, Natural Resources Project Manager, Tualatin SWCD. Forest conservation, rural and urban and habitat conservation.

Dairy McKay and Middle Tualatin RCPP – 2016 – 2021. Restore fish and wildlife habitat, increase efficient use of irrigation water, decrease nutrient and pesticides in surface and ground water. Establish riparian buffers. Manure compost facilities, install drip irrigation. Wetland restoration. Total acres enrolled for riparian acres to date is 120. 90 acres water use efficiency; 3 manure storage facilities.

Lower Gales and Carpenter Creek SIA – SIA's were established in 2014. SIA's are selected based on ODA's priority areas that may be out of compliance with Ag Water Quality Area Plan Rules. Lower Gales and Carpenter Creek Watersheds project area duration 2019-2024, focus on Ag Water Quality. Strategic focus/proactive, rather than complaint based. Funded through OWEB. Remote and field evaluation by ODA. Outreach will be done through ODA and TSWCD. SIA's are more successful when partnered with other groups or agencies that can contribute technical and financial assistance.

Looking ahead – Dairy McKay RCPP is wrapping up at the end of 2021 – hoping to extend one year. Lower Gales – looking for additional funding opportunities.

**Poll:** Have you Worked with NRCS? Have you had a contract? What worked, what didn't? Would you be willing to meet to discuss? 38% of participants have had contracts and said they would reach out to Jessica or Michael to provide feedback.

**Poll: Please select the type of land you manage or work in:**

- Crop – 15%
- Pasture – 0%
- Forest – 15%
- Crop and Pasture – 10%

Crop and Forest – 10%  
Pasture and Forest – 0%  
Crop and Forest and Pasture – 10%  
N/A – 40%

**Poll: How many acres do you manage?**

<1 – 40%  
1-10 – 5%  
11-25 – 0%  
26-50 – 10%  
51-100 – 0%  
101-250 – 15%  
250+ - 30%

**Poll: Who do you represent?**

Landowner/Operator – 40%  
State Agency – 5%  
Federal Agency – 30%  
Community Led Organization – 0%  
Non-Profit Organization – 10%  
Tribal Organization – 0%  
County Organization – 20%  
Other – 15%

**Farm Bill Programs in Washington County** include EQIP, CStP, CRP/CREP, RCPP, and WRE.

EQIP - Environmental Quality Incentives Program -

- Purpose – To solve priority natural resource problems on agricultural lands such as soil, water, wildlife, and related resource issues.
  - Assist farmers, ranchers, and forest owners in complying with federal, state, and local regulations
  - Encourage environmental enhancements
  - NRCS’s bread and butter conservation program. Most flexibility to address local resource needs on a county level
  
- Current EQIP Conservation Implementation Strategies in Washington County:
  - Dairy McKay Degraded Riparian Ecosystem (RCPP)
  - Structural Diversity in Forests (year 5 of 5)
  - Animal Feeding Operation
  - Erosion Control in Orchards (year 2 of 5)

National/State EQIP Initiatives – funds are now provided to basins to fund contracts rather than compete for state-wide funding pool

- Organic Initiative
- Seasonal High Tunnel Initiative
- Energy Initiative

- Animal Feeding Operation – State initiative with basin funding pools

CSStP – Conservation Stewardship Program

- Annual payment for conservation - 5-year contract
- Includes crop, pasture, range and forest land
- We have 1 active contract
- Designed for operations that are already functioning at a higher level of conservation and are willing to adopt enhancement activities that make additional improvements

CRP/CREP – Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (administered by FSA, most of the technical work is by TSWCD)

- Plant wet areas in grass cover or trees
- 10-15 year rental agreements that pay an annual payment to maintain riparian areas

ACEP – Agricultural Conservation Easement Program

- ALE – Agriculture Land Easement  
NRCS purchases easements on land used for agriculture to reduce conversion of those lands to non-Ag uses
  - No current ALE easements in the county
- WRE – Wetland Reserve Easement  
Previously known as WRP. NRCS purchases easement on ag land to restore wetlands. We have 3 permanent easements in Washington County.

RCPP – Regional Conservation Partnership Program

- Funding provided by NRCS, Partners administer the projects

**Poll: What Resource Concerns are you most interested in? (multiple choice)**

Water Quality Improvement – 81%  
 Soil Health – 52%  
 Forest Health – 52%  
 Water Savings/Efficiencies (irrigation) – 48%  
 Erosion Reduction - 48%  
 Pollinators/Beneficial Insect/Wildlife Habitat – 38%  
 Energy Savings – 24%  
 Mud/Manure Management – 10%  
 Brush/Weed Management (blackberry) to allow for native planting – 33%  
 Other – 0%

**Poll: How did you hear about the meeting today?**

- Email – 67%
- Word of Mouth – 29%
- Newspaper – 0%
- NRCS Website – 0%
- SWCD Website – 0%
- Other – 0%

**Summary of Program interest in Washington County for 2020:**

2020 – Received 18 EQIP applications; funded 8 totaling \$139,635  
10 RCPP applications; funded 9 for a total of \$331,246  
3 CSP Renewals - CSP delayed. 1 funded in 2021.

