

Upper Deschutes Agricultural Water Quality Management Area Program

SPRING 2011

Need to Continue to Emphasize Outreach to Landowners

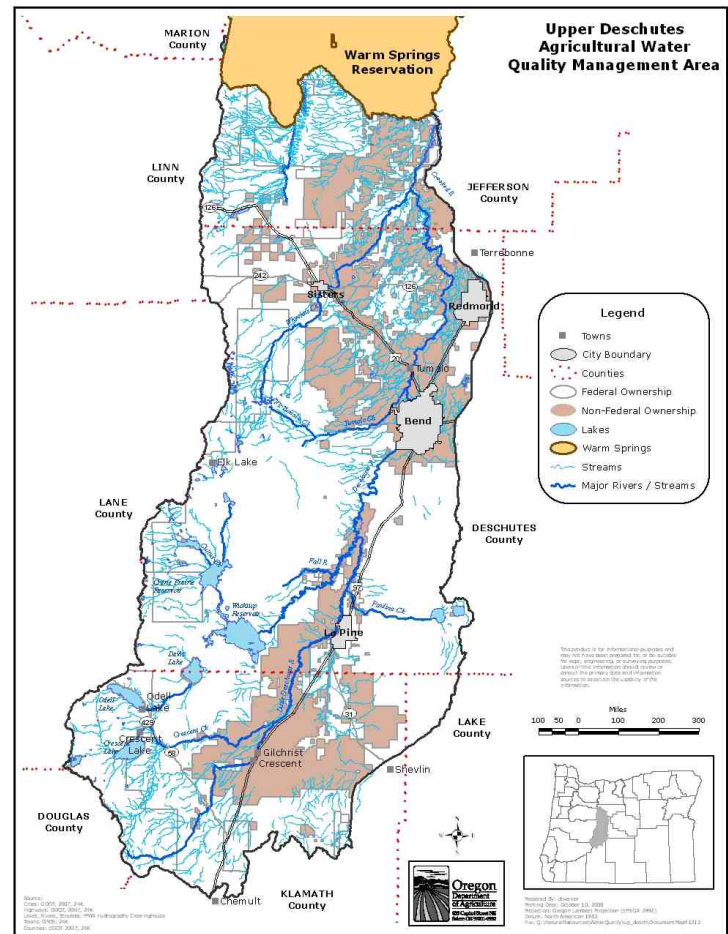
Conservation partners need to step up efforts to educate landowners.

This recommendation is a repeat of the one two years ago from the Upper Deschutes Agricultural Local Water Quality Committee (LAC), which met in March 2011 for the biennial review of the Upper Deschutes Agricultural Water Quality Management Area Plan (Area Plan).

Basic information needs to be repeated because of the high turnover of owners of small acreages.

Many of these people buy property to enjoy a rural lifestyle and then sell out when they discover how much work it takes to maintain that lush pasture or keep their sheep healthy. The new owners are also likely to need basic information on how to effectively manage their new property.

In addition, the LAC recommended that ODA add more people to the LAC that represent the city of Bend and that graze livestock on larger acreages, especially in southern Deschutes County and northern Klamath County.



The management area consists of the Deschutes River Basin upstream of its confluence with the Metolius River.

LAC Members

Bob Mullong, Chair
Bill Grafton, Vice Chair
Rex Barber
Gordon DeArmond

Dana Martin
Larry Roofener
Dan Sherwin
Terry Penhollow



Deschutes SWCD Accomplishments

Outreach and Education

- Helped plan the 2011 Living on a Few Acres (LOAFA) workshop.
- Provided administrative support and participated in Small Acreage Resource Team (SmART) outreach coordination meetings.
- Responded to 250+ landowner contacts regarding agricultural water quality.
- Staffed booth at six events, including Swalley Irrigation District Customer Appreciation day, LOAFA, Deschutes County Home and Garden Show, and the Deschutes County Fair.
- Offered two on-farm horse-keeping workshops (32 attendees).
- Maintained Deschutes SWCD website.
- Published and began to distribute 20,000 Deschutes County Rural Living Handbooks.

- Offered nine small monthly workshops (93 attendees).
- Ordered and distributing 200 pasture sticks.

Technical Assistance

- Started a manure exchange website that now has almost 200 listings.
- Provided over 100 landowner site visits for agricultural water quality technical assistance.
- Provided 24 on-farm irrigation site visits.

