



MEMORANDUM

TO: Salt Creek Watershed Collaborative Steering Committee
FROM: Robin Harkless and Turner Odell, Oregon Consensus (OC)
SUBJECT: Polk County Lower Salt Creek Watershed Assessment Report
DATE: May 24, 2018

The Salt Creek Watershed Collaborative Steering Committee enlisted the services of Oregon Consensus to conduct a high level process assessment with a group of landowners and other stakeholders who live and work in the Polk County Lower Salt Creek watershed area. The primary goals were to assess perceived floodplain issues and explore the possibility of convening a group to problem solve and develop collaborative solutions to address flooding and other priority concerns in the area. The following is a summary of the interview findings and follow up discussion with the Steering Committee.

Interview Findings

OC conducted seven phone interviews (4 Landowner, 1 County, and 2 State agency representatives). We heard that landowners have different experiences with flooding and that flooding is not considered out of the ordinary given the current landscape and practices. However all suggested that drainage structures need maintenance and that there were barriers to doing so – either cumbersome regulatory constraints or limited-effectiveness piecemeal approaches – and this was sufficient cause to merit working with others to address the barriers. The landowners suggested that regulatory agencies need to be at the table to discuss this together.

While not the focus of the interviews, participants offered suggested solutions that looked at on the ground practices and approaches to alleviate regulatory process burdens, and one participant provided an example of a successful pilot effort involving landowner and regulatory agency. There was a range of perspectives on the geographic scope for consideration, but most felt starting ‘small’ and with highest priority areas would be a good first step while recognizing a watershed wide solution will be most effective.

Everyone with whom we spoke saw the value of a collaborative problem solving effort and expressed a willingness to participate. They offered that education and trust building will be important elements to a successful collaboration.

May 15, 2018 Follow up Discussion with Steering Committee

After a brief oral report on the above findings and Q&A between OC and members of the Steering Committee, The SC explored next steps. In principle, they agreed that a process design that meets the stated needs of the participants for co-learning/joint education and trust building should be the focal point of any process. They assumed that the SC will be a convener and process guide for the participants and agreed that participation by landowners and state agencies is important.

Another consideration raised was finding a neutral space for the process. They discussed a range of ideas and approaches that included:

- A formal collaborative convening (similar to a place-based planning project). This might be too extensive and formal for the issue at hand.

- A two-part gathering of co-learning/workshop type format followed by group problem solving activity. This could work if there is a good enough 'hook' to get folks to the gathering.
- A field trip for co-learning followed by a gathering (with food) for more trust building and collaborative solving.
- A series of workshops for information exchange in parallel or sequenced with an opportunity to work 1:1 with landowners to meet specific needs. This could work if there is a two-way exchange of knowledge to and from landowners, and other ways to build trust. Also need to consider watershed-wide solution opportunities.
- A diverse panel of experts sharing various perspectives and wisdom about the issues – to include landowners, SWCD and other service organizations, and regulatory agencies among others. This helps build a comprehensive picture and could serve to educate and build trust.

Next Steps

The Steering Committee committed to developing their ideas into a process design and work plan. (*OC note:* In addition, a follow up email to the interview participants, perhaps along with this summary report, will provide continuity and signal respect and appreciation for the time and thought taken to provide input.) The SC will keep OC informed about their next steps!

In attendance:

Karin Stutzman SWCD

Jackson Morgan SWCD

Evelyn Conrad NRCS

Sue Reams NRCS

Brenda Sanchez ODA

Claudia Ingham SWCD

Patty Britt SWCD

Margaret Matter ODA

Derek Godwin OSU Extension

Luke Westphal GYWC