

# LOWER DESCHUTES

## Agricultural Water Quality Management Area

Biennial Review Report to the Board of Agriculture and ODA Director

Submitted by the Local Advisory Committee (LAC)



OREGON  
DEPARTMENT OF  
AGRICULTURE

<b>Meeting Date:</b> September 28, 2023
<b>LAC Members Present:</b> Ken Bailey (Chair), Brandon Beachamp, Rory Wilson, and Bob Krien
<b>Reporting Time Frame:</b> Calendar years 2021-2023

### PROGRESS MEASUREMENT

*This was a Light Review; progress toward Measurable Objectives will be reported at the next Full Review.*

Activities (Wasco and Sherman SWCDs)	#	Discussion
Events That Actively Engage Landowners	22	4 crop tours, 5 fair booths, 2 stream clean up days, 1 tree planting day, 3 bull tours, 2 post-fire restoration meeting/tours, 1 grazing tour, 1 local working group, 1 orchard manager meeting, 1 booth at Cherry Festival
Landowners Participating in Active Events	851	See above.
Landowners Provided Technical Assistance*	576	Technical assistance was provided on haul roads, terrace re-builds, solar and spring water developments, cross fencing, cover crops, range seeding, invasive weed control, wildlife guzzlers, irrigation efficiency, herbicide use, precision ag applications, juniper control, riparian vegetation, upland vegetation for erosion control and watershed health, mulching for erosion control, and grazing management.
Site Visits	411	
Conservation Plans Written	159	Conservation plans resulted in Farm Bill contracts such as Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), etc.; or district cost share and/or small grant program projects.
Funding Applications Submitted	94	Applications include district cost share, Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board applications (both large and small)
Funding Applications Awarded	69	

\* Number reported likely double-counts some landowners due to tracking methods.

### LAC DISCUSSION

#### Summary of Progress

#### **Management Area Wide Assessments:**

**Soil Erosion:** Assisted USDA with CRP program implementation, which addresses soil conservation on highly erodible land through vegetation management. Provided technical and financial assistance regarding precision agriculture, which supports and improves advances made through the conversion from conventional tillage to direct seed and no-till farming methods. The haul road program addresses concentrated erosion on farm roads. Numerous landowners were aided with grazing management and structural practices such as cross fencing and upland water to provide more uniform livestock distribution.

**Riparian Vegetation:** Assisted USDA with CREP program implementation, which addresses riparian vegetation establishment and management.

**Pollution from wastes:** Technical and financial assistance was provided to one landowner for manure management, although the project is not yet completed.

**Eastern Lower Deschutes SIA:** As of September 2023, 8 tax lots identified as Potential Violation or a Compliance Opportunity were downgraded to Restoration Opportunity or Likely in Compliance. LC = 713, RO = 71, CO = 5, PV = 1.

- ODA opened two compliance investigations in the SIA. ODA still has one active investigation with a landowner.

- SWCD is currently working with the remaining five landowners identified in the SIA as Compliance Opportunity.
- SIA is on track to meet the measurable objective.

**Other progress within the Management Area:**

Wasco County SWCD is currently working with ODA, DEQ, and affected/interested landowners to update the Pesticide Stewardship Partnership strategic plan.

**Impediments**

Climate change and natural catastrophes impact progress toward meeting the goal of the area plan and associated measurable objectives.

- *Riparian vegetation:* After wildfire events, vegetation growth is tracked to determine if active plantings or natural regrowth is needed to meet management goals.
- *Soil erosion:* The LAC discussed removing that measurable objective from the plan due to the lack of resources, with the option to reevaluate and potentially reinstate it.
- *Pollution from wastes:* Various factors can cause that number of livestock operations to fluctuate, including changes in landowners or managers.

**Recommended Modifications and Adaptive Management**

**Management Area Wide Assessments:**

- *Soil Erosion:* The LAC agreed that it would be best to keep the objective as a special project or note in the plan, with the possibility of reassessing it in the future based on available resources and expertise.
- *Riparian Vegetation:* After wildfire events, vegetation growth is tracked to determine if active plantings or natural regrowth is needed to meet management goals. Overall, projects are being implemented and the LAC feels like they are on the right track to meet the management area wide measurable objective.
- *Pollution from wastes:* None

**Other:** The LAC discussed drought and funding issues as the most significant impediments and roadblocks regarding wildfire prevention and management throughout the entire Management Area. They emphasized the need for proactive approaches to fire management, including fire breaks and other vegetation management actions to reduce the intensity of fires.

ODA COMPLIANCE ACTIVITIES (1/1/2021 through 8/31/2023)								
Location	Cases		Site Visits	Agency Actions				
	New	Closed		Letter of Compliance		Pre-Enforcement Notification	Notice of Noncompliance	Civil Penalty
				Already in compliance	Brought into compliance			
Outside SIA	1	1	3	0	1	3	0	0
Within SIA	2	2	7	1	0	5	0	0