

LAND USE GROUP COMPLETES MAP FOR THIS COMMUNITY

In Oregon a detailed land use report has been prepared in at least one community in every county. In two counties an intensive project is being carried on to complete land use reports in every community. Reports will be supplemented and changed from time to time as conditions warrant.

Members of the land use committee in this community are: W. T. Reeves, R. G. Saylor, C. M. Jackson, Fred Shelton, Carson Linder, H. J. Ott, H. K. Dean, J. R. Chenault, Dick Whiteman and M. E. Knickerbocker. The report follows:

(Continued from last week.)

Area No. 3—Irrigated lands which should be retired from agriculture.

(This area is bounded roughly by the Diagonal Road on the South, U. S. 30 on the West, by line running eastward from the Wm. Bensch place to the Duff Knight ranch on the north. Definite determination of the area can be had by looking at the

map prepared by the committee which is available at the assistant county agent's office.)

It is generally recognized that the greater part of the soil found in this area is of coarse texture, is extremely low in organic matter, and needs a high requirement of water to produce appreciable yields of crops. Twenty-five years of doubtful success and failure on farms in this area have more accurately classified the lands for future use than it is possible for this committee to do.

Approximately 70% of the area has at one time been farmed and abandoned. There remains 10% at present being operated under a contract agreement with the irrigation district whereby water is furnished to the land if a surplus over the needs of the irrigation district in other sections is available. A situation where short water supplies has prevented crop production in the area has never arisen but is not improbable. The present status of the established operators is generally satisfactory and should be continued. However, the committee feels that there are some additional places which should be retired from agriculture when present ownership expires.

In general, poultry production has

been more successful than any other enterprise. Climatic conditions, soil type, availability of feed supplies, and marketing outlets all lend encouragement to the following of this type of agricultural activity over any other in this particular district. The committee strongly urges that new operators taking over established places in this area be advised and guided along the lines of poultry production and sale. The committee is also cognizant of the fact that the individual plays an important part in determining successor failure. It thus evolves that all persons and agencies concerned with the development of the community should take into account these two considerations: namely, type of farming enterprise, and qualifications of the individual before making any recommendations to prospective settlers. It is also felt that a change of farming enterprise would be advisable in the case of some of the present operators in the area.

Because of the coarse textured leachy soil and under the conditions of low annual rainfall only sparse stands of natural grasses and brush have been maintained, and for this reason the committee recommends that no grazing be permitted on any of the undeveloped lands within this

area.

Area No. 4—Butter Creek Lands

It is the belief of the committee that water supply is a minor problem or adjustment in this area. Subnormal rainfall for a period of ten years has made necessary the general enlarging of units in order to produce an adequate living for the families thereon and has brought about an abandonment of tracts less suited to the production of farm crops. Diversion of an available water supply from another water shed would be a practical solution to the problem if such diversion could be accomplished at a cost of \$50 or not to exceed \$75 per acre. A method of financing this adjustment is at present the limiting factor in its accomplishment. In the event that additional water supplies are made available the committee firmly believes that the bench land lying to the east of Butter Creek proper, which has been considered a part of the project, should not be developed for irrigation because of the danger of flooding out the lower lands adjacent. Additional water supplies would necessitate further minor adjustments such as a decrease in the present size of unit to 160 acres or less, irrigation of most of the valley

bottom areas which are at present abandoned because of lack of water supplies, and more diversification of agricultural practices, such as the growing of row crops, irrigated pastures, following a system of crop rotation and maintaining sufficient animal units to consume the major portion of the agricultural products grown on the lands.

Area No. 5—Umatilla Meadow Lands.

The chief problems confronting farmers in this area are drainage and water erosion. The Umatilla River which flows along the Eastern boundary of the area frequently overflows during periods of runoff and floods low lying lands in its vicinity. During the summer months when practically all the water is removed from the river for irrigation, willows have an opportunity to grow in the natural channel which impedes runoff increasingly through succeeding years. Periodic channel clearance may be necessary to correct this condition. Due to a high water table soil alkali concentrations do not permit the growing of cultivated crops on a large part of the area. These pasture areas could probably be improved by the seeding of strawberry clover. It is the opinion of the committee that under the present economic conditions and land values drainage would be too costly to be practical.

Area No. 6—Westland, Stanfield and Umatilla Irrigation Districts

Proper water usage is a problem on all three irrigation districts. Average use of water varies according to supply and rainfall from six acre feet to as much as eleven acre feet per year. Two factors are responsible for this heavy water usage. The first is the high water requirement of some of the farms within the area. This condition is being relieved by the districts themselves by their policy of purchasing such farms at tax sales and retiring them from private use thereby voiding the necessity for delivering water. The second is the method of application and the variations between the districts in frequency of rotation. This committee feels that the management of the three districts within the community, together with the west extension unit of the Umatilla project lying mostly in Morrow county, should meet to evolve a unified system of water usage and rotation practices.

