

Watershed Ag Journal



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Forest Enhancement Projects Find Funding Through 2002 Farm Bill

“Oregon grows trees”, says Coos SWCD Watershed Technician, Larry Gill, “and trees are good for the economy, water and air quality, and wildlife.” Many landowners in S. W. Oregon have some kind of forest or timber on their property. With current conditions of economic instability and drought/fire risk looming in the coming months, landowners may want to incorporate fuel reduction, sustained yield planning, and/or water retention practices into their forest outlook. Now there are several Farm Bill conservation programs that provide technical and financial assistance with forest management. Whether you are in timber production or want to give some TLC to your forest habitat, landowners can receive up to 75% cost-share for approved forest management planning and implementation through the 2002 Farm Bill Conservation Provisions. These programs are administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and more information is available at the Coos SWCD office, 396-2841.

Rick and Robin Goche, small forestland owners in the Coquille area, are currently working with Coos SWCD staff to develop a forest management plan. Their forest management goals include fire fuels reduction, access road maintenance, irrigation development, enhancement of wildlife habitat, and planning small-scale sustainable timber harvest that may provide some future income for their children. The Goches’ 18 acres contains a mix of conifers, maple and alder in tightly packed single-age stands, brushy



meadows, and mixed forest with occasional gnarly, older trees.

Rick says his first priority is to cut a fire buffer around the house. The trees he loses to the fire buffer will be replaced in outlying areas with seedlings for future harvest. In the cleared area around the house he plans to plant native shrubs that will provide food and cover for wildlife. Fire fuel reduction practices, such as controlled burning of ‘jackpots’ or accumulated dead branches, will also be done throughout the forest. Some areas will be thinned for improved tree and understory growth, and a diversity of tree/plant species maintained for increased disease resistance and habitat enhancement. Individual older trees, cherished by the family as heritage trees and utilized by an array of wildlife, will also be pruned and protected for their genetic superiority / reproduction.

“This program is great”, says Rick. “We are learning how to incorporate the commercial potential from our land and still maintain the wild diversity that attracted us to this area. The cost share will allow us to establish wildfire buffer zones without losing total biomass in the long run. By designing in an established commercial aspect to the plan we hope to never have to fall our huge old growth, but will leave it standing for future generations.” Once the Goches’ forest management plan is complete and approved by the Oregon Department of Forestry, they will decide which

Inside This Issue

**Nonpoint Source Pollution
Control Tax Credit**

Soil Sampling: Why and How

CAFO Rules Changing

Student Essay: What Have We Gained?



of the conservation programs will be the most appropriate for their time frame and goals. Their application will be submitted to the NRCS for the next round of Farm Bill Conservation Provisions ranking and fund allocations later this year. Once approved for funding, the Goches may begin implementing their planned forestry practices and will be reimbursed for 75% of their expenses. Some practices, such as upland wildlife habitat enhancement receive additional incentive payments per acre.

Below are several programs which include assistance for forestry practices.

FLEP (Forest Land Enhancement Program)

This is a brand new program that will provide financial and technical assistance specifically on non-industrial private forestlands. FLEP contracts are 10 years or more in length, and provide up to 75% cost-share for development and implementation of a forest management plan. This program will be administered by the Oregon Department of Forestry, and will be available later this year.

EQIP (Environmental Quality Incentives Program) Although EQIP is utilized mostly on farm and livestock operations, 40% of the state's EQIP funds may go towards forest practices. Practices approved for EQIP's 75% cost-share include, for example, tree and shrub establishment, non-commercial thinning, release, slash treatment, and access road maintenance. To qualify for EQIP the landowner must first develop a 'farm plan' with NRCS or SWCD staff. However, if the landowner seeks assistance only with certain practices, such as forest management, an approved forest management plan can take the place of a farm plan. Cost-share is also available through the Oregon Department of Forestry for developing such forest management plans on non-industrial private forest lands.

WHIP (Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program)

This program encourages creation of high quality wildlife habitats that support specific wildlife populations of National, State, Tribal and local significance. The WHIP provides technical assistance and 75% cost-share on approved practices. Practices include, for example, installation of wildlife watering facilities, establishment of appropriate vegetative cover and forage, and recruitment of nesting snags.

