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NORTH/MIDDLE FORKS JOHN DAY SUBBASIN AGRICULTURAL WATER QUALITY MANAGEMENT AREA PLAN

North and Middle Forks John Day River Local Advisory Committee Meets to Revise Area Plan

Executive Summary

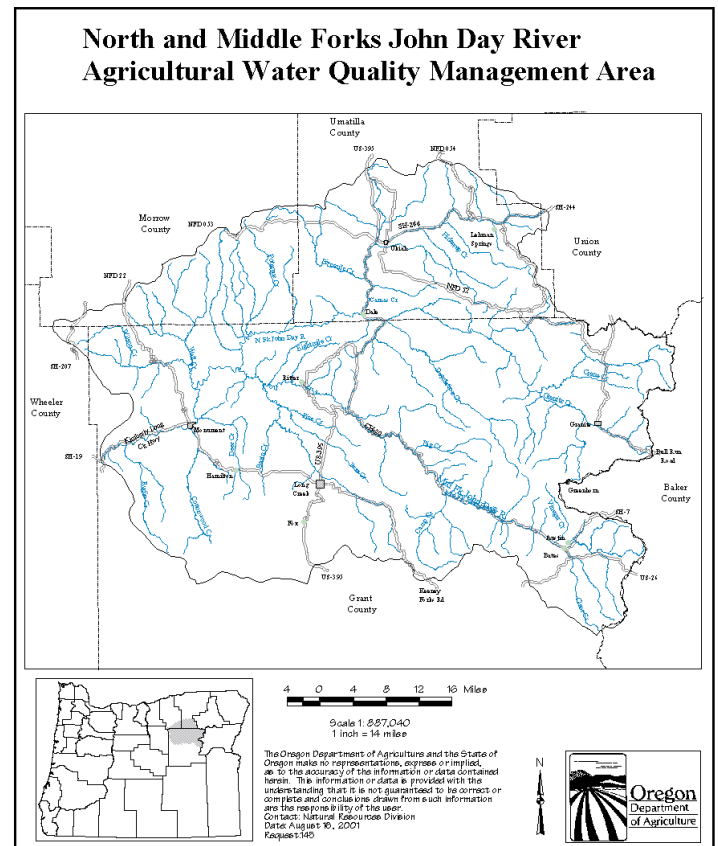
The North and Middle Forks John Day River Local Advisory Committee (LAC) met with the Oregon Department of Agriculture (Department) to conduct its fourth biennial review of the North and Middle Forks John Day River Agricultural Water Quality Management Area Plan (Area Plan). LAC members present were: Allen Reilly, Gary Adams, Sharon Livingston, Jacki Groff, Jim Bahrenburg, and John Zakrajsek. Also present were representatives from the Monument Soil and Water Conservation District (District), Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), North Fork John Day Watershed Council and Grant County Court.

During the review, the Department updated the LAC on statewide water quality and compliance issues, reviewed the District implementation activities, and revised the Area Plan to include information from the recently approved John Day Basin Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL). The TMDL is a plan developed by DEQ to improve water quality in the John Day Basin.

TMDL

The TMDL was approved by the Environmental Protection Agency in 2010 to fulfill requirements of the Clean Water Act to develop control targets and improvement plans for impaired water within the plan area.

The DEQ has identified several water quality concerns in the John Day Basin, including high temperature and bacteria levels, low oxygen concentrations and impaired biological conditions.



The North and Middle Forks John Day River Agricultural Water Quality Management Area includes the area that drains into the North and Middle Forks of the John Day River upstream from the confluence with the mainstem John Day River near Kimberly.

The TMDL focuses on temperature and bacteria reduction measures. Implementation of these target measures will subsequently address the water quality concerns for dissolved oxygen and biological diversity. Each jurisdictional authority then develops water quality management plans to achieve the load allocations. This Area Plan serves as the implementation plan for agriculture's load allocation.

LAC Plan Review



Typical trough installation in conjunction with development of a spring site. This small grant project was funded by Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board.

LAC Findings/Recommendations

LAC members feel that recent upward trends of fish returns to the subbasin are the result of improved habitat and water quality. They were cautioned that there are many factors affecting fish production that lie outside the subbasin.

Concern was expressed about the ability of landowners to address streambank damage caused by this year's high water events. Funding for repairs and the onerous permit process are the primary issues.

Concern was also raised about future direction of the ag water quality program relative to DEQ's adoption of much stricter toxic standards. Some feel strongly that DEQ wants to take over ODA's responsibilities for water quality regulation on agricultural lands.

Compliance Summary

No compliance investigations were conducted during the two-year period.

Background

The Area Plan was developed by the LAC to identify strategies to reduce water pollution from agricultural lands through a combination of educational programs, monitoring, suggested land treatment, and management activities.

The Area Plan is used by landowners and the SWCD as guidance for solutions to water quality problems. It also is used to enhance public awareness and understanding of water quality issues.

In March 2002, the Oregon Board of Agriculture adopted the North and Middle Forks John Day River Area Plan and Oregon Administrative Rules (603-095-1000 thru 1060). Biennial reviews were conducted in 2004, 2007 and 2009.

Goal

The goal of this Area Plan is to prevent and control water pollution from agricultural activities and to achieve applicable water quality standards.

Objectives

The objective of this Area Plan is to maximize agriculture's beneficial impact on water quality within the North and Middle Forks John Day River Ag Water Quality Management Area by identifying and controlling factors that contribute to pollution originating on agricultural and rural lands.



Fish passage project showing the installed culvert and smooth flow area for fish to be diverted through the escape route at the fish screen.

Strategies

- Work to improve the quality of water through planning and implementation of technically sound and economically feasible conservation practices that contribute to meeting plan goals.
- Create a high level of awareness and an understanding of water quality issues, in a manner that minimizes conflict and encourages cooperative efforts through education and technical assistance activities.
- Encourage active participation by the agricultural community and rural public in the process of solving our water quality problems.
- Achieve plan goals and objectives by encouraging adequate funding and administration of the program to achieve systematic, long-range planning and focusing of coordinated efforts on full-scale, watershed-based approaches, identifying needs, developing projects, actively seeking funding, and ensuring successful implementation of funded projects.

Rule Summary

In addition to voluntary strategies to achieve the goals and objectives, enforceable Area Rules were adopted to provide the regulatory backstop needed to assure that water quality standards are achieved. Prevention and control measures include land conditions associated with:

- Waste management
- Livestock management
- Uplands management
- Streamside management
- Irrigation management



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Summary of Accomplishments

Outreach and Education

The SWCD and North Fork John Day Watershed Council are actively involved with landowner outreach and education programs and with the Monument School District to provide natural resource and water quality information to students.

- Activities include: Cavander Conservation Day, monitoring field trips, outreach days, applications for funding to revive the Student Watershed Enhancement Team and a RARE intern position.
- An annual Resource Fair is held for community members to learn about and discuss natural resource issues with agency representatives.

Technical Assistance

The Districts, Watershed Council and Natural Resources Conservation Services provide technical assistance to landowners for implementation of conservation practices that protect water quality.

- Upland practices include: juniper removal, forest management, fencing, spring development, reseeding, replanting, road improvement, and weed surveys and control.
- Streamside practices include: irrigation efficiency, push-up dam removal, riparian fencing and riparian improvement.

Financial Assistance

In addition to USDA funding sources, numerous successful grant applications were received to provide cost-share to landowners for implementation of conservation practices.

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