

SWCD Board of Directors oversees many natural resource issues

The basic responsibility for conservation programs is vested by Oregon Statutes in the district boards of directors. The district board members are unpaid elected citizens of their districts. By statute, all but two board members in each district must be landowners or managers of ten or more acres of land. They are elected at the general election for four-year staggered terms of office.

The districts have responsibility for erosion control, water conservation, water resources development, flood control, irrigation water management, animal waste management, nonpoint source water quality, stream corridor management, range and pasture management, fish and wildlife habitat protection, weed control, forest management, and a large number of related resource programs. They are concerned about natural resource issues on private lands and on public lands as they affect private lands and private land operators. District boards have an almost infinite number of responsibilities and opportunities for service to their communities, but they have severely limited resources with which to function. Many lack basic clerical assistance and support staff.

Districts have been dependent upon other agencies, primarily federal and upon state and county governments for all of their manpower and financial resources. The USDA Soil Conservation Service (SCS) has historically provided technical assistance through assigned staff technicians for each district, but the numbers of these have been greatly reduced over the past few years. SCS has also provided limited financial assistance for district project activities, but this, too, is disappearing.

Limited cost-share funds for

individual district cooperators or small group projects are available through the Agricultural Conservation Program (ACP). The Cooperative Extension Service provides information and education program support and has generally cooperated with district boards.

One of our most effective avenues of reaching districts is through the Oregon Association of Conservation Districts. This statewide organization of SWCD directors sponsors area meetings each fall and spring. We are currently in the midst of the fall meetings at this time. The OSCD also sponsors an annual meeting. The association meetings provide excellent forums for exchanges of ideas and information between districts as well as for us to communicate new developments from the state and federal levels.

We assist districts in their relationship to other units of local government, state agencies, federal agencies and many associations and organizations. We have been particularly active in building close ties between SWCDs and county governments during the past few years. We believe that if districts are to survive and to achieve their goals, they must have the support of their county governments.

Currently, we are administering a matching fund program under which district boards receive \$1,200 of state appropriated funds, provided they raise at least \$600 at the district level. These funds are used for district operations in many ways, but it is far from adequate. All districts have received their matching funds in past years and we anticipate that will be true this biennium.

We are also administering a new fund this biennium. This is a grant program under which we will be able to

provide a very limited amount of money for conservation projects. We have \$36,000 for this biennium, but are hopeful that it can be increased when the state's economy becomes stronger.

The division spends much of its efforts helping districts supplement the traditional sources of manpower and dollars. We were able to obtain assistance through the CETA program when it was available and at one time had over 40 people in district offices who were able to effectively increase SCS technical assistance to the landowners. We had a student trainee program funded by the state which also provided supplemental assistance. These assistance programs were eliminated July 1, 1980 due to budget cuts.

Besides county and state funds, as previously mentioned, we have aggressively sought other sources of funding. One of these was the 208 program under which we have been able to focus federal funds on some serious state conservation problems. We believe this has been effective in gaining some much needed attention on certain priority problem areas. We have also prevented EPA and DEQ from turning it into a strong regulatory effort which, in our belief, would have been a serious mistake.

Much headway has been, and is being made. More erosion control practices are being installed each year in the wheat-summer fallow region of north Central Oregon. This effort is beginning to have an impact and has been snowballing the last few years, attracting national attention. Neither SCS nor ACP can keep up with the demand for assistance.

Previously, districts have never had the power to tax. Now, the 1981 legislature has given Soil and Water Conser-

vation districts the authority to go to the voters and ask for the power to tax. This is an important first step for districts.

Districts in every part of the state are active and aggressively moving ahead. Not all districts are at the same level of participation, but every district has a long range program and is making progress to achieve their goals. Increased field contacts by the division staff with district directors and improved communication with local units of government are vital needs that must be met if our natural resource problem is to be successfully dealt with.

Erosion is a growing national concern. It is estimated that we are currently losing more topsoil from agricultural lands across the country than we did during the dust bowl. Without an accelerated nationwide effort carried on at

state and local levels, the ability of this country's soil resources to produce an adequate supply of food for a rapidly growing population is in extreme danger.

Forestry, from page 3

the timberland around the homes, the homes are essentially unprotected and the potential for catastrophic loss in the event of a forest fire is high. We will be increasing our efforts to work with landowners in these areas to help prevent future losses.

Cost-share, from page 4

beginning of the project.

At present there are 10 long term agreements with Morrow County farmers for treatment of designated fields over a three to five year period. The total amount of cost-shares approved on these agreements is \$135,587.



Universal Realty, Inc.

RE 965 N. First St. — Hermiston, Ore. 97838
Phone (503) 567-8303 COLLECT

WHEAT FARM, over 1200 acres; 950 pivot irrigated, 2 wells, barns, hayshed, lovely 4000 sq. ft. home, adjoining city. \$1,800,000.

203 IRRIGATED ACRES established in alfalfa seed, shop, meat cutting room, water from well or Umatilla Flood Control, 9/4 mile wheel lines, 3/4 mile hand lines, located along golf course.

FARMS HOMES COMMERCIAL

WE WANT YOUR LISTINGS!

CALL US Members FLI


YOUR HANDYMAN CENTER ● Power Tools
● Paint ● Lumber ● Garden Supplies & Tools ● Fishing & Camping Gear

— BACKHOE SERVICE —

GRAVEL DIRT HAULING	EXCAVATING
EXPERIENCED	INSTALLATION OF SEPTIC TANKS AND DRAIN FIELDS
BONDED AND LICENSED	
TD9 WITH BLADE FOR LEVELING & DOZER WORK	

Pettyjohn's
HEPPNER 676-9157

PRINTING SERVICES FOR YOUR HOME OR BUSINESS 147 Willow
HEPPNER GAZETTE-TIMES 676-9228



WE'RE BEHIND YOU ALL THE WAY

HELPING YOU TO FARM WITH SUCCESS

As a farmer, you can depend on the people who depend on you... us! We know that your job is a vital part of the growth of this community... and your success benefits us all. So we make it a point to help you financially whenever we can.

LET'S WORK TOGETHER... BECAUSE CONSERVATION IS EVERYBODY'S JOB!!

BANK OF Eastern Oregon

"Your Home-Owned, Independent Bank"
ARLINGTON, HEPPNER AND IONE

MEMBER
FEDERAL DEPOSIT
INSURANCE CORPORATION