

Reorganization of the Natural Resources Conservation Service

The tightening of Federal budget dollars and the need for a downsizing of the government has resulted in some significant reorganization efforts. A National Performance Review was completed in 1993 for all Federal Departments and Agencies, and reorganization objectives were established. These objectives are cutting red tape, putting customers first, empowering employees, and cutting back to basics. With these objectives, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) started its reorganization, which is said to be the "most sweeping change in the 130 year old Department in many decades."

One the USDA agencies that has had significant changes is the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). NRCS Chief, Paul Johnson, explained how the reorganization would impact the agency. He said, "The USDA Reorganization of 1994 brings a new name and added responsibilities to the former Soil Conservation Service. The vision remains the same: 'A productive nation in harmony with a quality environment.' In creating the new

Natural Resources Conservation Service, we will build on the strengths of our past 60 year history of strong partnerships with Federal, State and local people delivering conservation assistance. We will expand our horizons, building new partnerships and looking at our work more holistically and on an ecosystem basis. We will also be good stewards of the taxpayer dollars and we will create an NRCS that not only works better, but costs less. This is the essence of what our reorganization/reinvention plan is all about."

Specific reorganization goals are targeted at each level throughout the NRCS. The overall goal is to have 80 percent of the NRCS workforce at the field level working directly with customers. This has initiated an array of changes through elimination and reduction of positions. In Washington D.C., the four Assistant Chief positions have been eliminated and Division Directors are reduced from four to three. Regionally, the reorganization has eliminated four Technical Centers, which had staffs of over 300. At the state level,

each state office is to reduce their staff by 20 percent. These reductions have spurred the delegation of authority to be closer to the field levels.

However, some of the responsibilities at the national and regional levels remain necessary. Instead of eliminating the positions, they were reorganized for efficiency. Five new National Resource Institutes were created to ensure that the NRCS keeps up with technology. These institutes are a National Soil Survey Institute (located in Portland), a Cartographic Institute, a Snow Survey Institute, a National Employee Development Institute, a National Plant Materials Institute and a Soil Mechanics lab.

Administratively, six new regional offices were created throughout the nation. These regional offices assist the individual state offices with administrative responsibilities. Although these new institutes and offices involve new positions replacing some of the eliminated positions, the streamlining and delegation of responsibilities and authority is having an impact. The estimates are that the number of NRCS employees above the field level will be reduced by at least 50 percent.

The Oregon State NRCS has been a national leader in its reorganization efforts within the state. Overall, the reduction of personnel will be from almost 200 employees in 1990 to 175 in 1996. The distribution of the workforce is also becoming closer to the field. In 1990, there were almost 60 employees at the State Office in Portland, which represented over 25 per-

cent of the workforce. In 1996, there will only be 36 employees, which will be down to the 20 percent goal of the employees within Oregon.

Oregon NRCS has also eliminated a middle management level by eliminating its three Area Offices and dispersed the staff from these to field offices to aid in their responsibilities. Another management level was eliminated when Oregon NRCS eliminated the 32 District Conservationist positions. Then Oregon divided the state into eight Watershed Basins. Morrow County is in the John Day/Umatilla Basin, along with Umatilla, Grant, Gilliam and Wheeler counties. Basin Team Leader positions were created to fill the necessary management responsibilities left from the Area and District Conservationist positions.

Oregon NRCS is also changing the way they conduct business. Instead of a strict line-and-staff delegation of authority, the staff is being reorganized into the "Team Concept". Each basin is designated as a "Basin Team". Within the basin team, each employee has responsibilities throughout the whole basin, instead of just the one county where their Field Office is located. Then all the employees throughout the state of Oregon are considered as part of "Team Oregon", with some of the basin employees having multi-basin or Oregon-wide responsibilities. Along with these wider responsibilities, Oregon NRCS is delegating expanded authority, so employees closer to the field and customers are able to make more timely and specific decisions.

