

Sherman SWCD Board Highlights

April 11, 2006

• TAX BASE

Gary and Krista discussed the proposed tax base with the County budget committee. The feedback was very positive. It was suggested that the District should try for a much larger rate. A motion was made to try for a rate of \$0.26 per \$1,000 on the November ballot. Motion carried. The board asked Krista to check with the county to find out how the loss of funds will impact the County funds specifically by department. The staff was asked to develop informational packets to be presented to city councils as soon as possible.

• WATERSHED PROJECT UPDATES

Implementation of practices is progressing in all of the watersheds, but the extremely wet weather has slowed things down.

Buck Hollow

One Macks Canyon landowner requested that the District try again to get a Buck Hollow/Macks Canyon watershed council formed.

Pine Hollow/Jackknife

The annual redd count that was scheduled for today had to be postponed because of the wet conditions.

Grass Valley Canyon

Jeff handed out a list of questions and concerns that he has received from people who have proof read the assessment. He addressed each of the concerns. The board asked Jeff to omit the Deschutes watershed portion of the Grass Valley Canyon Watershed Council boundary. That area will be included in a future assessment on the Deschutes side. Jeff predicts that he will be finished digitizing maps by the end of this week. Jason volunteered himself and Joli to help Jeff use the inventory data in the assessment. Jeff hopes to have the revised draft ready for another review in ten days.

• GRANT UPDATE

There are three large OWEB grants that must be completed by June 30th. Landowners involved have been contacted. The new Direct Seed Incentive grant was approved for funding, but contracts have not been received yet. Joli is planning to resubmit a grant request for the Solar/Wind Hybrid Off-stream Watering grant in the Fall OWEB cycle. She is currently working on two OWEB grant applications. After some discussion, a motion was made to include all of the requests for projects in one grant application. They felt that it was more straight forward and would cause less concern to the review team if only one grant is submitted. Motion carried. Mary Beth suggested checking with FSA to see if the Emergency Conservation

Program funds could help with some of the winter weather damage.

• SMALL GRANT UPDATE

Joli had prepared packets for the members to review and vote on. They discussed the grants, marked their vote for "fund" or "do not fund" and left them for Joli.

• JOHN DAY RIVER UPDATE

Jason will be attending a BPA Sub Basin prioritization meeting in John Day this Thursday and Friday.

• DESCHUTES RIVER UPDATE

The BPA Sub Basin project prioritization meeting will be coming up soon. The board asked that Joli, Krista or Jason plan to attend.

• NEW BUSINESS

Insurance – There will be a 21.53% increase in the cost of medical/vision insurance as of June. The dental insurance policy also increased. The board asked that the employees present a proposal for benefits at the next meeting. They are willing to look at possible retirement plans to be included in the benefit package.

• NRCS REPORT

This is Mary Beth's last SWCD meeting as District Conservationist. She thanked the board for all of the time and effort she put in to their jobs as directors.

• AGENCY REPORTS

Oregon Water Resources – Joel Clark, Water Master from Condon introduced himself described his job.

• OTHER BUSINESS

Wheeler Soil Survey – Gary Thompson sent a request for \$1.2 million in Federal appropriations for the completion of the Wheeler County Soil Survey. He may want a letter of support from the board later.

Jason reported that a bill had come in that was over the cap for cost per foot on a structure. The board agreed to leave the cap the same and asked Jason to remind landowners to be aware of time and costs when they contract for projects. Jason had also been asked if there was funding to replace a border fence that was destroyed by fire. The only funding that was available for that in the past was from disaster programs through FSA.



Mary Beth Says Goodbye as DC

A Respected Leader in Conservation in our Community

It's hard to believe 8 years have passed since I began working in Sherman County. We have seen many changes and worked together on a complete alphabet soup of programs including CRP, CCRP, CREP, EQIP, CSP, GRP, etc.

As in so many facets of life today, technology has greatly changed the way NRCS does business. Much of our work is now done via computer with minor emphasis on field work. In an effort to stay in the field, I have moved out of the managerial arena and into the technical aspects of the job.

In my new position as Basin Resource Conservationist I'll assist folks in Hood River, Wasco, Sherman, Deschutes, Crook and Jefferson Counties. Major duties include writing conservation plans, training employees, helping producers get to a "Tier 3 Level" of conservation and improving overall technical quality in our basin.

Although my duties will be basin-wide, please don't hesitate to drop in and say hello as my office remains in Moro. It has been my pleasure to work with you over the years and I will always be proud to be a part of the Sherman County conservation efforts.

OSU and the iSNAP program have obtained a grant to hold sessions aimed at using weather and climate information in pest management. The sessions will teach how weather information can be more fully utilized to improve pesticide application efficiency and product efficacy, reduce environmental impacts and increase farm profits. Target audience for this new program includes growers, pesticide applicators, consultants, private/public land managers, and others.