Size of farming unit is an important problem on all three irrigation districts. Particularly is this true on the Hermiston project where the original plan of farming activity called for the production of fruits on a family size scale. The average of 29 acres per farm on this project is considered too small to provide the farm family with an adequate standard of living unless some specialized form of farm activity is followed. As a general recommendation the committee sets a minimum of 40 acres for a family unit on the irrigation projects where general practices of crop production and sale are followed.

Here, too, the individual and the type of farming enterprise followed plays an important part in making final determination of the size of unit advisable.

Noxious weed control is another problem confronting the community that the committee feels should deserve earnest consideration. The threat of their becoming more widespread is considered more of a menace than is wind or water erosion discussed previously in this report. Infested areas lying along ditch banks and near sources of water supply such as is found near the Cold Springs Reservoir are considered particularly dangerous and should be controlled at once. The committee favors a course of action looking toward the complete eradication of these pests from the community.

RECLAMATION NOW GIVES MOST HOPE FOR NEW FARMERS

Control of water through reclamation offers the greatest opportunity for increasing the number of economic farm units in Oregon, says Dr. W. L. Powers, head of the soils department at Oregon State college, in an introduction to the triannual report of the Oregon Reclamation congress covering the three annual conventions from 1938 to 1940, inclusive.

The present irrigated area in Oregon has recently been estimated at 1,500,000 acres. It appears probable that this can ultimately be increased by perhaps 500,000 acres, says Dr. Powers. About 152,000 acres are within 70 developed drainage or dyking districts in the state, and nearly a million acres are still susceptible of improvement by farm tiling or community drains.

Latest census figures show that the increase in the number of farms in Oregon has been confined largely to the irrigated areas. To date 1590 new families have settled on the Vale-Owyhee project land.

As to future reclamation development, Dr. Powers points out the possibility of small feasible projects in Douglas and Josephine counties and the desirability of re-examining the John Day project in the light of recent power developments. Early completion of the Deschutes project is needed, he says, and there may be a combined flood control and reclamation approach to the Grande Ronde project.

The greatest field for drainage and irrigation remaining in Oregon, however, is in the Willamette valley, he says. While there are close to 750,000 acres of good irrigable soil types in the valley, various limitations make it improbable that more than half a million acres will be irrigated in the next generation.

"Sound reclamation decreases the unit cost of production and increases quality of products, and it renders the least area sufficient for the support of a family and thus contributes toward a peaceful world," said Dr. Powers.

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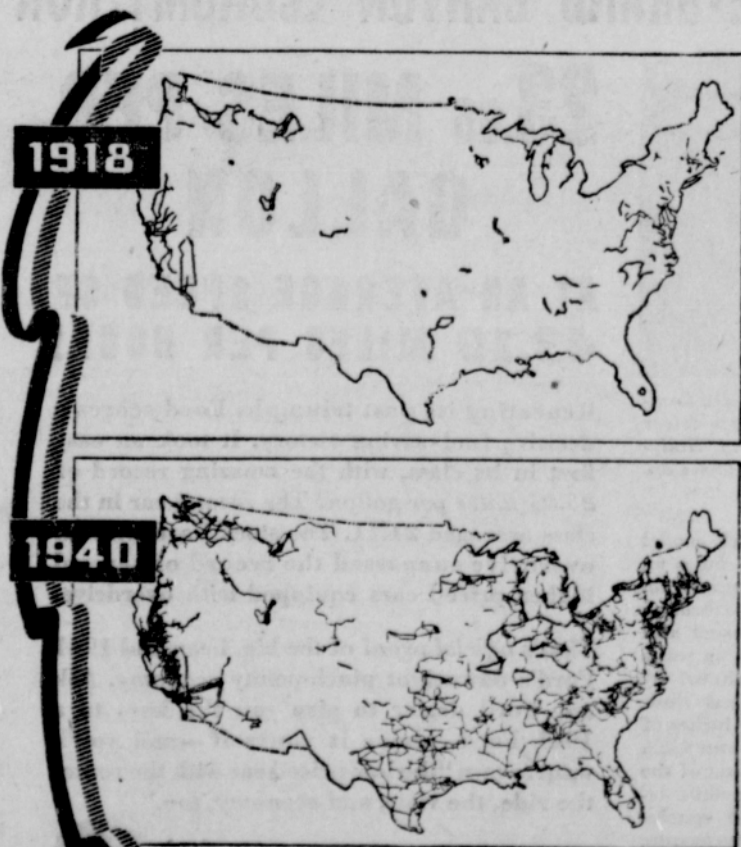


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