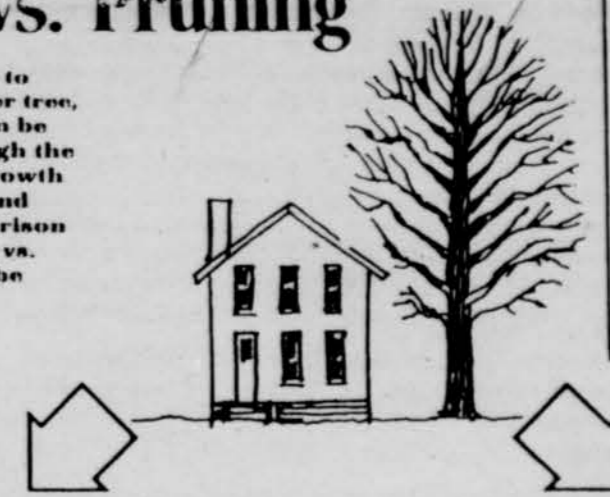
Reorganization has motivated many changes throughout USDA, and specifically within Oregon NRCS. Changes have included reduced budgets, reduced personnel and new ways of conducting business. By applying the objectives of cutting red tape, putting customers first, empowering employees and cutting back to basics, NRCS is becoming more efficient while maintaining a high level of quality service.

Don't top trees

The sight of topped trees is all too common in the communities and along the roadways of America-trunks with stubby limbs standing naked in the landscape, trees stripped of all dignity and grace. Topping is more than an assault on beauty; it causes unnecessary stress and increased risk to the tree's health. It is also a self-defeating exercise usually not worth the expense, and the results pose a danger from rot and weakly attached regrowth.

Topping vs. Pruning

When a decision is made to reduce the size of an older tree, it can be topped, or it can be pruned properly. Although the speed and nature of regrowth will depend on species and local factors, any comparison of irresponsible topping vs. competent pruning will be dramatic.



Topping



Year 1

The topped tree is an ugly stub and a remnant of a once lovely tree. If pruned properly, size is reduced but form and beauty are retained.

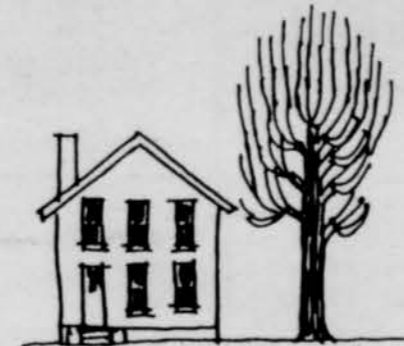


Pruning



Year 3

Vigorous sprouts have sprung out of the topped tree in large numbers and are growing with abnormal rapidity. The pruned tree adds growth more slowly and more normally distributed.



Year 6

In a relatively short time, the topped tree is as tall - and far bushier and more dangerous - than it was to begin with. The properly pruned tree is safer, more beautiful, and its size better controlled.



Greenup new District manager

On May 1, 1994, Janet Greenup became the new Morrow Soil & Water Conservation District manager. She replaced former manager, Jerry Anderson, who moved to Colorado.

Greenup is no stranger to the duties and responsibilities of the job. She came to the Morrow SWCD in 1980, working half-time as district clerk. In 1989, she became office manager and went to full-time.

As district manager, Janet will work with other federal and state agencies in planning and implementing resource conservation programs for agricultural, recreational, commercial, residential and community purposes. She also searches out and located additional funding sources to help cover the cost of local conservation projects. She keeps the SWCD Board apprised of these projects and keeps all pertinent records. Beginning in 1995, she began working closely with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (formally SCS) in determining eligibility calculations for CRP.

Greenup is right at home in Morrow County. The daughter of Bill and Pat Gentry, she grew up in Heppner and graduated from Heppner High School. Janet and her husband Greg have four daughters: Amy, 22, Sara, 19, Kathleen, 14 and Kelsey, 11.

ODFW-Cooperative Access Program

During the fall of 1994, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife initiated a new access program that allows public access to private lands for the purpose of hunting upland gamebirds.

Under the guidelines of the cooperative access program (CAP), the landowners sign an agreement with ODFW, their property is posted prior to the season, the property is patrolled during the season and at the

conclusion of the hunting season, the landowners receive a payment of .50/acre for lands that provide upland gamebird hunting. The .50/acre payment can be used to improve upland gamebird habitat or may be taken as a direct cash payment.

Last year, six landowners were involved in the program and approximately 19,000 acres of private land were opened for public hunting.

The CAP was expanded this

past fall and now involves 13 landowners and approximately 43,000 acres in Morrow and Gilliam counties. Landowners have opted to use either a "Hunting by Permission" or a "Welcome to Hunt" program to accommodate public access for the hunting of upland gamebirds.

Due to the concerns of overuse and overcrowding, maps of the various areas are not distributed and landowners' names

and/or phone numbers are not given to the public. The hunters are expected to locate the areas and then seek permission or use the Welcome to Hunt areas. Landowners that allow public access do receive liability protection under ORS 105.655.

If you are interested in the program, contact Bob Krein or Russ Morgan in Heppner at 676-5230.

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