Workshops will focus on:

- ✓ Weather impacts on pest biology and pesticide drift potential
- ✓ Practical techniques to reduce pesticide drift
- ✓ Design considerations for edge-of-field buffers that reduce pesticide loss and aid in biological control
- ✓ Online pest models and weather resources that support pest management

Credits: 3 Certified Crop Adviser (CCA) credits (1 SW and 2 PM) and pending approval 3 Oregon Department of Agriculture Pesticide Recertification credits

Workshop sponsors are interested in getting ideas as to where and when such sessions might be held. Producers who would like to participate need to contact Kristie Coelsch at 565-3551, ext. 102.

WATER WISE

ARE YOU WATER WISE?

Over 50 Years of Soil and Water Stewardship Week



Do you know how many gallons of water is needed to grow a bushel of wheat? 11,000 gallons! To ensure future water supplies, we need to learn about water resources, and plan to use them carefully. To help achieve this goal, the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) has chosen "Water Wise" as the theme for the 2006 Soil and Water Stewardship Week.

The Sherman County SWCD wants to show you how to be water wise, during its annual Soil and Water Stewardship Week celebration.

The Sherman County SWCD is a member of the National Association of Conservation Districts (www.nacdn.org), which oversees the Stewardship Week Program. Stewardship Week is one of the largest national annual programs to promote conservation. NACD represents the nation's 3,000 conservation districts, which were established to encourage resource conservation across the country.

For more detailed information and great conservation ideas, contact the Conservation District. Informed and helpful district staff can help with your particular needs.

Is Earth really a closed system?

For years, common wisdom held that all the water on Earth was created at some point in the past, and has been endlessly recycled ever since. But recent findings may change those thoughts.

Images from NASA's Polar Spacecraft reveal what seem to be small comet-like objects entering Earth's upper atmosphere. These appear to dissolve and disperse large quantities of water vapor. One University of Iowa scientist suggests that thousands of these "cosmic snowballs" may bombard Earth each day.

Even if we eventually learn that Earth continually receives new water from space, we must carefully conserve the water resource available to us today.



Direct Seed Incentive Grant Funded by OWEB
\$99,000 Grant aimed at Mitigating Soil Erosion in Sherman County

The funds will assist farmers with adapting to no-till wheat planting practices on nearly 4,000 acres. The change can reduce erosion, which carries tons of soil into the Deschutes and John Day rivers annually, by 90 percent.

The funds help pay start-up costs to purchase new equipment and to chemically treat areas rather than tilling to control vegetation. Landowners will receive \$11.25 per acre for two out of four years, not to exceed 500 acres per operator. Project partners include the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB), the North Sherman and Grass Valley Watershed Councils, landowners, the Sherman Soil and Water Conservation District and the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

The Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board is a state agency led by a policy oversight board. The agency provides grants and services to citizen groups, organizations and agencies working to restore healthy watersheds in Oregon. OWEB actions support the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds, created in 1997. Funding comes from the Oregon Lottery as a result of a citizen initiative in 1998, sales of salmon license plates, federal salmon funds and other sources. For more information, visit www.oregon.gov/OWEB or call OWEB in Salem at 503-986-0178.

The local watershed councils and SWCD board work together to encourage participation in cost share programs which target and help treat soil erosion concerns. Practices available for cost share assistance include:

- § Terrace and water and sediment control basin construction
- § Off-channel spring developments
- § Fencing
- § Brush control
- § Reseeding
- § Grassed waterways
- § Residue management
- § Wildlife watering facilities

For more information on these programs and others that may be available to you, contact the SWCD office at 565-3551.

Grass Valley Watershed Assessment
Nearing Completion

BY JEFF BIRD

The first draft of the assessment has been completed and is currently being reviewed by the SWCD board members and staff, as well as some landowners in the Grass Valley Watershed. Copies of the first draft are available at the SWCD office for anyone who would like to read it and contribute their thoughts and suggestions. Sections of the assessment are being sent off to the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality as well as other agencies for review and fact-checking. With some suggestions and comments having already been received, revisions to the first draft are underway.

The digitizing of the data gathered in the conservation inventory is complete. The information collected will be used in the assessment to show the conservation work already done in the watershed. Thanks again to all of the producers who contributed.



Say Hello Again to Some Familiar Faces

As of May 1st, Kristie Coelsch (not to be confused with Krista Coelsch) and Brian Stradley joined the team in the Moro Field Office.

Kristie graduated from Eastern Oregon University in 2000 with a Bachelor of Science majoring in Crop and Soil Science. She has had an extensive history working for NRCS. From 1994-1999, Kristie got her feet wet by working for NRCS as a student co-op throughout eastern Oregon. In 2000 she worked full time with the NRCS in Moro before being transferred to The Dalles where she has worked as Soil Conservationist for four years.

