The meeting was called to order by Jessica Wells at 10:00 a.m. Those in attendance were:

Jessica Wells, NRCS          Dee Robinson, NRCS
Kaycee Shockey, FSA          Kris Meunier, NRCS
Michael Taylor, NRCS        Jeff Brown, Hazelnut Farmer
Aaron Shaw, Tualatin SWCD    Tom Nygren, TSP Forester, SWA
Dean Mobeg, Tualatin SWCD    Brittany Mills, ODA
Nicole Ruggiero, Tualatin SWCD Dave Vanasche, Farmer
Randy Lawrence, Clean Water Services Heidi Noordijk, OSU Extension Sm Farms
Daniel Brown, Farmer         Hannah Isaacs, NRCS
Jacqueline Jones, Farmer     Tom Miewald, NRCS
Scott McEwen, TRWC           Jesse Nichols
Adriana Campagna, NRCS       Simon Christensen
Lacey Townsend, Tualatin SWCD Marina Oriel
Tom Nygren, TSP Forester    Megan Garvey
Jill Erickson, Clean Water Services Jonathan Soll
Emma Martin, City of Hillsboro Karyn Servin

Jessica 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, Federal, State, and Local agencies, 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. Local people help drive our programs. Our programs are voluntary, and the success of getting conservation on the ground depends on you.

Jessica presented a PowerPoint presentation explaining the Local Work Group process, our 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.
Partnerships make things happen!

**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:

**Adriana Campagna – NRCS Basin Engineer** - been in the position 6 months, took over for Travis.

**Kris Meunier** – Soil Conservationist in Hillsboro NRCS office. New to the agency, been here 5 months. Background in plant biology, ecological restoration, forestry and agriculture. Excited to meet everyone and help get conservation on the ground.

**Kaycee Shockey** – County Exec Director FSA, new to the west side, came from Pendleton. Happy to be here and meet everyone.

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.

**Farm Bill Programs in Washington County** include EQIP, CSIP, 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 (basin-wide)
  - Animal Feeding Operation (basin-wide)
  - Erosion Control in Orchards (year 3 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
CStP – Conservation Stewardship Program
- Annual payment for conservation - 5-year contract
- Includes both crop land 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)
- 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
  o 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

EQIP-CIC – Conservation Incentive Contracts
- Bridge between EQIP and CSP

Partner Updates:

Kaycee Shockey. FSA County Executive Director - covering Washington, Tillamook, Clatsop and Columbia counties. FSA is a sister agency to NRCS, co-located in same office. Dennis Cooper and Heidi Duggan are long-time employees in the office.

Upcoming Program Deadlines:
- Agriculture Risk Coverage/Price Loss Coverage (ARC/PLC) – deadline March 15, 2022
- CREP – continuous signup
- Dairy Margin Coverage DMC – signup deadline March 25, 2022

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 signup for that will allow you to access your FSA records. Acreage reporting can be done through
FSAFarm+. Please keep current on your crop acreage reports annually. Deadlines for reporting is July 15 spring crops; December 15 fall grains. 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 winter snow/ice storm is now available – covers all counties from Lane County north. Also the USDA Pandemic Assistance for Producers is available. Many different programs offered in disaster relief assistance. Please feel free to call the office for information on any program that may provide assistance to your operation. You can also sign up for ‘Gov Delivery’ on the Farmers.gov website – which you will receive bulletins and newsletters for up-to-date information. FSA County Committee – five local members, critical components that drive day to day operations within FSA. Members serve for a 3-year term. www.fsa.usda.gov for more information. Feel free to contact me if you have any questions. Kaycee.shockey@usda.gov.

Dave Vanasche praised Dennis and Heidi for their excellent customer service.

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

Dairy McKay and Middle Tualatin RCPP – 2016 – 2022. 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. Final year for this program, through end of September. Practices funded through EQIP

Enhanced CREP signups/re-enrollments are happening now. Working with FSA to determine which contracts are expiring and may be extended and looking for new applicants that fit the program.

Habitat Conservation Program – Oak enhancement deadline late summer

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.

Brittney Mills, ODA
Agricultural Drainage Channel Maintenance Program – Drainage of ag lands vital for Oregon
Requires channel maintenance
Requires DSL or federal permits which are very costly.
The solution was to create the Ag Channel Maintenance Program – ODA DSL ODFW
Purpose is to make it simpler for landowners to maintain their drainage channels, improve awareness of compliance and encourage landowner assistance.

Qualifications – could provide drainage in past 5 years, need to be traditionally maintained streams or manmade ditches, cannot be an ESH Stream, and channel must be dry at time of work.

Irrigation ditches – primarily to deliver irrigation water
Changes DSL permit to ODA Notice – no cost application, 45 day process.
Requirements – streamside veg/wetlands/habitat, timing of work, equipment
Landowner Incentives – allows temporary storage of spoils along channel; adjacent hydric soils and wetlands too; avoid natural undisturbed wetland.
Increase sediment removal limits 3; cubic yards

Process of applying for Notice:
- ODA receives – consults with ODFW – ODA and ODFW on-site visit – ODA Compliance; DSL enforcement
- There is also an OSU Study of Impacts – 5 year project studying the impacts and benefits of maintaining ag channels. Dr. Guillermo Giannico, OSU

Currently focusing on Willamette Valley, will eventually phase in state-wide. Forms and processes are ready.

https://oda.direct/AgChannelMaintenance

ODA, Natural Resources Program Area 503-986 – 4700

Email updates – you can signup at the same website above.

