

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

Meeting Date: December 10, 2025

LAC Members Present: Rory Wilson, Jerod Warnock, and Bill Hammel

Reporting Timeframe: Calendar years 2024–2025

PROGRESS MEASUREMENT

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

Activities	#	Description
Wasco County SWCD and Sherman County SWCD		
Events That Actively Engage Landowners	17	County fairs, crop tours, cherry tours, pesticide event, planting day, fire workshop, neighborhood meetings to give details on conservation programs to landowners, quarterly newsletter and displays at local fairs to provide information on agricultural water quality projects and associated funding opportunities.
Landowners Participating in Active Events	1,183	Landowners who participated in the above activities.
Landowners Provided Technical Assistance*	257	Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) site visits and associated conservation planning, emergency grazing plans, Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) practices for irrigation efficiency, haul roads technical assistance, cross/boundary/riparian fencing, plantings, livestock wells, livestock pipeline, solar water and spring developments. Post fire erosion control and water quality investigations with partner agencies, irrigation conveyance efficiency, and streambank stabilization.
Site Visits	132	Pertaining to the activities and practices listed above.
Conservation Plans Written	47	Conservation plans resulted in Farm Bill contracts, including EQIP, CREP, and CRP, as well as district cost share awards and small grant projects.
Funding Applications Submitted	50 plus 4 pending submittals	Project types included: spring development, boundary/cross/riparian fencing. Funding sources include district cost share and Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) applications (both large and small grant types).
Funding Applications Awarded	44	

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

LAC DISCUSSION

Summary of Progress

- Eastern Lower Deschutes Strategic Implementation Area (SIA) Monitoring Plan was approved in November for work in May 2026 - October 2027
- The District Cost Share program is money from each county's tax base. The program is 20 years old and popular. Each project is similar to an OWEB small grant.
- SIA compliance was wrapped up.

Impediments

- Conservation partners find that permitting for beaver dam analogs is challenging to obtain.
- ODA's Water Quality Program feels too separate from ODA's Pesticide Stewardship Partnership Program (PSP). It would help SWCDs if the two programs could intersect more and if PSPs in neighboring

Management Areas could coordinate more as well, such as Lower Deschutes and Middle Deschutes PSPs.

- The ODA Agricultural Water Quality Management Area Plan is not useful for general outreach. It would be nice to have another version of it that is more targeted to the agricultural community instead of the agencies. The Executive Summary is not quite enough. Something in between would be ideal.
- SWCDs would really benefit from more capacity funding. Less capacity funding would make things very challenging for them.
- The upcoming changes in OWEB's Capacity Grant rules are causing some anxiety for SWCDs.

Recommended Modifications and Adaptive Management

- ODA might consider allotting each SIA or each year of SIAs a certain amount of restoration dollars instead of having the whole pot be competitive for past and present SIAs.
- Should the BOA Report include photos to highlight successful projects?
- Should there be two versions of Area Plans, one for ODA/DEQ and one more condensed version for landowners/outreach?
- A condensed version of the Area Plan might help with Local Advisory Committee recruitment and participation.
- Could there be a place in Board of Agriculture (BOA) for accomplishments over time? The past two years AND historic data (for comparison).
- The current compliance table isn't useful when there are no compliance activities to report in the past two years. The 0s don't tell a story. No compliance is a good thing. The information could be presented differently to highlight what has been going on in the Management Area instead of what has not.
- Invite Kathryn Rifenburg to Full Review and collaborate beforehand.
- Could there be a place for PSP activities and data on the BOA report?

ODA COMPLIANCE ACTIVITIES

Location	Cases		Site Visits	Agency Actions				
				Letter of Compliance		Pre-Enforcement Notification	Notice of Noncompliance	Civil Penalty
	New	Closed		Already in compliance	Brought into compliance			
Outside SIA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Within SIA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0