

WALLOWA

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: November 6, 2025

LAC Members Present: Dennis Sheehy, Kevin Melville, and Ken Nash

Reporting Timeframe: January 2023 – June 2025

PROGRESS MEASUREMENT

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

Activities (Wallowa SWCD, NRCS)	#	Description
Events That Actively Engage Landowners	5	Small woodlands meeting; Woodlands & Watersheds Festival; hosted a meeting for Dobbin irrigation ditch landowners to discuss an irrigation piping project; hosted a meeting with Marr Flat permittees to discuss fencing.
Landowners Participating in Active Events	43	
Landowners provided with brochures/fact sheets/mailings, etc.	198	Newsletters, information on water quality monitoring, and brochures on soil health and how to reduce erosion.
Landowners Provided Technical Assistance*	27	Technical assistance for landowners for riparian fencing, invasive grass treatment, livestock water developments, water quality monitoring, erosion control, irrigation pipeline, irrigation infrastructure, seeding, and soil moisture monitoring.
Site Visits	5	Site visits for riparian fencing, invasive grass treatment, irrigation diversion structure, and pipeline projects.
Conservation Plans Written	0	
Funding Applications Submitted	8	Grants submitted for water quality monitoring, erosion reduction on sloped ground, fencing, NRCS/OWEB technical assistance, irrigation diversion structure, irrigation headgate.
Funding Applications Awarded	5	Grants awarded for water quality monitoring and NRCS/OWEB technical assistance, fencing, road rocking, irrigation headgate.

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

LAC DISCUSSION

Summary of Progress

SWCD/NRCS:

- The Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) continues to implement fencing projects through the Strategic Implementation Area (SIA) process.
- The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is advancing pipeline installations and pivot irrigation projects to improve water quality and water use efficiency.
- Upland wildlife habitat improvements include the installation of off-channel watering facilities.
- Significant forest stand improvement activities are occurring to reduce wildfire risk and improve forest resilience. Work includes thinning, brush management, and weed treatments.

Wallowa Resources:

- Implementing projects focused on invasive annual grass management, including medusa head rye and broadleaf species treatments.
- Conducting stream restoration projects to enhance watershed health.

Private Landowners:

- Private efforts include forest stand improvements.
- Landowners are implementing brush management practices aimed at reducing wildfire risk and improving forest resilience.

SWCD Monitoring:

- The SWCD continues water quality monitoring in the Wallowa Subbasin.
- The SWCD is re-monitoring sites from the 1990s and collaborating with the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) to compare current and historical data.

DEQ Monitoring:

- Temperature standards are being met at 10 of 52 monitoring sites.
- Nine of fourteen temperature trends show improvement.
- Two dissolved oxygen sites are currently meeting state water quality standards.

Impediments

- Wildlife and livestock browsing: Combined elk, deer, and livestock browsing pressure on riparian vegetation limits natural regrowth and reduces riparian shading and bank stability.
- Low stream flows and elevated summer temperatures: Reduced flows and higher seasonal temperatures contribute to water quality concerns, particularly elevated stream temperatures.
- Water quantity and quality tradeoffs: Efforts to improve water quantity can have unintended impacts on water quality.
- Sediment loading impacts: Sediment originating from wilderness accumulates in irrigation ditches, clogging equipment, and reducing system efficiency. Degraded streambanks and roads contribute sediment inputs to streams.

Recommended Modifications and Adaptive Management

- Increase outreach to install additional off-stream watering sources (e.g., wildlife guzzlers or troughs) to reduce wildlife and livestock reliance on riparian areas.
- Encourage projects that retain water and create deeper pools to improve summer temperatures. Prioritize riparian planting efforts in areas that will support a mix of native woody species such as willow and cottonwood and in areas where shading will most effectively reduce stream temperatures.
- Identify studies evaluating the effects of sprinkler irrigation conversion on hyporheic exchange and water availability and promote integrated planning approaches that balance irrigation efficiency improvements with water quality protection.
- Identify and summarize available studies on vegetation management and its effects on streamflow and temperature, and present findings to the LAC to inform future decision making. Support targeted projects that reduce excess sediment inputs and improve channel stability in areas experiencing sediment-related impacts.
- Collaborate with ODFW to prioritize restoration efforts in the Prairie Creek area, emphasizing projects that promote riparian woody vegetation recovery.

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	1	0	0	1	0	0	0