

ONEIDA SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

137 North 100 West
Malad City, Idaho 83252

FIVE-YEAR RESOURCE CONSERVATION PLAN



July 1st, 2013 to June 30th, 2018

Forward

Five Year Resource Conservation Plan

The Oneida Soil and Water Conservation District is one of 50 Conservation Districts in Idaho. Idaho Soil and Water Conservation Districts are political subdivisions of State government, but are not State agencies. Conservation Districts are charged with carrying out a program for the conservation use and development of soil, water, and other natural resources.

Conservation Districts are the primary entities to provide assistance to private landowners and land users in the conservation, sustainment, improvement and enhancement of Idaho's natural resources. They are catalysts for coordinating and implementing conservation programs, channeling expertise from all levels of government into action at the local level. Programs are non-regulatory, providing science-based technical assistance, incentive-based financial programs, and informational and educational programs at the local level.

Both by legislation and by agreement, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service provides technical assistance to landowners and land users through Conservation Districts. Each Conservation District in Idaho has a signed Mutual Agreement with the Secretary of Agricultural and the Governor of Idaho that establishes a framework for cooperation.

This Five-Year Plan / Annual Plan was developed not only to guide the Conservation District, but also to encourage cooperation among landowners, government agencies, private organizations, and elected officials. Through knowledge and cooperation, all concerned can ensure a sustainable natural resource base for present and future generations in the Oneida Soil and Water Conservation District.

Background and brief history

Landowners in the Pocatello Valley area were the first to show interest in organizing a soil conservation district in southeastern Idaho's Oneida County. They believed a district could help them protect a section of the valley that was often inundated by heavy spring runoff. The idea caught on throughout the county and on May 22, 1941, the Oneida Soil and Water Conservation District was formally organized. The town of Malad City joined the District in 1975.

Members of the first Oneida SWCD board were James Williams, Samaria; O.W. Browder and Colen Sweeten, Holbrook; and John Blaisdell and Ruel Ipsen, Malad. Governor C.A. Bottolfson appointed Oneida County rancher Joe M. Isaacson to the Idaho Soil Conservation Commission in 1939. Isaacson held this position until 1945, helping organize the first conservation districts in the State of Idaho.

Oneida County provided \$1500.00 per year to help the new district carry out programs. In the 1950's the district became self-supporting through the sale of grass seed, renting equipment for conservation work, and by selling items such as irrigation pipe and headgates. The first farm conservation plan was completed June 10, 1942 on Charles E Thomas' land.

The District operated without an office until the 1950's, when the board was granted two abandoned barracks used by the Civilian Conservation Corps in Downey, Idaho. Personnel of the Soil Conservation Service designed a remodeling plan for the barracks. Supervisors invested about \$4000.00 and many hours to move the building to Malad and remodel it. The District then offered the Soil Conservation Service free office

space. The District took great pride in having their own office and the barracks were used until 1964, when supervisor Ray Eliason loaned the District money to build an office building.

Although many changes have occurred over the past sixty plus years, one thing remains constant – everyday all of us count on the care and skill of farmers and ranchers to conserve our most precious resources. We must all work to ensure that for those who come after us will have the same bounty that we enjoy. We will set our goals high and make it a record breaking conservation year!

Current Supervisors and Associate members include

John Wittman, Chairman
Ron Blaisdell, Vice-Chairman
Tim Keller, Secretary, Treasurer
Dallan Nalder
Dave Jones
Lowell ‘Chuck’ Davis, Associate

Function of the Oneida Soil & Water Conservation District

- To make available technical, financial and educational resources, whatever the source and focus and coordinate them so that they meet the needs of the local land manager with conservation of our natural resources.

Who We Serve & Why

- The people and natural resources in the Oneida Soil and Water Conservation District, to conserve the natural resources for the beneficial and sustainable use by all.

Mission of the Oneida Soil & Water Conservation District

- To develop county solutions to sustain, conserve and improve our natural resources and promote sound management practices that protect the environment and are economically feasible and productive.

Vision of the Oneida Soil & Water Conservation District

- Oneida Soil and Water Conservation District will safeguard soil and water within the County. We are committed to quality leadership, customer service and the preservation and conservation of our natural resources for present and future generations.

Values of the Oneida Soil & Water Conservation District

- Sustainable use of natural resources.
- Support for agriculture activity that uses sustainable, economic feasible practices.
- Value and respect for the Idaho Conservation Partnership.
- Conservation education for adults and youth.

Physical Characteristics

Oneida County, with a population of 4,131, sits on the Idaho/Utah border nestled against the stately peaks of the Rocky Mountains. The county is heavily dependent on agriculture. Government and trade provide most of the jobs in the county with most of those in education. Mining and manufacturing, while small, are vital parts of the county’s economy. Many residents work along the Utah Wasatch front and have located in

Malad and surrounding area for the relaxed lifestyle it provides and to take advantage of the area's wide open spaces and recreational activities.

