

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE**  
**AGENCY REPORT TO**  
**THE OREGON PLAN FOR SALMON AND WATERSHEDS**

**June 2001**

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) works in partnership with Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Watershed Councils and other state, federal and local partners to provide resource conservation assistance to private landowners. The technical and financial assistance provided by the NRCS is predicated on the idea that resource issues within the watershed related to the Soil, Water, Plants, Animals and Humans need to be addressed. Each Conservation Management Unit that we provide assistance to addresses all of these resource concerns and the finished product is referred to as a Resource Management Plan (RMS).

During the period September 1998 to present, in Oregon, the NRCS has provided assistance to 3,926 landowners in developing RMS plans on 943,668 acres and implementation of those plans on 611,840 acres.

The NRCS has developed a conservation delivery system that includes the needed support to ensure the technical assistance we provide is timely, and accurate. In order to provide quality, technically sound assistance to private landowners we have endeavored to provide training that leads to certification of NRCS and District people on the RMS planning process. This extensive training has led to the certification of 130 individuals in Conservation Planning. Formal and informal training is also given, which is specific to other areas including engineering, range management, soil science, biology, etc. Reference material in the NRCS has been developed over many years of conservation planning and implementation and includes the Field Office Technical Guide, Technical Notes, Manuals and Technical Releases.

As the NRCS looks to the future of multi-discipline, science-based conservation planning and implementation on a watershed scale, we realize that we must stay abreast of new technology in the areas of non-point pollution from animal waste and erosion, fish passage, riparian and upland habitat improvement, irrigation water management and pesticide use. We know that the Endangered Species Act and other regulatory issues will continue to impact both our workload and the content of the Conservation Plans we develop and implement. We expect our people to know about these issues and how to bridge that implementation gap that sometimes exists between landowners and those charged with regulation. The world of conservation on private lands has become much more complex in the past few years and the level of commitment and expertise required to address the important resource issues has increased as well.

Our strong relationships with landowners, Conservation Districts, Watershed Councils and other partners has helped get conservation on the ground. We know that with all our cooperation and commitment the people of Oregon have realized an increase in riparian areas, enhanced habitat for fish and wildlife, improved water quality, water and soil saved and a decrease in the use of pesticides.

Landowners in Oregon want to do what's best for their land. Yet sometimes they become confused or frustrated with the labyrinth of agency and permit requirements they face to implement conservation planning. They don't know and probably don't care if the person who comes out to their place to assist them with their land is from the state government, federal government or foreign government.

Perhaps, in the future we could streamline the assistance we provide to these stewards of the land. As different agencies and entities work together in a spirit of cooperation perhaps we could provide a "One Stop Resource Conservation Center" for natural resources. This center would employ individuals from the Conservation Partnership who could seamlessly address the needs of landowners and provide them with the information they need to get the assistance they need. The Center would provide information on how to get help with technical assistance and provide information on what the permit requirements are and assist them with the permitting process. Individuals working for state, federal and local governments would be available to assist them. The public has been requesting that different government agencies work together. This would provide an opportunity for this to happen. Obstacles to this idea would be budgets, lack of trust between agencies, program conflicts, etc.

The Conservation Partnership has made great strides since the Oregon Plan was conceived. This progress must not be kept secret. As we continue to have successes we must make them know to the general public. As urban dwellers begin to understand the gravity of the issue of natural resource protection and how it affects them they too will support our efforts. With that support will come more support in the state and federal legislatures and more funds to carry out the mission the public mandates.