Brittany Mills – Brittany.mills@oda.oregon.gov  971-218-1409

Dave Vanasche – local farmer, irrigate with TVID water. Historically, everything used to be dry land initially, however, since 1977, dry ditches aren’t totally dry anymore due to management practices or lack thereof, urban sprawl, development. Ditches never dry up. Brittany said in this situation you would need to contact DSL to discuss how to do maintenance.

Jacqui Jones - how to address issues with neighbors that don’t maintain their portion of the ditch. It’s an ongoing issue that impacts people that are trying to manage. ODA needs to give incentives to non-farming neighbors to help them maintain their section. Dave mentioned that there is a state law that one neighbor cannot negatively impact the other. State agencies need to enforce these laws. Problem isn’t being solved, and is a continual problem for those that are trying to make a living off the land. Brittany suggested contacting the SWCD or NRCS to see if there is any assistance available to work with non-cooperating landowners.

Tom Miewald – NRCS, RCPP Project Lead – Funding proposals are due April 13, 2022 for this year’s cycle. Oregon NRCS has been one of the most successful states in the country to utilize RCPP funds. Farm Bill 2018 program.

Strategic Landscape/Watershed Scale
$10-20 million per year for multiple projects
An evolving program
RCPP is not a grant – it’s a project-based partnership

Impact –
Contributions
Innovation
Project Management

Since 2015, in Oregon there have been 32 RCPP projects, $89 million in NRCS funding; $120 million in partner contributions.

Example of Existing RCPP’s in Oregon:
  Tillamook Salmon Super-Highway
  Polk/Yamill Oak restoration
  Dairy McKay
  Irrigation Modernization
  Duck habitat and wetland restoration
  Invasive Plants
  Forest Health

Tom described the Lower John Day Canyons Restoration Initiative project to show how partners can work together to accomplishment strategic conservation and how the RCPP program is played out. Landowners are a key partner to implement these projects.

Scope and scale – can multiple sub-basins be included? As long as it’s a manageable landscape with the same resource concern, the scale can be what you make it.

Alternative Funding Agreement – does that allow partners to utilize other programs to get work done? AFA provides lead partner the funds to get project work accomplished, as long as it follows the goals of the project. RCPP Projects are ones that can’t be done under classic NRCS programs.

Jacqui – concept of new projects – things are constantly changing. Grass field that is left longer than expected being scrutinized. Needs to be a mind-shift in new programs to allow other practices than what is the current hot topic like no-till or carbon sequestration. Give incentives to keep oak tree that is an inconvenience to farmer.

Dave – tall fescue field that is 20 years old. No carbon credit because it’s not an annual crop. Need recognition for existing stewardship.

Jess mentioned that NRCS does have a practice called reduced tillage that we can talk about offering that in a future CIS.

Dean Moberg – SWCD – drainage issue. The impacts of farmers upstream and downstream is not really in the purview of NRCS. It can fit SWCD, and they can possibly work with the board to see if there’s something they can do to help maintain ditches

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through the whole stretch and reach out to the folks to offer assistance for those that aren’t currently managing their section. Climate Change – important natural resource issue facing humanity today. Soil sequestration, energy conservation, adapting to climate change that is coming. Need to be based on science, through voluntary efforts and knowledge of local farmers and foresters.

Dave Vanasche – Water impoundments, earth-fill dams on farms for conservation and irrigation. Farm fields are flooding, water is staying longer than used to due to increase of water due to development in UGB.

Summary of Program interest in Washington County for 2022:

1 – Organic
6 - high Tunnel
1 - Erosion in Orchards
9 – Forestry
2- AFO

2 new CIS’s that started this year. We can now accept and fund application across all of Washington County to obtain a Forest Management Plan. If you already have a FMP and fall into the current priority area, funds are available to implement practices included in your plan.

Irrigation Improvements – 2 Important changes
- Interruptible water rights does not prevent you from applying. You still need to meet the other requirements.
- 441 – drip irrigation systems require water quality testing to ensure the system is designed adequately.

New Water Quality Testing requirement – starts with new contracts obligated in FY22. Only applies to micro-irrigation practices. Contracts obligated prior to FY22 will be grandfathered in and will not require groundwater testing prior to implementation of irrigation practices.

Setting priorities for Washington County Resource Concerns for 2023 and beyond –

Irrigation efficiency – expenses are increasing. Linear is way too expensive and not feasible.

Heidi Noordijk – OSU Small Farms - small farmers are interested in drought resiliency and soil ecosystem services for retaining soil moisture and irrigation efficiencies.

Dan Brown – orchardist - Water availability is a concern. Water rights need to be expanded. Grinding of prunings and other orchard practices would be appreciated.
Jeff Brown – what is the timeframe for CIS development? Something brand new will most likely be proposed spring of 2023 to be implemented in 2024.

Jess mentioned the new program EQIP-CIC might fit for management practices. This year focuses on Cropland, water depletion. Practices being covered are
329 – Residue and Tillage Management, No-Till
340 – Cover Crop
345 – Residue and Tillage Management, Reduced Till
430 – Irrigation pipeline
441 – Irrigation System, Micro irrigation
442 – Sprinkler System
449 – Irrigation Water Management
533 – Pumping Plant
587 – Structure for Water Control

Orchard recycling is a common theme throughout our basin that could possibly be made into a basin-wide CIS in the future.

Thank you to everyone for attending. Feel free to contact Jessica anytime at: Jessica.wells@usda.gov or 503-207-7949 or Michael.taylor2@usda.gov Kristoffer.meunier@usda.gov

Meeting adjourned at 11:58 a.m.
Dee Robinson