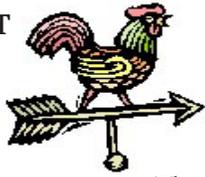
Kristie grew up on a dryland wheat farm in Condon. She moved to Sherman County in 2000 where she met and married her husband Bryce Coelsch, a local wheat farmer. In October 2006, Kristie and Bryce welcomed their newest addition to their family, a baby girl they named Courtney.

Many of you remember Brian Stradley, a long time SWCD district technician before his recent work at Maryhill Wineries. Brian will be back at work in the Moro field office resuming his previous duties as a district technician and Hawaiian shirt fashion connoisseur.

Congratulations to both of the newest members of the conservation team - it's great to have you back!

SHERMAN COUNTY EXPERIMENT FEBRUARY WEATHER STATS

- ◆ Total precipitation was 1.05" which was 0.06" below normal
- ◆ The crop year total is 11.11" which is 3.70" above normal
- ◆ The highest temperature was 56 degrees on the 9th
- ◆ The lowest temperature was 6 degrees on the 20th
- ◆ Long-time average indicates we can expect 57 and 10 degrees
- ◆ The monthly average temperature was 34.4 degrees.
- ◆ 4" soil temperature ranged from 45 to 30 degrees
- ◆ The average wind speed was 3.5 miles per hour which is 0.2 below normal



STATION WEATHER STATISTICS MARCH WEATHER STATS

- ◆ Total precipitation was 0.63" which was 0.39" above normal
- ◆ The crop year total is 11.74" which is 3.31" above normal
- ◆ The highest temperature was 62 degrees on the 24th
- ◆ The lowest temperature was 20 degrees on the 10th
- ◆ The monthly average temperature was 40.5degrees
- ◆ 4" soil temperature ranged from 55 to 37 degrees
- ◆ The average wind speed was 3.3 miles per hour which is 1.0 below normal
- ◆ Total snowfall was 3"

SWCD SEEKS STABLE FUNDING FOR CONSERVATION

USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has traditionally provided local conservation technical services to the county. While the quality of that assistance remains excellent, the number of federal technical personnel available for local assistance has steadily declined. Over the past 15 years, Sherman County Soil and Water Conservation District has gradually built its capacity to deliver technical, educational, and financial assistance to meet local conservation needs. Demand for services has steadily risen as local people and organizations have requested assistance in dealing with erosion control, water quality, endangered species issues, protection from flood hazards, and other environmental and natural resource issues.

Growth in the SWCD capabilities has helped narrow the growing gap between conservation workload and technical assistance availability. The district has done that with an aggressive grant writing program, and a solid staff training program. The district's efforts have brought millions of dollars into the local economy over the past 15 years through grants for on-the-ground conservation work such as erosion control, water quality improvements, and habitat improvements. Technical assistance provided by the SWCD has been essential for programs such as CRP, CREP, ACP and EQIP. With its high operational tempo and total reliance on grant funds, the district has become increasingly vulnerable to an interruption in grant funding.

To address that vulnerability, the board of directors unanimously voted to put this question to Sherman County voters this November as a tax measure: "Shall the District have a permanent tax rate limit of \$0.26 per \$1,000 of assessed value beginning in 2007-2008?" If approved, that measure would resolve some of the district's vulnerability problem and ensure that the district is able to continue assisting the people of Sherman County indefinitely. The district is committed to continue aggressively seeking grant funds to minimize the local tax burden.

Ford Family Foundation Breaks Ground on Fairground's Project

Construction of "The Commons" at the Sherman County Fairgrounds is underway! Excavation of "Center Court" took place on April 9th during which several volunteers utilized their skills in preparation of the central gathering place.

With Bill Makelim lending technical assistance, a concrete contractor was recently selected by the Ford Group, allowing construction of Center Court to begin in early May. Picnic tables and park benches will soon be ordered and the inscription of bricks by local artist Joni Anderson is in progress. Additionally, a grant for playground equipment was received from the Sherman County Commission on Children and Families. This grant is for the purchase of a play structure for younger children which will be situated near Center Court.

The Sherman County Court and the Sherman County Road Department have also made contributions to the project. Other improvements are in the works, including a flagpole and donor recognition boards. The Commons is a collaborative project involving the Sherman County Ford Leadership Group, Sherman County Fair Board, Sherman Development League and numerous other volunteers.

Shaping Sherman Changes Shape

Shaping Sherman Action Teams joined forces to form one Team under the leadership of Eric Whitley.

Small groups of Sherman Shapers are moving forward with selected projects and will report their progress at Shaping Sherman II on May 23rd at 6:23 and 7:23 at the Jr/Sr High Cafeteria. Join in! Your energy, passion and ideas are welcome!

~Shaping Sherman Action Team



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Jessa Irzyk, CRP Technician
Jeff Bird, Grass Valley Assessment Technician

NRCS Staff

Kristie Coelsch, District Conservationist
Mary Beth Smith, Basin Resource Conservationist

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Rolling Thunder Review

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