

1935 CCC Camp plants seed for Conservation District

Interest in forming a conservation district in Morrow County first began as a result of the Heppner SCS CCC camp on the Willow and Hinton Creek project area from 1935 to 1941. When it became apparent that the Department of Agriculture was turning most of its technical assistance and other conservation facilities to organized districts, interested landowners who had benefited from the conservation program of the CCC camp inquired of the SCS camp officials how they could organize a local

district. Millard Rodman, Area Conservator from Pendleton, Jim Kistner, Camp Superintendent, C.D. Conrad, County Agent and several landowners including John Hanna, W.E. Hughes, O.W. Cutsforth, John Wightman, Frank Wilkinson and Fred Mankin met at the Heppner CCC Camp January 11, 1941 to discuss possibilities and needs for organizing a district.

Interest in soil conservation by Morrow County farmers had been shown following heavy dust storms in the north end of the

county in 1935 and again in 1936. A voluntary blow control association was effective in focusing public attention on the need for remedial measures and at the urging of farmers from Morrow County the 1937 State Legislature provided legal machinery for setting up blow control districts. The Lexington Blow Control District was formed and is still in effect. The original Committee of the Blow Control District were H.V. Smouse, Amar Rietman, Louis Marquardt, R.B. Rice and Frank Saling. The Lexington Blow Control District is considered the first conservation district in the United States.

In 1935 the Soil Conservation Service established a 25,000 acre project in the Hinton and Willow Creek watersheds south of Heppner. Depletion of range cover had resulted in rapid run-off of both rain and melting snow. The valley creek channels had eroded and scoured, resulting in deep drainages which had decreased production on adjacent hay land. With decreased hay production came increased heavy use of spring and fall range resulting in deterioration of rangeland. The SCS Civilian Conservation Corp filled in creek channels and built check dams to prevent channel cutting. Increased hay production eased use of spring and fall rangeland allowing considerable improvement.

The first field of strip cropping was installed on the Frank Anderson farm near Ruggs using an extension farm plan.

After the initial meeting at the CCC camp, petitions were circulated by Orville Cutsforth and Eb Hughes and submitted to the State Committee in January, 1941. Proposed boundaries were established and a vote held on May 10, 1941. Because of irregularities found in voting pro-

cedure this vote was judged inconclusive by the State Committee and a new referendum was scheduled for August 30, 1941 which passed with a majority vote. The new district encompassed 701,788 acres. O.W. Cutsforth, Lexington; W.E. Hughes, Lena; and Orian Wright, Rhea Creek were elected as supervisors, Henry Peterson, Ione and John Wightman, Heppner were appointed by the State Soil Conservation committee to serve as the district governing board. C.D. Conrad, County Agent served as secretary for the original board and was replaced by N.C. (Nels) Anderson as County Agent in 1946. Mr. Anderson continued as secretary for the district boards until the supervisors elected a secretary from among the board.

On October 29, 1941, the supervisors made a formal request for assistance from the Soil Conservation Service. This request was granted and Tom Wilson, SCS CCC camp farm planner was assigned to assist the District Board.

At a special meeting on August 19, 1943 the District Board decided to place the district on a maintenance basis because of World War II and the loss of the work unit leader to the Army, shortage of farm help and lack of qualified equipment operators.

The 1946 annual meeting was held as a reactivating meeting of the district. The district was restored to an active basis and asked SCS for technical assistance and machinery. Supervisors terms had expired and it was necessary to conduct an election to fill the three vacancies. The three original supervisors were nominated and elected. In June, 1946, the SCS opened its office in the First National Bank of Portland building and by September, a full staff was

assisting the district with its program.

In May, 1947 a referendum was held to form the Boardman Soil Conservation District consisting of 68,700 acres. The original supervisors of the district were Don Kenney, Ingvard Skoubo, Jack Mulligan, Carl Knighten and Charles Dillon.

After petitions were circulated and hearings held a certificate of addition was issued in October of 1948 to add Township 3 south, Range 24 which is the Valby, Gooseberry area which added 23,305 acres to the Heppner SCD.

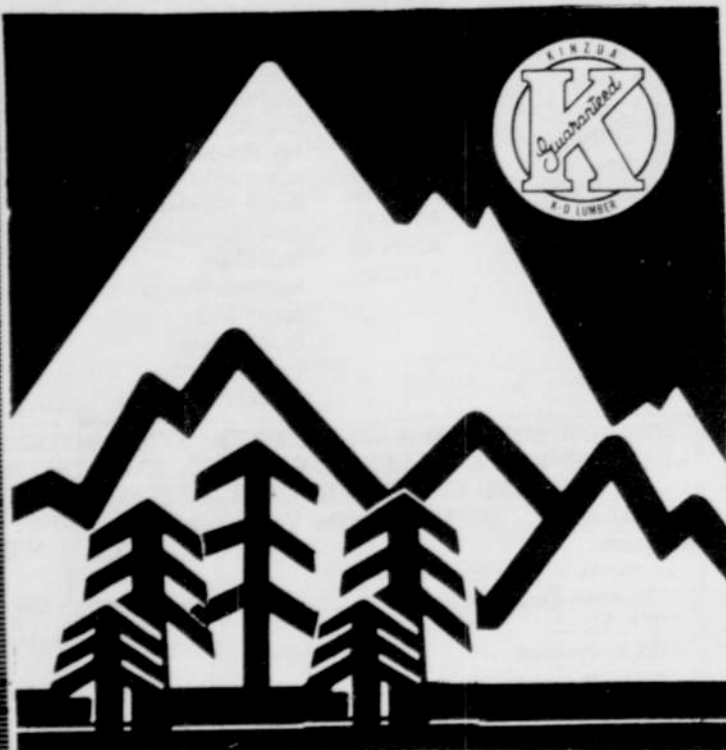
Also in 1948, interest was shown in the Cecil area for technical assistance. Petitions were circulated by John Krebs, Cecil; Ralph Crum, Garland Swanson and Don McElligott of Ione to include this area in the district. After a favorable vote on September 16, 1950, the total acres included in the Heppner SCD were 1,330,660,81,600 acres of which were located in Umatilla County.

In December of 1972 Boardman and Heppner SCDs were combined to form the Morrow Soil & Water Conservation District which conforms to the boundaries of Morrow County.



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