# KLAMATH HEADWATERS
## 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:** January 26, 2026 |
| **LAC Members Present:** Megan Skinner, Cameron Duncan, Michelle Sharp, Kevin Newman, Margaret Jacobs, Shahnie Rich, Kelley Delpit, and Becky Hatfield Hyde |
| **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: Klamath SWCD | # | Description |
|---|---|---|
| Events That Actively Engage Landowners | 2 | |
| Landowners Participating in Active Events | 26 | |
| Landowners Provided Technical Assistance* | 239 | Field visits, phone calls, and group discussions to provide support. |
| Site Visits | 28 | Meeting with landowners on their property. |
| Conservation Plans Written | 2 | |
| Funding Applications Submitted | 10 | |
| Funding Applications Awarded | 2 | |

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

## LAC DISCUSSION

### Summary of Progress

- Klamath Soil and Water Conservation District (KSWCD) is in the process of interviewing an ag specialist jointly with NRCS. There will potentially be another hire in February.
- There have been discussions regarding a “benefits calculator” that would help practitioners quantify the benefits of a project in three main categories: water quality, habitat, and impact to grazing benefits. The goal would be to help identify projects that score well for all three. There is a need for funding.
- Tributary streams in the upper basin are getting a lot of attention and seeing restoration success stories.
- There is a wealth of knowledge in the basin among restoration practitioners and agency staff. They are a great resource when consultation is needed for project design.
- Engagement efforts in the basin have helped get landowners interested in restoration opportunities.
- Sustainable Northwest has a well-designed email newsletter for relaying information to landowners.
- Mapping tools from Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program are useful for seeing past project work and strategizing future work.
- The Klamath Tribes have one of the best water quality monitoring programs there is, perhaps KSWCD can support its effort with existing monitoring funds.

### Impediments

- The original process for applying for the Klamath Water Quality Improvements Program (IM11) funding through OWEB/DEQ was cumbersome and made it challenging to get good projects on the ground. Based on updates from DEQ and Sustainable Northwest, these have likely been remedied.
- KSWCD staff finds it challenging to know what type of staffing expertise to seek out when it is unsure what type of projects new staff might be working on.
- Large scale restoration (e.g., fixing Sprague River diking) is extremely expensive.
- There have been serious permitting delays for riparian work (archaeological, State Historic Preservation Office, etc.)
- It can be frustrating to ranchers when they seek help and show an interest in a project but are faced with a lack of communication and follow-through from practitioners.
- It takes a lot of time and effort by landowners to make phone calls and chase down funding opportunities for projects.
- The Bootleg Fire continues to be an issue for water quality.

**Recommended Modifications and Adaptive Management**

- Regarding the improvements made to the IM11 grant application process: Oregon Water Resources Department will be more heavily involved on the front end of the application/consultation process.
- Could IM11 applicants work with KSWCD to use remaining SIA funds for match? This might be particularly useful for post implementation monitoring needs.
- There is a collective need for creativity to get larger projects on the ground.
- There needs to be a way to demonstrate and quantify benefits of restoration work to landowners.
- The human dimension and economics need to be considered when assessing a landowner's willingness to do restoration on their property.
- LAC members recommended reevaluating the Strategic Implementation Area (SIA) monitoring plan to have a narrower scope and answer a specific agricultural water quality related question.
- LAC members need more understanding of how SIA's show success and how that metric brings partners closer to Total Maximum Daily Load standards. A final report from an SIA would be helpful.
- Natural resource partners need to understand that we are in a repeating cycle. Landowners have generational memory of dikes being installed in the Sprague River valley. Now they are being told that the dikes on their land are the problem and that they need to be taken out to achieve water quality and restoration goals. They fear that in agreeing to today's solutions they are just creating issues for future generations. There needs to be trust built into these conversations. The government bodies need to be able to admit that there are mistakes that need to be corrected and there needs to be trust in the solution to move forward. It is also important to recognize that this push to reset waterways is a result of better science and understanding of the environment, not simply the whims of a government.

**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 | 1 | 6 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| Within SIA | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |