

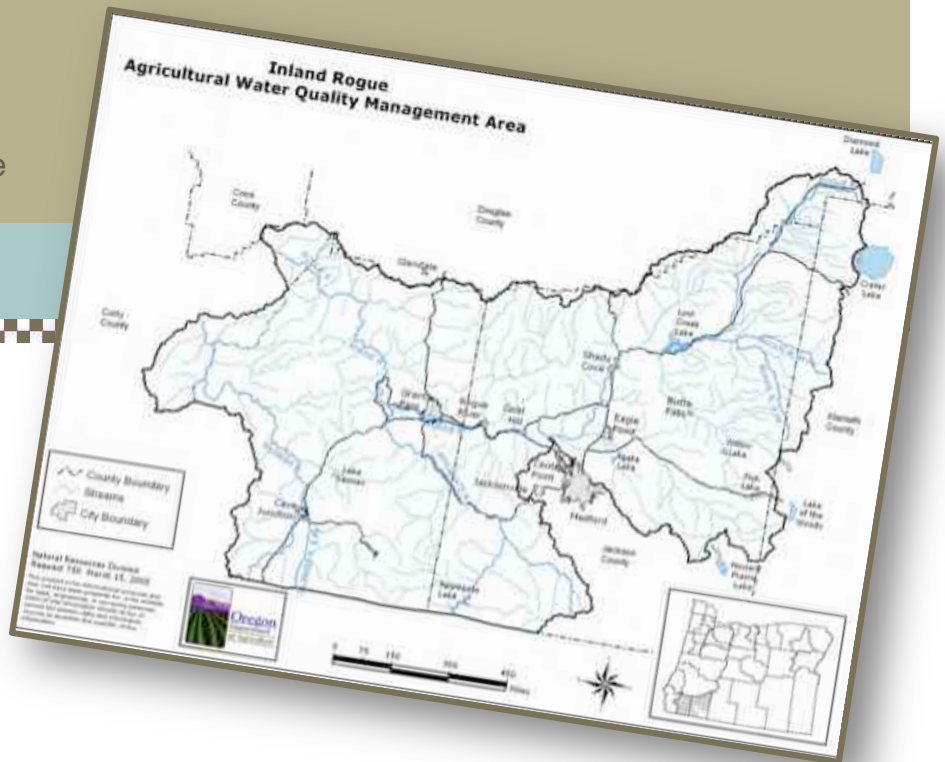
Bear Creek and Inland Rogue Agricultural Water Quality Management Area Plan Biennial Reviews

Illinois Valley, Jackson and Josephine
Soil and Water Conservation Districts

September 26, 2011

Merging of the Two Management Areas

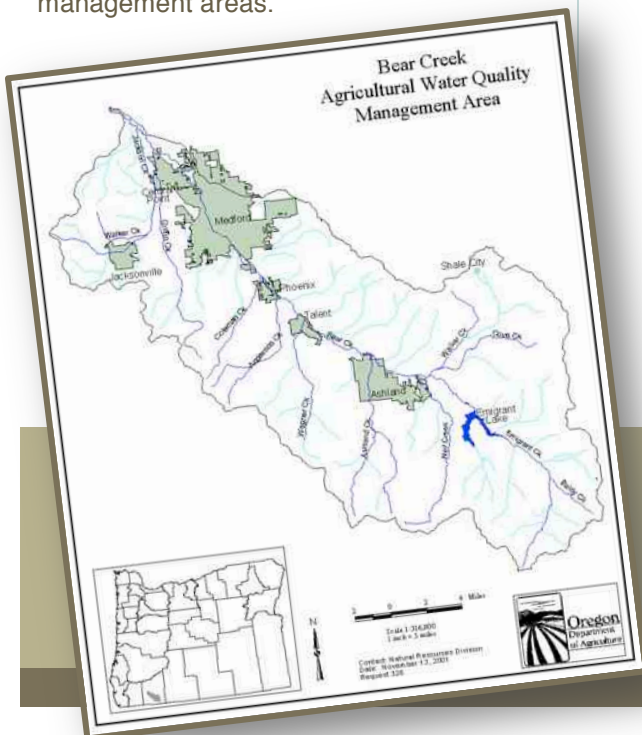
In the winter of 2007, the Bear Creek and Inland Rogue Local Advisory Committees (LACs) voted to merge the Bear Creek and Inland Rogue agricultural water quality management areas. The merged committee has taken the name of the Inland Rogue Agricultural Water Quality Local Advisory Committee. They are in the process of revising the Inland Rogue Agricultural Water Quality Management Area Plan and Rules to reflect the merged management areas.



