

WILLOW CREEK

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: February 26, 2026

LAC Members Present: Jim McElligott, Terry Felda, and Mark McElligott

Reporting Timeframe: January 2024 – December 2025

PROGRESS MEASUREMENT

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

Activities (Morrow Soil and Water Conservation District)	#	Description
Events That Actively Engage Landowners	12	County fair, quarterly flyer, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) local work group, water resilience workshop, Hermiston farm fair.
Landowners Participating in Active Events	3,429	
Landowners provided with brochures/fact sheets/mailings, etc.	425	
Landowners Provided Technical Assistance*	453	Technical assistance for Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), virtual fencing, annual grass treatment, managed aquifer recharge, off-channel livestock watering facilities.
Site Visits	139	Site visits for CREP, virtual fencing.
Conservation Plans Written	1	
Funding Applications Submitted	12	
Funding Applications Awarded	4	

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

LAC DISCUSSION

Summary of Progress

Morrow SWCD

- Conducting water quality monitoring in the Upper Willow Creek SIA.
- Providing successful technical assistance and project implementation within the Lower Umatilla Basin Groundwater Management Area (LUBGWMA) Strategic Implementation Area (SIA).
- Advancing the Lower Willow Creek aquifer recharge study.
- Completed a crop, irrigation, and livestock inventory within the LUBGWMA.
- Planning for reassessment of riparian and livestock waste measurable objectives.

NRCS

- Partnering with West Extension Irrigation District to pipe Lateral 17 within the LUBGWMA SIA.
- Received five applications for flood-to-sprinkler irrigation conversions.

Oregon Water Resources Department

- Implementing backflow projects within the LUBGWMA, with planned expansion into the Willow Creek area.

DEQ Water Quality Update

- Dissolved oxygen trends are improving basin wide.

Oregon Department of Agriculture

- New irrigated agriculture rules for the LUBGWMA are expected to be finalized in early March.
- Completed 11 compliance site visits within the management area.

Private Landowners

- Many landowners are actively implementing practices to protect and improve water quality.

Impediments

- Climate variability continues to affect progress toward water quality goals. Warmer winters and reduced snowpack impact native vegetation and contribute to increased weed pressure and non-native species dominance.

Recommended Modifications and Adaptive Management

- For the soil erosion measurable objective, work with NRCS and ODA's monitoring specialist to explore use of RUSLE to establish a baseline assessment.

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	8	6	11	0	2	8	0	0