



Oregon
Department
of Agriculture

Hood River Agricultural Water Quality Management Area Plan

FALL 2010

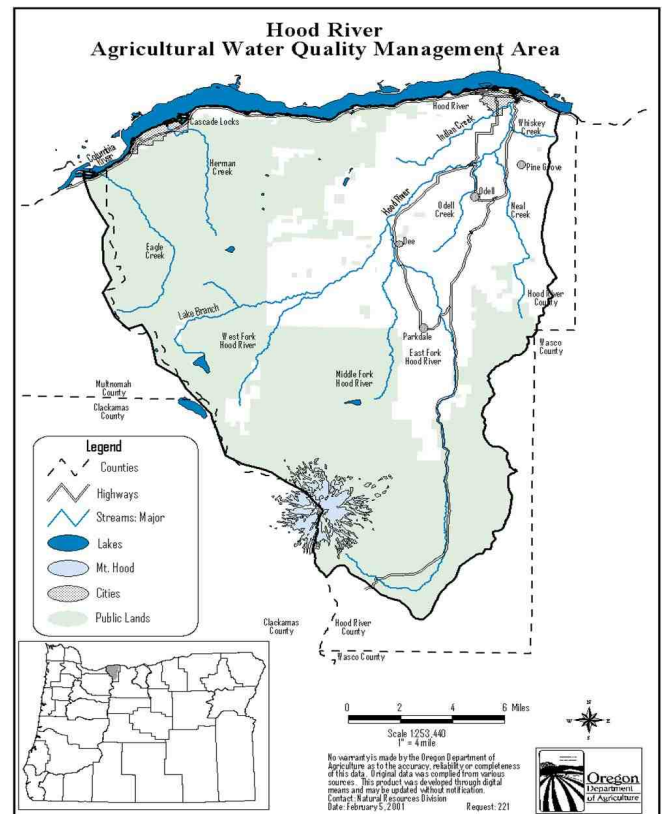
Support Continues for Ag WQ Efforts

The Hood River Local Advisory Committee (LAC), which met November 9, 2010, to review the Area Plan, told the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) that they were generally well pleased with efforts to protect water quality in the Hood River area.

The LAC expressed support for an expedited enforcement process so that agricultural water quality problems are resolved in a timely manner.

LAC members expressed some concerns and proposed some solutions.

- Mating disruption is an effective, but expensive, alternative to broad-spectrum chemical insecticides. However, funding for it and other alternatives is drying up. Orchardists would like more cost-share funding for these "softer" insect-control measures. The LAC hoped that ODA might be able to encourage potential funders to support these options.
- Hobby farmers and absentee landowners are not plugged into the usual 'information networks' and some of their properties show poor stewardship. How can the Hood River Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) and its conservation partners get their conservation messages to these landowners? The SWCD will offer to hold a workshop for realtors.
- ODA is currently investigating anonymous complaints only under special circumstances. This situation concerns the LAC because it puts too much of a burden on neighbors to file complaints, contributing to rifts in neighbor relationships.



The Hood River Management Area is located between the Columbia River and Mt. Hood, and extends from the towns of Cascade Locks to Hood River. It is drained primarily by the Hood River and its tributaries.

Hood River Soil & Water Conservation District

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We're on the Web!

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



Hood River SWCD Accomplishments

The SWCD has worked actively to promote agricultural water quality.

Educational

- Four tours were held including: Hughes horsekeeping operation, Parkdale Fish Facility, Robinhood Creek restoration project, and the Coe Branch Diversion upgrade.
- Two radio presentations were given on weed prevention/eradication, and water conservation best management practices.
- Several articles were published in the Hood River News on: Living Among Orchards, Invasive Garlic Mustard, Area Plan & Rules, Naturescaping, Water Conservation Tips, Know Your Water Rights, and Backyard Wildlife.
- The SWCD continued distribution of the Hood River County Rural Living Handbook (including at the showing of "Dirt! The Movie" in cooperation with the History Museum's Farm Life Series).
- They conducted both the annual native plant sale and conservation materials purchase program to increase opportunities to enhance riparian areas, conserve water quantity, and protect water quality.
- The SWCD continues to develop and maintain their website, which they use as a key community outreach and education tool (www.hoodriverswcd.org).
- Their annual display was exhibited at the Hood River County Fair where 725 handouts were taken (484 in 2008, 269 in 2009).
- Three workshops were held on water conservation techniques, pond permitting, and horsekeeping.
- Eight presentations were given on: SWCD services, Neal Creek riparian restoration project, Title II program and projects, cooperative efforts to reduce pesticide detections in waterways (DEQ statewide meeting), noxious weeds, stormwater management and an annual presentation to county Board of Commissioners.
- SWCD staff conducted a survey of livestock owners to gauge interest in a regional outreach program.
- SWCD staff provided Area Plan & Rules to Columbia Gorge Fruit Growers' technician conducting landowner outreach on pesticide-sensitive areas.
- The SWCD assisted with the DEQ pesticide stewardship partnership.



