

# Landowner Assistance Program 2003-2006:

## Background:

Marion Soil and Water Conservation District's Landowner Assistance Program (LAP) is a cost-share grant program that is designed to help landowners install conservation projects. Successful grant applicants receive technical and financial assistance from the Marion SWCD to implement conservation practices to address natural resource concerns on their property.

Marion SWCD started LAP in 2003. Funded projects have addressed natural resource concerns and are in coordination with the goals of the local Agricultural Water Quality Management Area Plan and Rules (Senate Bill 1010). Marion SWCD pays 50% of the project cost, up to \$5,000. Landowners are required to provide the remaining 50% of the project funds (this could be provided as labor costs, materials, cash or financial assistance from other sources). Preference is given to small acreage landowners that have difficulty finding other financial assistance through existing state and federal programs. Several of the projects funded in this first three years of the program are highlighted here.

## Smoky Hills Farm:

Fred Dalzell owns this 8-acre farm in south Salem where he raises a few horses. He was spreading the manure from his horses in a small pasture behind the barn, but this became problematic in the winter, when it had to be piled rather than spread directly. He contacted Marion SWCD with a proposed solution – build a manure storage facility where manure could be stored and composted year-round. This would give Fred the freedom to spread it on the pasture after it had time to breakdown and turn into a useful fertilizer. It was a great solution and his project was completed in the winter of 2005.



Three-bin manure composting system in use

## Hughes Forest Management:

During the very dry summer of 2003, an unfortunate event took place east of Silverton on the property of John Hughes. Every forest owner's worst fear, a wildfire, broke out on the land. Starting on a neighboring property, the fire spread fast to Mr. Hughes property along with many neighbors in the immediate area. The fire was ultimately put out by the Oregon Department of Forestry but not before significant damage was done. The landscape in this area is very steep and the threats of major soil erosion were looming for the upcoming winter. Mr. Hughes was also very concerned because his house was built near the outlet of a small forest stream. To assist Mr. Hughes in his efforts to restore his forest, the LAP grant helped to: install water bars on the forest roads that were cut to fight the fire, seed annual ryegrass in the steep locations and hay bales where concentrated flows were likely to occur. The program also helped with the costs of replanting the acres of burned trees back to native vegetation. The projects were very successful and the area should rebound to a healthy forest ecosystem.

## Karen Kohler:

Karen has a 2-acre property on the Little Pudding River in Salem where she raises a couple of horses and a llama. Karen contacted our office to request technical assistance on her property after attending a streamside management workshop that Marion SWCD co-hosted in spring 2003. Karen indicated that she was having problems managing mud and manure during the rainy winter and she was also concerned about soil erosion along the river. Marion SWCD worked with Karen to provide technical assistance for three different projects including: converting part of her barn into an area to store and compost manure, installing a heavy use protection area adjacent to her barn for year-round animal use, and planting a streamside buffer along her stretch of the river. Because of her resourceful nature, Karen was able to complete all three projects with one LAP grant. For example, she used an existing structure for manure storage, recycled materials in her heavy use area, and free willow cuttings for her planting project.



Heavy use protection project beginning



Heavy use protection area project complete



Shortly after fire



Forest road in the winter



Forest road in the spring



Slope returned to vegetation

# A Marion Soil & Water Conservation District program to assist landowners in implementing conservation practices on their land

## Grucza Farm:

Located in the Turner area of Oregon is the Triple G Ranch, a 19 acre beef and horse operation. This ranch is located near the Santiam River and Mill Creek flood plain area. An intermittent stream can be found running through one of the pastures. Livestock animals can create unique issues on a farm, especially when there is a waterway running through the largest pasture. As the livestock grazed in the pasture, mud and stream bank erosion became a concern. Also, the rocky soils found here do not create highly productive pastures. With this in mind, owner Scott Grucza came to the Marion SWCD for some technical assistance on options to improve the pasture forage production, and options on reducing erosion. After some planning with a Marion SWCD watershed technical specialist, it was determined that Mr. Grucza and the Triple G Ranch were perfect candidates for the LAP. Mr. Grucza's plan included fencing to keep the livestock out of the intermittent stream area. Fencing also allowed him to break up some of the larger pastures and create rotational grazing opportunities which has increased the pasture forage production. The landowner's desire to write a conservation plan and his hard work in installing all the fencing has enabled the Triple G Ranch to operate much more efficiently and significantly reduce the environmental impact to the land!



Completed fencing project

## The Jefferson Farm:

Heritage Seedlings, Inc. own a farm in Jefferson, part of which is in production agriculture (grass seed) and part of which is being restored as a rare oak savanna habitat. Owner Mark Krautmann noticed that there was a problem in the field where winter runoff was causing gully erosion on the property. Recognizing that this property was not meeting the goals of Senate Bill 1010 by allowing sediment to leave his property and enter a waterway, he contacted Marion SWCD for assistance in 2004.

Heritage Seedlings staff worked with Marion SWCD and the LAP to correct the problem by installing a permanent grassed waterway where water runoff was directed. This system filters any sediments or chemicals from the field before any water leaves the property and enters a nearby stream. The grassed waterway is also designed with gently sloping sides so that farm implements can safely be navigated across it when field work is occurring.



Before installation



Completed grassed waterway, before field was seeded

## Friends of Opal Creek:

This 40 acre former farm is located very near to the Opal Creek Wilderness which is the largest contiguous area of intact, low elevation old growth forest that remains in Oregon. The former farm was donated to the Friends of Opal Creek which use the farm as a headquarters. This farm had a serious Scotch Broom infestation. Over 75% of this farm had been overrun with the invasive noxious weed. Friends of Opal Creek created a strategic plan for its eradication and the replanting of native vegetation in the spring of 2003. The LAP helped the Friends of Opal Creek purchase native plants and trees for replanting along with providing funding for labor materials needed to help with Scotch Broom removal. With volunteer assistance from many groups, dedication and hard work, the Friends of Opal Creek have been able to restore approximately 15 acres of previously infested land with native trees and shrubs.



Scotch Broom infestation



Returned to native vegetation

## LAP Roadside Signs:

As part of the LAP, landowners with high visibility farms agreed to have signs about their involvement in the program posted near their projects. Each sign indicates that the Landowner Assistance Program of the Marion SWCD had aided in conservation practices on the property. The signs include information on the type of conservation practice implemented in the LAP.

## Hinsvark Farm:

Jim Hinsvark is the manager and operator of the family farm that is located south east of Woodburn. The farm consists of 35 acres on very flat valley soils with a variety of different cane berries grown. A unique feature of this farm is that it has achieved the status of being certified organic. Jim has worked very hard in recent years to obtain his organic certification. To complete farm upgrades, he was in need of financial assistance to install new irrigation systems. Specifically, Jim wanted to phase out the use of big guns and overhead sprinklers and start using microirrigation. The process of gaining organic certification takes a lot of work and involves a much higher degree of crop management, and that also includes irrigation. Since this is also a small farm with Jim and only a few workers, the change over to drip irrigation was the most logical choice. Through the LAP, Hinsvark Farm installed new microirrigation on a newly replanted 5 acre Marion/ raspberry field and the rest of the farm will not be far behind with more drip lines planned for the future.



Before project



Microirrigation installed



Karen Kohler's LAP sign