



***Tillamook County Local Work Group Meeting
February 18, 2015 POTB Conference Room***

MINUTES

The meeting was called to order by Mitch at 1:05 p.m. Self-introductions followed. Those in attendance were:

Mitch Cummings, NRCS
Becca Pederson, NRCS
Dee Robinson, NRCS

Rudy Fenk, Tillamook SWCD
Gus Meyer, Tillamook SWCD A.D.
Dan & Carol Marie Leuthold, Farm
Bureau/Dairy Producer
Ed Wallmark, ODF

Armando Macias, ODA
Bub Boquist, Tillamook SWCD

Mitch welcomed everyone to the meeting, and stated that the purpose of this meeting is to provide a forum for NRCS to work collaboratively with our partners so we can develop a plan that strategically utilizes limited resources in a way that benefits all of us. This is an annual meeting to gather input on the future direction of our NRCS programs. Introductions were made around the room and it was noted that the lower attendance this year was likely due to several other meetings in conflict for the usual variety of attendees.

Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) is the main program that NRCS is working with in the county. Financial cost-share assistance is available to address local resource concerns. Local landowners may apply. They must meet the program criteria, and all applications will then be ranked according to the national, state and local criteria set. Once the ranking is completed, the conservation plans are developed, available funds are obligated in highest ranking contracts, and practices can then be implemented. This is generally based on an approximate 50% cost-share rate. Payment schedules are developed on a regional basis, which includes Oregon, California, and Washington. Mitch reviewed the previous and current year's program participation and how they broke down by implementation strategy, number of applicants, number of contracts funded and the value of these by year.

Main focus is on Water Quality, Plant Health & Vigor, Wildlife-T&E Species.

2012 - 2014 Conservation Implementation Strategies – Mitch explained the 2 funding strategies for NRCS in Tillamook County. The biggest challenge with the CIS's is outreach and getting the word out to the local people throughout the county. We are also facing declining budgets, which decreases the amount of applications we are able to fund. Each Implementation Strategy has a measurement tool identified in order to gauge how successful the implementation is and when the area can be expanded or moved.

1. Tillamook Water Quality Nutrient Management CIS – set up to help farmers to better utilize the fertilizer value of their manure. Under this strategy, the landowner hires a Technical Service Provider to work with them for three years to assist them with nutrient

management tasks such as record keeping, calibrating equipment, soil sampling, and agronomic application rates. The chief goal of this CIS is assisting landowners to develop the ability and skills for properly managing and utilizing their waste. The chief measurement of success is reduction of bacteria in the adjacent water courses and removal from DEQ water quality impaired lists. The Wilson and upper Kilchis Rivers meet current water quality standards and are not eligible for this funding pool.

2. Nestucca Water Quality/Fish Passage CIS – The focus of this CIS addresses Water Quality, Natural Stream Processes, and Fish Passage. This focus addresses issues associated with culverts, riparian areas, private roads, livestock and stream ecosystem function within the Big Nestucca, Little Nestucca, Neskowin and Sand Lake areas. Partner agencies and organizations are assisting with the permitting and planning process. A culvert survey has been conducted in the Tillamook Bay area, which may be the next focus area depending on the survey results and partnership participation. Currently this is a slow moving CIS, partly because of challenges working with the permitting agencies in the previous year.

3. There is a National Initiative for Seasonal High Tunnels (hoop houses) which is funded currently at the State Level. This practice is used to extend the growing season, and allow landowners to grow crops that they otherwise wouldn't be able to grow on the coast. There are specific requirements that must be met in order to qualify for the funding. The High Tunnel Initiative has allowed us to work with folks we typically have not been able to work with in the past.

4. The other National Initiative is for Organic Farmers. One of the biggest issues for organic farmers has been elk and loss of forage. In order to qualify under the organic initiative, you must be an officially certified organic, transitioning to organic, or be able to show proof of income to meet the criteria not requiring certification. Organic operators may also apply under the regular EQIP CISs for practices that may not be available under the organic strategy. In this CIS they will be competing with traditional operations regarding specific resource issues.

EQIP Applications/Contracts per FY –

WQ Nutrient Management CIS

2011 – 5 Applications,	5 Contracts,	\$129,280
2012 – 5 Applications,	5 Contracts,	\$130,002
2013 – 13 Applications,	10 Contracts,	\$143,102
2014 – 12 Applications,	7 Contracts,	\$137,138
2015 – DRAFT		
9 Applications,	4 Contracts,	\$75,000

WQ Nutrient Management/CNMP CIS

2013 – 1 Application,	1 Contract,	\$8,063
2014 – 1 Application,	1 Contract	\$8,414
2015 – DRAFT		
0 Applications		

Nestucca Water Quality CIS

2013 – 4 Applications,	3 Contracts,	\$149,763
2014 – 2 Applications,	2 Contracts,	\$61,864
2015 – DRAFT		
0 Applications		

Seasonal High Tunnel

2013 – 6 Applications,	4 Contracts,	\$11,916
2014 – 2 Applications,	0 Contracts,	\$0
2015 – 3 Applications,	3 Contracts,	~\$TBD

Ed Wallmark, ODF will work with Mitch on projects that they run into on private lands, and could partner with NRCS with, which possibly could provide more funding. Will send a list of possible sites for site visits. Kate Skinner, Tillamook District Forester, is willing to further explore the “Statewide Agreement between NRCS/ODF” to determine how we might be able to make it work for Tillamook County.

