

Agencies Work Hand-in-Hand With District to Improve Natural Resources

S.C.S.

The Soil Conservation Service (SCS) has assisted the Morrow Soil And Water Conservation District (MSWCD) in four major areas this year. The main emphasis has been on providing farmers with determinations on whether their fields are highly erodible and assisting them with development of conservation plans for those fields. All determinations are complete and approximately half the acres have had conservation plans developed.

On the Dry Fork Watershed Project, SCS has provided assistance in two ways: technical assistance to develop contracts and design conservation practices and financial assistance to fund the contracts.

The Conservation Reserve Program is another area in which SCS provides aid to SWCD by reviewing contract development, providing seeding assistance, and stand certification. The fourth area in which SCS is involved is its Columbia/Blue mountain Resource Conservation and Development Program (RC&D).

RC & D is comprised of representatives from five counties - Gilliam, Morrow, Grant, Wheeler and Umatilla - who form the governing body. There are 14 members of RC & D with each county sending a soil and water district member, a county court member and a port member if they have one.

The group meets to deal with problems of conservation. As a unit, they prioritize problems of mutual interest such as erosion, road and streambank erosion, critical ground water and watersheds. Efforts are then made to deal with the problems on a regional basis.

In Morrow County, the RC & D committee has been assisting with the City of Lone Water Control Project. Currently the group is seeking soil and water district funding at the state level.

Karl Niederwerfer is the Eastern Oregon coordinator and is one of three RC & D positions in the state.

Extension

Each year the Oregon State Extension Service gives technical assistance to the Morrow Soil and Water Conservation District, especially in the areas of technology and weed control.

This year the extension service was involved with the Conservation Reserve Program field tour and with the chemical test plot.

The field tour brought together extension specialists, Soil Conservation Service staff, and ASCS personnel to view different CRP fields - some with good stands of grass and some with virtually no grass present.

The group pooled their ideas and reached the following conclusions:

—Use of high quality seed from known and respected sources is helpful in avoiding unwanted weeds. It was better to use certified seed if available.

—Competition from certain weeds was an important factor. Weeds prevent newly emerging grass seedlings from surviving. Therefore, good weed control is very beneficial.

—The time of seeding is important in establishing good stands of grass. Generally, depending on weather conditions, seeding in the dormant season or early spring into moisture worked the best.

State Forestry

The Oregon State Forestry Department was busy this year in Morrow County with many conservation programs.

The office operates out of Fossil and, among other activities, assists landowners in forest management practices. This winter the department participated in a forestry workshop with small woodland owners in attendance and provided landowners with assistance in forestry conservation for over 100 acres of forest property. Assistance in insect and disease management was given for 200 acres.

Timber management, a continuing activity for the Fossil Unit, included the thinning of 173 acres of forested land and assistance with two management plans for a total of 2,230 acres.

Gamebird waterers need maintenance

by Bob Krein

Landowners, if you have upland gamebird guzzlers (waterers) on your property, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife needs your help. Due to recent changes in budgeting priorities, funding for the maintenance of the guzzlers has basically been reduced. If you are interested in keeping the bird guzzlers functional, your assistance will be needed.

Maintenance of the guzzlers is fairly simple. The roofs and gutters need to be checked to make sure that they are securely nailed and all debris should be removed. The next area to check is the tank itself. The easiest way to check the tank is to run a shovel or rake handle down into the water, if the handle is hard to push, you will need to clean the tank. This is easier to do if you remove the roof. After cleaning, renaill the roofs to the steel posts at the same height that they were originally nailed. If you have livestock in the area surrounding the guzzlers you will also need to repair the fence around the guzzler.

The best time of the year to do the maintenance work is late-fall or early-spring. This allows the structure to collect the maximum amount of water and will extend its value through most of the dry season of the year.

If you find that you have a serious problem with any of your guzzlers, such as a cracked tank or roof that is no longer functional, please give Bob Krein, 676-9956, a call.

Elk tagging study underway

by Bob Krein

On the 26th of June, 1988, a cow elk was captured and fitted with a

radio transmitter collar and released. This elk was the last of 20 elk that were captured and fitted with radio collars during a two year period, beginning in April of 1986. The project is a cooperative venture between the U.S. Forest Service and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife to determine how the elk in the Texas Butte area respond to increased human activity associated with logging and sale administration. This area was chosen because it was one of the last unmanaged forest areas in the Heppner District of the Umatilla National Forest.

The elk were trapped at three trap sites throughout the Texas Butte area. The traps were baited with white-block salt and the elk were trapped when they hit the trip wire and the self-closing door was activated. The traps were checked each day and when elk were found in a trap, they were chased into a squeeze chute area, held immobile and a radio transmitter collar was attached. The radio collars are approximately two inches wide and are an off-white to yellowish-white color. The transmitter is attached to the collar and is approximately 2x3 inches in size and silver colored. Each transmitter

emits a different signal so that individual elk can be identified.

The collared elk will be located once each month to determine their movements. A very simple explanation of how the elk are located is as follows: Two directional antennae are mounted on the wing-struts of a Cessna 180, one on each strut. The antennae receive the signal from a transmitter and by using a junction box, the operator can determine if the signal is coming from the right side or the left side of the airplane. It normally takes about three passes over an area to pinpoint the elk and the accuracy of each locate is approximately 200 yards plus or minus from where the elk is actually standing.

The collared elk will continue to be monitored for the next 3-5 years, depending on the battery life of the transmitters.

If you should happen to shoot an elk that has a radio collar, please make sure that the collar is returned to Glen Ward or Bob Krein. There is no penalty for killing a radio collared elk, but if you have a choice between killing a collared elk or an elk without a collar, please choose the elk without the collar.

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