Local Advisory Committees Meet

On September 26, 2011, the Bear Creek and Inland Rogue LACs met to review the comments presented during the public hearings for the new Rules that will govern the merged Bear Creek and Inland Rogue management areas. The LACs also conducted the 2011 biennial reviews for the two management areas.

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Public hearings for the proposed Rules to apply to the merged Bear Creek and Inland Rogue Management Area were held in August 2011. The new Rules are scheduled to be approved by the Department of Agriculture in December 2011.



Accomplishments

The Illinois Valley, Jackson and Josephine Soil and Water Conservation Districts have implemented the Bear Creek and Inland Rogue Area Plans through their extensive conservation efforts.

From July 2009 to June 2011 the Districts have accomplished the following:

- Contacted 2,192 landowners,
- Provided 1,274 landowners with technical assistance,
- Conducted 232 on-site visits with landowners,
- Held 28 workshops with 426 participants,
- Gave 14 water quality presentations with 203 attendees,
- Put up 13 water quality displays with 3,060 viewers,
- Held 15 student events at nine schools with 596 student participants,
- Distributed 4,101 fact sheets and brochures,
- Distributed 2,000 newsletters,
- Wrote two newspaper articles reaching 2,800 readers,
- Monitored six sites for water quality,
- Submitted 12 grants for water quality project funding,
- Completed 28 farm plans covering 1,042 acres.

District Highlights – Jackson SWCD

The Jackson Soil and Water Conservation District (District) is involved in a collaborative effort with the city of Eagle Point, Medford Water Commission, Little Butte Creek Watershed Council, Eagle Point Irrigation District, and other State and Federal agencies to improve the water quality in Little Butte Creek. This effort has led the District to develop an Agricultural Water Enhancement Program project with the Natural Resource Conservation Service and act as project manager to improve irrigation systems in the Little Butte Creek Watershed.

The District has partnered with OSU Extension Service to develop and deliver a Landowner Stewardship Program, which has been well attended. The District's Smart Horse program and Forage Resource Management class are still doing well.

The District has worked with small landowners to improve

irrigation systems, improve riparian vegetation, install riparian fencing, develop heavy use protection areas, and other similar projects.

The District helped several landowners develop plans and receive funding totaling \$31,000 from the District's Landowners Assistance Program. Projects included: reseeded after the Siskiyou and Deer Ridge fire, irrigation water efficiency, stream restoration projects, and mud and manure management. The District developed plans and received funding from the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) Small Grant Program totaling \$45,864. Projects included: Irrigation efficiency and riparian fencing projects. The District has also worked on an OWEB grant for a headwater monitoring project totaling \$8,521 and several other grants for a large irrigation efficiency project, totaling \$137,545.

RARE Asset at Illinois Valley SWCD

Nancy Smebak joined the Illinois Valley Soil and Water Conservation District (IVSWCD) in September 2012 through the University of Oregon's Resource Assistance for Rural Environments (RARE) AmeriCorps Program. As the District's Special Projects Coordinator, Nancy will spend her eleven months of service coordinating new outreach and assistance programs for local landowners. She will also cultivate relationships with local media outlets to increase District exposure.



"My year at IVSWCD is an opportunity for me to explore natural resources conservation planning as a career," explains Nancy. "My degree is in architectural design, but my studies left me wanting to know more about human interactions with the environment. The RARE AmeriCorps Program allows me to learn that, all while contributing to the community through national service." Nancy says she is also excited to be back in a small town and working with landowners—she grew up on a small farm in northern Minnesota—and looks forward to making a positive impact in rural Oregon.

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During the meeting, the Illinois Valley, Jackson and Josephine Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) presented summaries of their accomplishments over the past two years (see page 2). The Department of Agriculture (ODA) gave a summary of agricultural water quality complaints and compliance cases that have occurred over the same two-year period.

