Status of 208 explained

Governor Atiyeh's proposal stresses voluntary compliance, local control

By Dick McElligott

Governor Victor Atiyeh has announced his preference that the Soil and Water Conservation Commission be designated the statewide program management agency to meet the goals of improved water quality from agricultural non point sources. He prefers a program with a high degree of voluntary compliance, on site planning implementation and, if necessary, enforcement done at the local level.

The Governor's emphasis is on leadership at the state level to encourage and assist landmanagers in utilizing available financial and technical assistance to do a better job of conservation on a voluntary basis.

The Department of Enviromental Quality (DEQ) will probably retain the designation as lead agency for all water and air quality problems. The Program Management Agency would have the authority to contract out some specific functions to other agencies, such as chemical and pesticide monitoring to the Oregon Department of Agriculture.

Our method of meeting water quality standards is to be accomplished by the installation of "economically feasible," best management practices. It is recognized that adequate cost sharing is needed to make many effective practices economically feasible.

Public Law 92-500 called for broad public participation in planning both at the local level and at the state level. At the state level this led to the recommendations of the Policy Advisory Committee to the DEQ, which have been pretty generally accepted by the Governor and by many key members of the legislature. Where we have active water quality committees in the state there appears to be good acceptance by the local county commissions.

The Soil and Water Conservation Commission budget is before the ways and means committee at this time and there appears to be support for increased funding to activate local water quality committees on a statewide basis and provide for district staffing in some priority areas.

There are still policy decisions to be made on which water quality problems should be addressed first. This will be a continuing problem both at the state and local level. Funds to do necessary work will be limited and hard decisions will have to be made on which alternative would be the most cost effective.

Precious resource-water-in good supply now; needed for summer

The snowpack in our higher elevations will most likely generate good stream flow in our creeks and major channels this spring. Many creeks have already overflowed their natural channels with water spreading out onto the valley lands—in some cases creating problems of erosion and deposition of debris onto hay or pasture lands. Most likely many hours of labor will be used in the cleanup process or removing the debris from the fields and perhaps shaping some areas where erosion has taken place.

Water, a very precious resource, sometimes becomes a problem and an expense, yet how often have we thought about having some of this "problem water" available to us for irrigation during the dry summer months? If we could have irrigation water available during those summer months we could add an approximate 1.5 tons of hay per acre to our yield; on pasture for livestock another 30 days of grazing could be expected.

Maybe the way to accomplish this extra production and income would be to store a portion of this "problem water" in an off-channel reservoir. Fill the reservoirs with water during early spring runoff and reserve the stored water until creek flows in the summer have stopped. Then by using water stored in the reservoir the extended irrigation period can begin. If the storage reservoir is large number of acres are involved it may be advisable to think about additional reservoirs.Selection of an upland site for the

Should a second look be given to irrigation storage reservoirs?

designed and built to hold the maximum of 9.2 acre feet of water as allowed by the state, what will this quantity mean to you in terms of acres that can be irrigated? It will be enough water to apply 5 inches on twenty two acres of hay or pasture land. In cases where a reservoir may also allow for gravity flow irrigation and a significant reduction in power costs.

Considering all alternatives, perhaps an irrigation storage reservoir is worth a second look!