Irrigation improvement projects were completed on a total of 213.9 acres of farmland during the last biennium.

A typical orchard irrigation upgrade conserves approximately 290,000 gal/acre/year.

Technical

- Nine irrigation efficiency projects were completed on 85.2 acres, funded through the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board.
- Through Natural Resources Conservation Service programs - irrigation upgrades on 128.7 acres were completed.
- SWCD staff secured funding for, and began flow meter monitoring on 26 irrigation upgrade sites.
- A horse operation was upgraded with a manure storage facility, paddock footings, and gutters/downspouts to direct water away from animal heavy use areas (*see story on next page*).

Managing Mud and Manure Along Indian Creek



Managing five horses on two acres next to a creek can be challenging. The SWCD helped one family meet that challenge along Indian Creek.

The landowners had no place to store the 150 cubic feet of manure produced monthly by their horses. Much of it languished in an uncovered pile less than 200 feet from Indian Creek and about 20 feet from a small seasonal drainage that flows into the creek.



In addition, the drylot became a 'mudlot' in the winter. The drylot is 250 feet from the creek and 20-50 feet from the seasonal drainage.

Indian Creek is impaired by nutrient, bacteria, toxics and turbidity. The conditions on the farm could have been contributing to these water quality concerns.



What to do?

Grant funds were used to improve the **drylot footing** and build a 3-bin **manure composting facility**.

To install the footing, the landowners laid a layer of 3/4 inch washed rock over the 40' x 40' area, topped by an interlocking plastic grid system, and covered with a layer of pea gravel.

The manure facility has a concrete floor. In addition to the metal **roof**, the landowners installed **gutters** to gather and direct clean roof rainwater into a **French drain** behind the facility. The clean water flows through the **grassed pasture** away from mud and manure.

Benefits

The drylot is useable year round. Mud is virtually eliminated and the landowners can drive equipment into the drylot in the winter to remove manure.

The composted manure is used by a neighbor on his fields as **fertilizer**.

The risk of sediment and manure entering Indian Creek from the horse farm is greatly reduced.



LAC Members

- Mike Oates, *Chair**
- Bruce Decker, *V-Chair*
- Tim Annala*
- Chris Brun*
- Steve Castagnoli*
- Steve Hunt*
- Mike Kleinsmith
- Davinne McKeown-Ellis*
- Brian Nakamura
- Roger Nelson*
- Chuck Thomsen
- Jim Wells*

Alternate:
Jean Godfrey*

*attended the biennial review meeting



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Background

ODA worked with the LAC to develop the Area Plan and associated Oregon Administrative Rules 603-095-1100, which were adopted by ODA in 2001. The LAC reconvenes every two years to review progress towards meeting Area Plan goals. LAC members represent the interests of local landowners (orchardists, livestock owners, and small-acreage farmers), Columbia Gorge Fruit Growers, fruit packing houses and agricultural businesses, irrigation districts, Hood River Watershed Group, Hood River County Board of Commissioners, Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation, and the Hood River SWCD.

The LAC identified several objectives to improve water quality:

- 1) Minimize agriculture’s contribution to the following water quality concerns: temperature, nutrients, bacteria, pesticides, sediment, and petroleum products.
- 2) Assist landowners by providing information and both technical and financial assistance.

3) Work with others to track Area Plan implementation and effectiveness.

4) Continue to include the public in the implementation of the Area Plan and Rules.

The Area Rules state that landowners must:

- allow the establishment, growth, and maintenance of vegetation along streams sufficient to control water pollution by moderating solar heating, minimizing streambank erosion, filtering sediments and nutrients from overland flows, and improving the infiltration of water into the soil profile.
- 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.

Complaint Investigations

ODA received no new complaints since the last biennial review, but worked to resolve two long-standing issues.

After receiving a Notice of Noncompliance, one landowner is maintaining a fence along Odell Creek to limit livestock access to the creek. The landowner is now in compliance.

A second complaint was related to cattle access to Graham Creek. The landowner received two Letters of Warning due to lack of riparian vegetation and excessive sediment and *E. coli* in the creek. The creek has now been fenced and issues with the crossing are being resolved.



Dramatic effects of fencing off a creek to limit livestock access for watering and crossing.