Summary of Compliance Cases

From July 2009 to June 2011, there were two complaints in the Bear Creek management area. One compliance case resulted in a Letter of Warning followed by a Letter of Compliance. The second compliance case resulted in a Letter of Compliance, as there were no water quality issues.

During the same two-year period, there were four new complaints in the Inland Rogue management area. In one instance, there was no connection to waters of the state, while a second case resulted in a Letter of Compliance. Two Letters of Warning were issued in other cases. One has been resolved and the landowner

has been issued a Letter of Compliance. The other case is still open.

A case opened prior July 2009 resulted in a Notice of Noncompliance after two Letters of Warning were issued. The landowner has since complied with the Plan of Corrective Action and has received a Letter of Compliance.

Successes in Implementing the Area Plans

The LAC discussed the successes in implementing the Area Plans through the work of the local Soil and Water Conservation Districts (see the summary of accomplishments on page 2). The LAC was impressed with the amount of work done with limited resources. They also acknowledged the unknown but large number of projects done by landowners and operators without government assistance.

Impediments in Implementing the Area Plans

The LAC feels there are many challenges to implementing the Area Plans. These include the

lack of adequate funding to provide local management area staff the resources to implement the Area Plan effectively. The LAC also feels that there is inadequate and insufficient education and outreach activities

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From 1993 through 1998, ODA and the Bear Creek LAC worked to develop a management Plan and associated administrative Rules for the Bear Creek Agricultural Water Quality Management Area. The LAC updated the plan in 2005. From 1998 to 2001, ODA and the Inland Rogue LAC worked to develop a management Plan and associated administrative Rules for the Inland Rogue Agricultural Water Quality Management Area. The Inland Rogue LAC conducted its first biennial review in 2003-2004. In 2007 and 2009, the Inland Rogue LAC conducted a joint biennial review for Bear Creek and the Inland Rogue management areas. The 2011 biennial review for these two management areas was also conducted jointly.



Local Advisory

Bear Creek

Paul Kay, Chair joint committee

Keith Corp

Keith Emerson

Ron Meyer

Ed Vaughn

Inland Rogue

Tom Dover

Keith Nelson

Robert Niedermeyer

Greg Walch

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to inform landowners and operators about the Area Plan and Rules. However, the LAC noted that there is a comprehensive Education and Outreach Strategy and Action Plan that is being developed.

The LAC also discussed the lack of financial assistance to offset costs of implementing management changes and Best Management Practices.

Recommendations

The LAC discussed the draft Education and Outreach Strategy and Action Plan that was being developed. The LAC felt that this plan would go a long way toward improving the knowledge of the Area Plan and Rules in the Inland Rogue and urged ODA and the local SWCDs to complete and implement the plan.

Monitoring

The Inland Rogue and Bear Creek watershed has multiple monitoring sites listed on the DEQ's Laboratory Analytical Storage and Retrieval (LASAR) database. Of these, Bear Creek at Kirtland Road probably provides the most integrated water quality data. However, with the possible exception of two sites on Griffin Creek (that were only monitored for one season), the monitoring sites reflect not only agricultural but also urban/residential water quality impacts. In 2011, ODA and DEQ entered into an agreement to begin long term monitoring of new sites primarily influenced by agriculture, however, non-agricultural land use is widespread and scattered throughout the Rogue Basin, so it is hard to pick monitoring locations where the primary influence is agriculture. There will be one new monitoring site in the Rogue Basin.

The Rogue Valley Council of Governments also monitors 32 sites and takes over 500 samples per year in the Bear Creek watershed (streams and canals) but none of these appear to be wholly representative of agricultural development.

Water quality at the Bear Creek Kirtland Road monitoring site showed little change over the last two years. Elevated E. coli and dissolved oxygen still remains. High total phosphorus levels and high pH (up to 9) were also recorded.

The Little Butte Creek monitoring site continues to have elevated E. coli concentrations, along with high total phosphorus. In addition pH had a wider than normal range, from 6.2 to 8.3. The Rogue River at Lobster Creek Bridge had three high turbidity concentrations, but there were no apparent water quality issues on the Rogue at Dodge Park.

Local Soil and Water Conservation Districts provide technical assistance and other services to local agricultural landowners and operators. They can also provide copies of the Agricultural Water Quality Management Area Plan and Rules.

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