Discussion on the CNMP’s being written in the County. Currently there are two alternatives. Bob Pedersen, volunteer for the TCSWCD has been writing plans for clients needing to update ODA. Technical Service Providers (TSP) are also available to work with a producer through EQIP (for CNMPs) or maybe available on a private basis to write ODA waste management plans.

Working to get the Culvert Initiative off the ground. One culvert has now been replaced with a bridge last year, and was a very successful project.

Two landowners are contracted in the Water Quality/Fish Passage - culvert projects, but permitting issues have been a hindrance, and proved very frustrating. A partnership of entities and agencies are working to get the current five that are designed, installed this year, hoping this will start the program building over the next few years. If designs and permits are in place this summer a second set of culverts could be replaced while two others are being worked on by the NNWSC and Tillamook County Public Works.

Discussion of Future CIS for Tillamook County

The question was asked about the possibility to once again fund the construction/installation of more waste storage tanks. Mitch said it’s possible. Armando (ODA) stated there is still a need in the county for more storage. These structures would need to have been identified in CNMP in order to be eligible for NRCS funding if a CIS was developed.

Nestucca Forestry – No funding is available just now, but this is how we discussed the CIS working. Eligible participants must be on private non-industrial forest land. It is recommended that landowners have a Forest Management Plan (FMP) of some manner before they request funding in order to be eligible for ranking of their application. The program could assist in the development of a plan using TSP assistance where needed. This Forestry strategy, when developed, would allow applicants to apply for funding to implement forest management practices identified in their plans. Chief issues to be addressed is Water Quality, and Forest Health. The strategy would be developed in concert with ODF in order to maximize opportunities.

Tillamook Water Quality and Fish Passage – When the Nestucca Water Quality and Fish Passage CIS is successful, we will be looking to expand it to the Tillamook Bay watershed near term and Nehalem Bay watershed long term. Possibility of moving from Nestucca up to Tillamook will be dependent on our success working with partners in the Nestucca area.

Audience participant mentioned Tillamook County roads have 3500+ culverts – and most are failing. County doesn’t have adequate funding to replace these culverts. Gus Meyers asked if there was anything we could do to replace those? We can only work on private

lands, not county or government land – but future possibilities where we work on a culvert on private lands, might be used as leverage to help get funds for adjacent county road culverts (by the County). Finding partnerships where multiple funding sources can be developed will help to work on different ownerships and open up further reaches of streams. There will continue to be fish passage issues in all watersheds in Tillamook County for some time.

Air Quality – what tools can we provide folks to address what is becoming a more widely publicized issue in the county in order to help improve air quality? The former Tillamook AQ program could be re-established and reworked to make it current. The few practices used previously had at least anecdotally made quite a difference. Bub stated that there is a manure lagoon out north of town, and it doesn't have any odor. The difference is in the way they manage it. They do a lot of things right. They flush their barns with water, which makes a huge difference. The field application delivery systems are low to the ground and they have a very good well maintained separator system to remove solids. All added together makes a huge difference in odor management.

The group was asked for additional thoughts of how we can provide assistance to help farmers address odor in the county? Mixed reviews with chiseling waste into pastures. Cleaning the tanks (or lack thereof) is thought to be a major issue. Some participants suggested that there are tanks that have never been cleaned out. ODA has the authority to make people clean their tanks. First they issue a warning, then they start issuing fines for non-compliance. Some producers feel it is cheaper to pay the fines at least initially than to clean the tank. Eventually, the fines increase. By the time, they 'have' to clean the tanks, it's very expensive. ODA has a random check rotation. Rudy suggested working with the District to provide the landowner a 5 year loan to have the tank cleaned. Armando did say that once a tank has been cleaned, it is much easier to keep cleaned. NRCS cannot put money into cleaning tanks because it's an operation and maintenance issue. Armando has been telling everyone that industry needs to stay ahead of the game as far as air quality. The first thing is to switch from big gun to a drag line (or low head application equipment). EQIP monies would be very helpful to get those practices on the ground. One thing to remember is that once landowners are issued a fine for being out of compliance with ODA, they are no longer eligible for NRCS program funds.

Wym Matthews, ODA, is working with Oregon Solutions. Mitch will talk with him to get more information.

Air Quality – practices considered

Drag Lines

Aerators/Agitators

Low Head Applications

Hedgerows

Wildlife on agriculture land. Geese are a huge problem.

Waste Storage

Money is a big problem. It is very expensive to add storage.

Land base and poor quality ground to physically support waste storage structures.

Over application remains a big problem.

Discussion about lagoons. 6 in the county, 2 do not have issues, the other 4 will need to be replaced.

Dry Storage – not as big of an issue as the liquid
Dry Bedded packs – starting to be utilized

Hobby Farms – manure storage needed for:
Horse facilities
Goats, chickens, sheep, beef

Top Priority – Air Quality

Announcements and Additional Discussions

Farm Bureau is busy with legislative issues. 180+ Voting members, and several Associate Members. Meetings are every third Monday of each month at Hidden Acres.

One idea is to address some of the issues identified is to get the local high school Ag Class involved with projects to solve the problems.

ODF – working with fish passage projects.

ODA – focus area – over application and record keeping is current hot topic.

Mitch discussed an email that suggested the possibility of NRCS taking a more active role in the replacement and maintenance of tide gates in the county. To date, NRCS has not had any role in tide gates.

Rudy mentioned that the district is having a 75th Anniversary Celebration of Soil and Water Conservation District in September. Contact the local office for more info.

Meeting adjourned at 3:15 p.m.
Dee Robinson

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