

Mandatory Conservation may be in farmers' futures

By KEN TURNER
Water Quality Committee

...Section 208 has Eastern Oregon Farmers and conservation directors running scared...

Section 208 of the federal Environmental Protection Agency's clean water act has Eastern Oregon Farmers and conservation directors running scared and defensive.

If the mandate is to be carried out, silt and sediment yield from non-point sources such as our farmland must be further reduced. Summerfallow fields produce lots of silt during a bad erosion winter such as this past one.

It is not clear at this point just how severe the soil loss standards might be set, not who will enforce these standards.

Local control based on broad local input is the time honored way and the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) is Oregon's arm of the EPA, designated to implement 208. The DEQ appears to be pushing local control.

The burden now shifts to the local Soil and Water Conservation District. The catch is for the SWCD to convince the DEQ it can get the job done and hopefully on a voluntary basis.

If it's going to voluntary then the responsibility sits

squarely on the individual farmer's shoulders and the county collectively. It's an opportunity for farmers to continue the good work they've been doing and in some cases go much further. It appears cost sharing for terrace construction will be on a more consistent and dependable basis.

This is the key to success. Morrow County leads the state in conservation work.

The job to be done includes complete field terracing; intensively designed and close enough spacing on critical areas. Some grass seeding may be needed and Best Management Practices (BMP) be applied. BMP include stubble mulch, minimum tillage, early seeding, contour farming and all farming techniques now proven to stop erosion.

New herbicides and technology are needed and will be used as they come along, but it can hardly be argued that diversion terraces should not have been in place 60 years ago and a lot of top-soil would not have been lost. Feasibility and economics has to be part of the formula with a lot of reason and logic but, if we don't made good, rapid progress, mandatory controls in the form of ordinances written by the outside agencies is a very real threat.

Looking back at 1977

Accomplished last year

Completed Phase I of the Heppner Water Control District (HWCD) Critical Area Treatment Project. This included 45 miles of terraced ditches, 90 debris basins, six acres of sod waterway and 84 acres of critical area seeding.

Construction started on the second phase of the HWCD project this past summer. There were 60 debris basins built. Construction will continue this spring on approximately six miles of terraces.

The design of the third phase of the HWCD project was completed. Two acres of sod waterway was constructed this past fall. Construction will begin this spring on terraces and debris basins.

Participated in the development of the present 208 Morrow County Plan. Inventories and Best Management Practices have been provided to date.

The final correlation of soils has been completed in Morrow County and a draft soil survey manuscript prepared. The published soil survey manuscript will be available in approximately two years.

Provided resource information to the local communities and Morrow County Planning Commission for their compliance with LCDC guidelines.

Provided support to the Columbia-Blue Mountain Resource Conservation and Development Project. Supported the Navy Bombing Range Development.

Supported the National and Oregon Associations of Districts. Provided funds for the development of their programs.

Other Accomplishments:

	Numbers	Amount
Terraces	—	40,823 feet
Ponds	31	—
Tile drainage	—	9029 feet
Irrigation systems	17	436 acres
Irrigation mainline	—	26,888 feet
Spring development	5	—
ACP referrals	98	—
Range & pasture seedings	—	288 acres
Waterways	—	10 acres
Farm plans	2	776 acres
Individuals assisted	109	—
Technical assistances—		
Individuals	488	—
Technical Assistance		
Units of government	36	—
New Cooperators	7	7,401 acres

....and ahead to a busy 1978

This years' objectives

Complete Morrow County's 208 non-point source pollution plan. Develop an acceptable implementation program for compliance with PL 92-500.

Develop a Natural Resource Conservation Program for Morrow County. Identify problems and opportunities within the county, define critical erosion areas, and establish priorities.

Arrange for the inclusion of the Natural Resource Conservation Program into Morrow County's Comprehensive Plan.

Develop a memorandum of understanding with the County Court so that the above conservation program can be carried out effectively.

Continue emphasis for the completion of the Heppner Water Control District Critical Area Treatment Project. Progress is expected on the following phases:

Phase II—complete construction of six miles of terraces and approximately 20 acres of critical area seeding.

Phase III—let bid and start construction of 75,000 feet of terraces and 50 debris basins.

Phase IV—start design on channel drop structures.

Support proposed RC&D measures in Morrow County. Develop an inventory and evaluation on the Juniper Creek S.E. Land Treatment Measure.

Continue to stress the protection of our soil resources with structural as well as agronomic practices. Increase follow-up assistance to our cooperators to get conservation achieved.

Continue emphasis on conservation education. Assist on grade school tours.