CREP (Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program) This program, which focuses on riparian areas, provides 75% cost-share for excluding livestock and establishing trees and shrubs along waterways. It also provides annual incentive payments based on the number of acres enrolled. If you have eroding stream banks or sensitive waterbodies, such as wetlands, that you would like to stabilize, enhance for wildlife, and help improve water quality, this program may be profitable for you and your land.



Pam Blake, of DEQ, answers questions at a "Free \$ for Smart Farming" workshop in Bandon.

Get Tax Credit for Nonpoint Source Pollution Control

The 1999 Legislature added nonpoint source pollution control to the list of activities eligible for the pollution control facilities tax credit. 'Nonpoint Source Pollution' means pollution that comes from numerous, diverse, or widely scattered sources of pollution that together have an adverse effect on the environment. Capital expenditures for purposes of implementing the Coos / Coquille Agricultural Water Quality Management Plan, forest management plans, and TMDLs, for example, may be eligible for the tax credit.

Commercial operations deducting the same expenses from their farm taxes may **also** take the nonpoint source pollution tax credit. Nonpoint source pollution control project expenses paid for with grant funds are not eligible, however, if the landowner contributed capital for 'grant matching' the match may be eligible for the tax credit. Documentation of expenses and certification of project eligibility by the Natural Resources Conservation Service or the Department of Environmental Quality is also required. Applications are available at the Coos SWCD office, and on line at <http://www.deq.state.or.us/msd/taxcredits/txcp.htm>. There is an application fee of \$50 or 1% of the eligible costs, whichever is higher.

An applicant with an eligible facility has either one or two years after the construction completion date to file an application with the Department of Environmental Quality; one year if construction was completed on or after Jan. 1, 2002 and two years if completed prior to 2002. For more information, or to inquire about having your project certified for eligibility, contact **Rachel Burr, Oregon DEQ South Coast Basin Specialist, 1-800-844-8467 x264.**

Coos / Coquille Agricultural Water Quality Management Plan
Information, rules and fact sheets available on the Coos SWCD website:
www.coosswcd.oacd.org

Soil Sampling: Why and How



What do cows, cattle, sheep, cranberries, vegetables and trees have in common? They are all important components of agriculture in Coos County, yes. They also, in some way or another, all gain nutrients through soil.

Cultivation of the most effective growing conditions for your crops - be it forage grasses or tomatoes - will be

greatly enhanced by testing the soil for its available nutrient content. Soil tests, such as those done in an analytical soil testing laboratory, provide information that helps the landowner to efficiently develop and maintain a more productive soil and to increase net returns per acre. Current, site-specific soil information helps you to: select the correct kind and amount of fertilizer and liming material, manage manure/fertilizer applications, and select the appropriate crops to grow. The standard soil test from most laboratories measures organic matter, phosphorus (P), potassium (K), calcium (C), magnesium (Mg), sodium (Na), and soil pH (acidity). Different laboratories offer different services. Check with OSU Extension publications for soil testing requirements of various crops.

To have your soil tested you must contact a laboratory, (See the info. box in this article.) and send the appropriate samples from your property. A soil sample weighing approximately ½ pound is used to represent from 2 to 40 million pounds of soil in the field. Thus, care in gathering samples is essential.

Tips on Soil Sampling

- Sample different soil types separately. Areas with different management history should be sampled separately.
- Each sample should consist of subsamples taken from 15 to 20 locations within the sampling area.
- Where fertilizer has previously been banded, as for vegetable crops, take at least 30 to 40 subsamples. Don't take subsamples from fertilizer bands where you can identify these.
- Avoid small unusual areas. Take separate soil samples from unusual areas that are large enough to fertilize separately.

- Take soil sample to the correct depth. Unless otherwise specified, soil samples are taken to plow depth – usually, from the surface down to about 6 to 9 inches.
- Avoid contaminating the sample during mixing or packaging. A small amount of fertilizer residue on tools or hands, for instance, can cause serious contamination of the soil sample.
- Galvanized brass, or bronze sampling tools should not be used for soil samples where a soil test for micronutrients such as zinc is to be run.
- The soil sample should be carefully mixed and packaged. Place soil subsamples in a clean container and mix thoroughly. Fill the soil sample bag with the soil mixture.
- For some established perennial crops such as berries, orchards and Christmas trees, leaf tissue testing may be more useful.

How often should soils be tested?