Funding for Projects

- Awarded seven small grants from the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board for fencing and other agricultural water quality improvement activities.



Typical issues that bring a landowner to the SWCD for help. Above: fencing horses out of an irrigation ditch. Below: creating a vegetated buffer between the pen and the irrigation ditch.



Background

ODA worked with the LAC to develop the Area Plan and associated Oregon Administrative Rules 603-95-3000, which were adopted by ODA in 2003. The LAC reconvenes every two years to review progress towards meeting Area Plan goals. The LAC includes farmers and ranchers, fish fans, and representatives of irrigation districts and the Deschutes County SWCD.

The Area Plan goal is to “promote voluntary agricultural practices that improve and protect water quality while sustaining a healthy agricultural economy” using the following strategies:

- Create a high level of awareness and understanding of water quality issues related to agriculture.
- Increase the voluntary adoption of agricultural practices to improve water quality.
- Secure funding for administration and successful implementation of the Area Plan.
- Conduct periodic reviews of the Area Plan by the LAC and other interested parties.

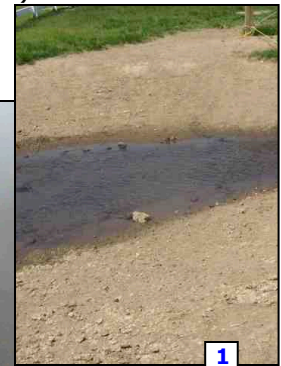
The Area Rules state landowners:

- Must allow the establishment and development of non-weedy vegetation along natural and channelized streams.
- Vegetation must be adequate to prevent unnatural streambank erosion, moderate water temperature, and filter sediment and nutrients from surface runoff.
- Not pollute ground or surface water by discharging waste into waters of the state or placing any wastes in a location where they are likely to escape or be carried into the waters of the state.

Complaints

Five complaints were investigated by ODA in this management area. All were neighbor complaints regarding the management of small acreages:

1. Excessive soil clogging an irrigation pump due to unrestricted livestock access to the ditch.
2. Dust and dry manure blowing off of horse drylots and settling in an irrigation ditch and fishpond.
3. Manure buildup in a drylot in a shallow groundwater area near LaPine.
4. Manure entering a seasonal drainage from pigpens (two complaints).



1



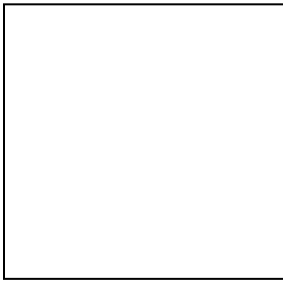
2



3



4



Increasing Irrigation Efficiency

Irrigation water is everywhere. But, many irrigators are new to farming or don't make the time to irrigate as efficiently as possible.

That's the reality of irrigation in Deschutes County.

And that's changing - various agencies, individuals, and organizations have joined Central Oregon SWCDs to create the Irrigation Water Management (IWM) Group. Our mission is to 'accelerate the efficient use of irrigation water on-farm in Central Oregon'.

Efficient irrigation has multiple benefits. It can:

- Reduce the amount of water that can flow off a field ('tailwater') carrying manure, fertilizers, and eroded soil,
- Reduce the amount of nitrogen leached below the root zone of crops,
- Produce more uniform crop yields,
- Provide more water for irrigation districts,
- Leave more water instream to improve fish habitat,
- Prevent flooding out a neighbor's field or adjacent road.

Irrigation districts are responsible for providing water up to their 'point of delivery' or head gate. Beyond this head gate, it is common for a group of landowners to divide up the water and try to distribute it to all. Unfortunately, experience shows that this is often difficult and water is wasted. Members of the IWM Group will work with these landowners to use water as efficiently as possible.

Oregon Department of Agriculture

Water Quality Program
635 Capitol St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Regional Water Quality Specialist:

Ellen Hammond
475 NE Bellevue Dr. #110
Bend, OR 97701

Ph: 541-617-0017

Fax: 541-388-8283

ehammond@oda.state.or.us

Deschutes SWCD

625 SE Salmon Ave., #7
Redmond, OR 97756
541-923-2204



Horses trampling grass and compacting soil in over-irrigated pasture.

We're on the Web!

http://egov.oregon.gov/ODA/NRD/water_quality_front.shtml