

# Morrow County Ag Advisory Committee initiated

Dealing with the county's agricultural lands in the context of revising the Comprehensive Plan will be the general topic of discussion when the recently-formed Morrow County Agricultural Advisory Committee convenes next week.

Next week's meeting, only the second for the new committee, will be held Wednesday, March 29, at the Dodge City Inn, Boardman, beginning at 8 p.m.

The 10-member committee has been formed to assist the Morrow County Court and the Morrow County Planning Commission in the development of the agricultural element of the county's Comprehensive Plan and in the implementation of accompanying ordinances. Acting in an advisory capacity, the committee plans to work in conjunction with members of both the Citizen Involvement Advisory Board and the Morrow County Planning Commission. Recommendation made directly to these bodies by the committee will be forwarded to the County Court.

Morrow County Planning Director Dave Moon, who worked on the selection of committee members and will attend the meetings, said the committee is still open to new membership and he encourages all interested citizens to attend Wednesday's meeting. Moon identified several objectives that the new committee will work towards in the coming months. Among the

objectives are: developing goals relating to the preservation or development of agricultural lands in Morrow County, identifying and categorizing various types of agricultural practices and agricultural lands within the county, assisting in developing standards to be used in administering the Comprehensive Plan, and reviewing and commenting on the creation of Urban Growth Boundaries which define potential areas for transition from rural

to urban land use. "In order to protect the agricultural element of the county's economic base, productive farm lands should be protected from encroachment by non-agricultural uses," Moon said. "Farm land is best managed in large units and the best interest of the county is not served by dividing agricultural land into small parcels."

Currently serving on the Agricultural Advisory Com-

mittee are: Harold Kerr, Heppner; Kurt Gantenbein, Boardman; Don Brewer, Hermiston; Dick Wilkinson, Heppner; Dick McElligott, Ione; Joe Tatone, Boardman; Joe Bartlett, Boardman; Gene Trumbull, Boardman; Dorris Graves, Heppner and Virginia Grieb, Lexington.

# Letter assures elimination of flood plain by dam

The Honorable D.O. Nelson, Chairman, Board of County Commissioners Morrow County Courthouse Heppner, Oregon 97836

Dear Judge Nelson: This is to clarify the nature of the process Senator Hatfield intends to follow if local officials report to him that the people of Morrow County still desire to obtain flood protection by establishment of a federal dam and reservoir project above Heppner.

As you know, Congress in 1965 authorized construction of the Willow Creek Project, a 155-foot-high dam controlling an 11,500 acre-foot reservoir. The authorization was contained in Section 204 of Public Law 89-298 (the Flood Control Act of 1965), which stated simply,

"The project for flood protection on Willow Creek, Oregon, is hereby authorized substantially in accordance with the recommendations of the Chief of Engineers in House Document numbered 233, Eighty-Ninth Congress, at an estimated cost of \$6,680,000."

The recommendations of the Chief at that time called for 1,300 acre-feet of exclusive flood control storage space in the reservoir, 300 acre-feet of storage for water quality control, 100 acre-feet for municipal and industrial water supply, and 7,900 acre-feet for the joint uses of flood control, irrigation, sport fishing and recreation. The remaining 1,900 acre-feet were intended for sedimentation and fish survival at minimum pool. At maximum pool the reservoir would have had a surface area of 224 acres, and at minimum pool 76 acres.

During the advance engineering and design work following authorization, several developments forced the Corps of Engineers to revise the project. In a Special Report dated May 15, 1974, the Chief of Engineers requested that Congress revise the authorization to allow municipal water storage to be dropped as a project function (Heppner had withdrawn its request), to eliminate the channel improvement aspect downstream from the dam (emergency work by the Corps in recent years had accomplished what was needed), to defer irrigation until such time as it becomes economically feasible (potential irrigators had balked at the cost of the water for which they were being asked to sign contracts), to increase the exclusive flood control space in the reservoir (the size of the potential thunderstorm flood had been re-estimated and found to be larger), to reduce the recreation aspect at the reservoir (recreation and fishing were expected to be adversely affected by the poor water quality that would develop from operating at minimum pool a greater percentage of the time), and to eliminate water quality control as a project function (EPA had found that sewage treatment was sufficient to eliminate the need for additional dilution of waste discharges into the river). The Chief's recommended plan was for a dam and reservoir identical in size to that authorized in 1965, but with the functions altered as described above.

As you recall, Senator Hatfield and Congressman Ullman introduced the required legislation, got it through the Senate and the House, and saw President Ford veto it at the very end of the 93rd Congress, in December 1974. The following year Senator Hatfield and Congressman Ullman

reintroduced the legislation and stated they would try to protect it from veto by getting it included in a larger bill covering many projects around the country. However, when they were informed that local assurances of cooperation and support would no longer be forthcoming, they dropped the matter; and the 1976 Water Resources Development Act passed the Congress and was signed into law without Willow Creek.

Today, if local support is expressed by the County of Morrow and the City of Heppner, Senator Hatfield has said he will attempt to obtain an immediate appropriation to begin work on the Willow Creek Project at the point the Corps left off in 1974. In order to do this, he will seek an appropriation of funds for Willow Creek in this year's Public Works Appropriations Bill, and try to specify in this bill that these funds are to be expended in accordance with the recommendations of the Chief of Engineers in his 1974 Special Report. Of particular interest to you, in the consideration of the size of the flood plain in Heppner, is the description on page 8 of the Special Report, which says in part,

"Under the proposed initial plan of development, a total of 9,500 acre-feet is provided for exclusive flood control use, providing protection against thunderstorm floods in excess of a 500-year recurrence interval. Under ultimate development, 6,000 acre-feet will be available exclusively for flood control and, with varying amounts of the 3,500 acre-feet of irrigation storage, the project will provide a 360-year degree of protection."

If the project initially controls the 500-year flood, and, when irrigation deliveries begin (expected in about 1990), it ultimately controls the 360-year flood, then the 100-year flood from Willow Creek and Balm Fork is completely contained by the reservoir and would not contribute to flows downstream. Willow Creek's and Balm Fork's contribution to the 100-year flood plain is therefore completely eliminated, and only contributions from uncontrolled side canyons, such as Hinton and Shobe, could provide any damage. It should be noted that with complete control of Willow Creek and Balm Fork by the dam, which can dry up the channel immediately below the dam, the affect of the addition of waters from the side canyons will also be lessened somewhat.

I should hasten to point out there is no assurance that Senator Hatfield will succeed, but he will certainly do everything he can if you decide to ask him. And there does not appear to be any harm in trying. If he is not able to obtain construction of this project, I expect he will move to deauthorize it once and for all, so that it no longer will be a threat to the landowners who would be displaced by construction of the project.

If there is any other information I can provide, don't hesitate to call again.

Sincerely,  
Steven G. Hickok  
Field Representative

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