For perennial crops such as alfalfa, grass seed, and permanent pasture, soils should be tested prior to seeding and subsequently at least every 3 years. The initial soil test, prior to seeding, is particularly important. For annual crops, the soil should be tested annually before planting. Soil testing well in advance of planting is important particularly in the case of acid soils where liming is likely to be needed. Lime should be applied and mixed with the soil several months prior to seeding as lime reacts slowly with the soil.

Water Quality

Just as soil testing can help land managers to apply only the necessary kind and amount of fertilizers, it is also playing an important role in efforts to reduce non-point source pollution from agricultural lands. Runoff of excess nutrients can lead to water pollution. Nutritionally-exhausted land that is not adequately vegetated can also lead to water pollution by erosion and runoff of exposed soil and sediment.

Implementation of a Nutrient Management Plan incorporates soil test results, site conditions and management goals may help your operation function more effectively. For more information on Nutrient Management Planning contact the **Natural Resources Conservation Service, (541) 396-2841.**

A list of soil testing laboratories, and many other helpful publications, is available on the Web at <http://eesc.orst.edu>. Open the Publication and Videos catalog and choose Agriculture, followed by Soil and Water. Or contact the local OSU Extension Service, 396-3121x240.

This information was gathered from OSU Extension Service publication EC 628, revised June 2002, and the Coos/Coquille AgWQM Plan.

What have we gained?

By Lane Gorst, Dorothy Guerin Memorial Essay Contest Winner, Myrtle Point High School

Large clouds of smoke billowed high in the sky. You could see it easily from many miles away. Lightning had struck. Loggers with equipment, helicopters with water were turned away. Both could have easily contained the fire to just a few acres. But due to wilderness and territory regulations this fire grew to be the largest in Oregon's history. The fire burned over 400,000 acres, killing wildlife and habitat, costing the taxpayers millions of dollars.

Without wise forest practices, this scene could become an annual event. Oregon's forests are some of the world's most productive; managed properly these forests can produce sustained yields to last for generations to come.

In recent years, policies have been made that have forced the United States to import one third of our timber from Canada. Canadian forests require up to 10 times the acreage to produce the same amount of wood as one acre of Oregon Coastal Douglas Fir. If people strip a forest in another country that doesn't have reforestation practices, what have we gained?

If we were to reduce the amount of wood we use and substitute it with materials like concrete, steel or plastics, we would produce more pollution and consume up to 10 times the water and energy than we would producing a unit of finished wood. By consuming resources that are not renewable, what have we gained?

Oregon does have many good laws to help protect our forests. We need to practice good management in all the forests including the wilderness so we do not have out of control forest fires. By thinning small to medium trees, there would not be the fuel to feed large fires. Through the thinning there would be access roads made that could be used when trying to fight a fire.

More than 600,000 acres of forest burned in the year 2002 in Oregon. These forests need to be managed now. If left to nature, we will have over 600,000 acres of brush. Excellent for run-away fires. By harvesting the dead timber and replanting the forest, we will create healthy forests. These healthy, renewable forests can create jobs and economic growth for the state of Oregon. If we don't, what have we gained?

District Staff

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New CAFO Rules Being Finalized

House Bill 2156, passed by the Oregon Legislature in 2001, requires the development of new CAFO (Confined Animal Feeding Operations) rules and permits. Under the new rules, Oregon CAFOs now include state and federally defined livestock operations including certain AFOs (Animal Feeding Operations). The new CAFO General Permit will be offered by the ODA. These new permits also meet the requirements of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) program.

The EPA rules regarding CAFOs are now on line and posted on the EPA website. However, the ODA, which will continue to administer the permits, is currently reviewing public comments and finalizing the State's rules. The final rules will go before the Environmental Quality Commission this May.

The new rules will encompass operations that may not have been considered CAFOs in the past, such as some cattle operations that are confined during winter months. Chris Anderson, the new ODA Livestock Water Quality Specialist for Coos County, is available for non-regulatory educational tours of your operation upon request. If you are interested in finding out how your farm stacks up to the new CAFO rules contact **Chris Anderson, (541) 955-9873**.

NEW STAFF PERSON

The Coos SWCD welcomes new Conservation Technician Walt Shearard. With Walt 'on board', beginning in March, the District will be able to serve more landowners with conservation planning and program implementation.

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