- 1 – High Tunnel Initiative
- 1 - TVID (Irrigations Improvements)
- 3 – Forest Diversity
- 1 – Organic Initiative
- 2 - Animal Feeding Operations

RCPP – 9 funded

- 4 – vegetative projects
- 2 – Gutters/Manure Management
- 2 – Irrigation Improvements
- 1 – Combo of vegetation and manure management

**Completed Practices in 2020:**

Plans Written:

- 1 – Ag Energy Management Plan
- 1 – CNMP

Vegetative Practices:

- 11.8 ac – Conservation Cover
- 14.8 ac – Cover Crop
- 1750 ft – Fence
- 43.5 ac – Tree Planting
- 49.2 ac – Herbaceous Weed Treatment

Manure Management or Structural Practices

- 1 – Waste Storage Facility and Cover
- 2 – Roof Runoff Structures (gutters/tanks)
- 2 – High Tunnels

Irrigation Practices

- 139.8 ac - Irrigation Improvements

260 ft – Irrigation Pipeline

1 – Fish Screen

Forestry Practices

83.7 ac – Forest Stand Improvement (Pre-commercial thin) and slash treatment

**2021** – Received 7 applications to date

1 for CNMP

1 FMP

4 Forest Diversity

1 for Emergency Fire Assistance

**Cutoff date for submitting applications for 2021 EQIP funding is April 16, 2021.**

**Poll: Would you be willing to be part of a smaller group that meets 2-3 times per year to provide feedback?**

Yes – Sounds Great! – 69%

No Thank You – 6%

Maybe – 19%

N/A – 6%

**Poll: Are there Groups or Areas that we should concentrate more time and resources on?**

Yes – 31%

No – 19%

N/A – 50%

**Poll: If you know of other groups or areas, would you be willing to introduce us?**

Yes – 44%

No – 6%

N/A – 50%

**Setting priorities for Washington County Resource Concerns for 2022 and beyond –**

**2022 Fuels Reduction and Forest Health** – new basin-wide CIS that will begin in 2022. Kim Gray, Basin Resource Conservationist is developing this CIS and will request input from each county on focus area, needed practices, and goals for acres treated. Focus will be on fuels reduction, mainly precommercial thinning, brush management, Pruning, Chipping, Tree planting, etc.

Where should we focus the funding?

Who is going to apply?

How many acres to goal?

Jessica showed the current forestry CIS boundary – discussion on if it should expand into southern area of the county.

Tom – another practice that should be added is access roads. Open legacy roads to aid in access and fire suppression.

Dean – NRCS would not be able to fund assisting with landowners to make homes more fire resistant. Would it be possible to partner with outside organizations to assist with protecting the home at the same time?

Andrew – Definitely strategies across the state that focus on the dwellings. Pairing the right partnerships with the right funding would be ideal. A few other practices are strategic fire breaks on multiple properties or adjoining properties can help with suppression. Always a lot of data from aerial flights by ODF that can pick up on insect and disease trends.

Brandy - Working with OSU extension to expand data on where the locations are that are more susceptible to major fire.

#### **New CIS Proposal - Source Water Protection Area (Includes SIA)**

Will follow the Joint Water Commission's Drinking Water Source Focus Area which includes the following watersheds: Upper Gales Creek, Middle Gales Creek, Lower Gales Creek, Middle Fork of North Fork Trask River, Sain Creek/Scoggins Creek, Headwaters Tualatin River, Roaring Creek – Tualatin River, Carpenter Creek – Tualatin River, Christensen Creek – Tualatin River, and Wapato Creek. Main Resource Concern will be Water Quality. Is there a secondary resource concern that we should focus on? Soil Erosion? Soil Health? Water Quantity - Irrigation? Habitat Improvements? Manure/Mud Management? Micro-irrigation?

Dave – linear lines are popular. Soil Health is a huge resource concern. What used to work to improve the soil is no longer working. Need assistance in improving soil health. Contact agronomist Steve Vangrunsven for more information on what Dave has been doing to improve his properties.

Jacqui – does water use and efficiency fall under water quality? Jessica said that would be water quantity and could be addressed as a secondary resource concern. Looking at quality in hand with quantity. Would be helpful if the program would assist with maintaining existing systems vs switching to new, i.e. filters, screens, pumps, etc.

Agreement to go forward with Water Quality as main resource concern in conjunction with Water Quantity- Irrigation, and Soil Health.

Thank you to everyone for attending. Feel free to contact Jessica anytime at: [Jessica.wells@usda.gov](mailto:Jessica.wells@usda.gov) or 503-207-7949

Question – should we look into working more with smaller farms? Discussion: ‘why’? doesn’t everyone have equal access to these programs regardless of size? All Farms Matter! Yes, however, small farms utilize different practices than larger operations.

Dave - Cover crops and orchards – brush chipping vs. burning. Grinding is very beneficial to the orchard and more efficient use of time. Nutrients stay in the ground. Burning sends everything into the air. Jessica is going to try and add that practice to the CIS.

Climate change – we’re now hearing from the new administration that we have to eliminate fossil fuels. Most farms operate on diesel or gasoline. How are we going to operate machinery on solar, wind, etc.? Fertilizers also are a byproduct of fossil fuels. Concerned about rising costs. Outlook is bleak for agriculture. Jessica will elevate the concern up the ladder.

Jeff – grinding would help overcome massive compaction in orchards, tractor ruts, difference between erosion and compaction.

David Wills-Ehlers - small farms and organic farms. Excellent to acknowledge small producers and small farms. We should focus on small farms as well, and not just the large-scale producers.

Meeting adjourned at 3:45  
Dee Robinson