There are 762,240 acres within the boundaries of the Oneida Soil and Water Conservation District. A large part is owned and operated by the Bureau of Land Management and the US Forest Service. The remaining land is owned by the State of Idaho, Oneida County, Malad City, private groups and individuals.

Major land uses have not changed a great deal. Federal land is used mainly for watersheds, grazing and wildlife. The next biggest land use is for production of dryland grain and alfalfa, irrigated grain, hay and pasture. The third major land use is private range and permanent pasture. Remaining areas are used for recreation, roads, town sites and etc.

Cropland acres total about 220,000 which is located primarily in the valley bottoms. About 28% of the county is dryland and used mainly for the production of winter wheat, spring wheat and barley. With the creation of the Conservation Reserve Program, the county has been at the cap of 55,000 acres. This has been a great benefit by reducing soil erosion from about 20 tons per acre to about 1 to 2 tons per acre. Irrigated land is approximately 4% and used to produce wheat, barley, alfalfa hay and small amounts of potatoes, silage, corn, pasture. Much of this land was surface irrigated and then starting in mid 80s canal companies started converting ditches to pipeline. This opened the door for landowners to convert to sprinkler irrigation.

Economic Conditions and Outlook

The economic trend in Oneida Soil and Water Conservation Districts looks very good with the unemployment rate at 5.3%. This is one of the lowest rates in Idaho since 1999. Nonfarm employment has been on the rise with a 17.1% increase since 1999. This has helped to stabilize the economy the last few years. Agriculture, trade, finance activities and leisure have had notable increases in jobs within Oneida County. Even with these increases in job opportunities and the low unemployment rate, Oneida County has one of the lowest per capita personal income rates in Idaho at \$24,818 per year. This low rate has been the most limiting factor in providing technical help to the farm producers within the District's boundaries.

Assessment

Trends Impacting Conservation in the Oneida Soil & Water Conservation District

- Limited availability of State funds for conservation
- Market outlets for agricultural production are outside of the area.
- Focus on water quality compared to other conservation and environmental issues.
- Increased paper work to getting the job done
- Trend to regulate agriculture and ranching

Strategies to Address Trends

- Sponsor project proposals with neighboring districts.
- Determine opportunities to coordinate outreach activities with traditional and non-traditional partners.
- Raising awareness of conservation values with State legislature and elected officials – help decision makers be better informed.
- Strengthen local working group and get them even more involved in District Operations.
- Supervisors become more informed on current issues impacting working lands and cost-share programs.
- Determine how to become more involved with County Planning and Zoning issues impacting natural resources.

- Map noxious and invasive weeds to more effectively target weed control efforts
- Establish a data base to track resource conditions
- Host an open house to make public aware of goals
- Solicit input to improve Annual Plan/Five-Year Resource Conservation Business Plan
- Identify the information methods to communicated with small land owners
- Sponsor project proposals with other districts
- Training for Conservation District Supervisors and staff

Identify and Prioritize Objectives

- Rangeland
- Non-Irrigated Cropland
- Irrigated Cropland
- Pasture/Hayland
- Woodland
- Fish and Wildlife
- Water Quality
- Information and Education
- Invasive Species
- District Operations
- Riparian
- Urban
- Carbon Sequestration
- Recreation

1. Water Quality

- Use various programs to help owners and operators meet the objectives of the Oneida Soil and Water Conservation District for Water Quality in Oneida County.
- Focus on new projects that include the “Little Malad “ tributaries and Bear River TDML in cooperation with the Idaho Soil Conservation Commission and Division of Environmental Quality.
- Evaluate opportunities and apply for 319 projects and Water Quality Program for Agriculture.
- Continue to promote Environmental Quality Implementation Projects Fish and Wildlife grants and Fish and Game programs to address targeted water quality areas.

2. Invasive Species

- Control invasive vegetative species throughout Oneida County. Reach contract holders and stress the need to control invasive vegetative species.
- Seek opportunities to work in conjunction with the Oneida County weed department supervisor and federal and state agencies to control invasive vegetative species.
- Co-sponsor yearly weed school with Oneida County and offer recertification course to update applicator license.

3. Irrigated Cropland

- Provide assistance to EQIP contract holders with funded projects that increase efficiencies and improve irrigation and energy savings.
- Coordinate with Oneida County irrigation boards to assist with projects that result in water savings.
- Pursue engineering assistance to over 100 landowners owning shares of the St. John Irrigation Company to install pipeline from Daniels Reservoir.

4. Information and Education

- Provide daily precipitation and temperature data to three Idaho television stations, National Weather Service and USDA-Food Safety and Inspection Service.
- Yearly display during Idaho legislative session, Oneida County events and various conservation activities.
- Sponsor annual rangeland tour. Conduct three conservation events with Malad High School agricultural classes.
- Assist with Boy and Cub Scout camps, give presentations and hold tree planting clinic.
- Co-sponsor yearly, Oneida County Habitat Restoration Partnership Opportunities Field Tour.

5. District Operations

- New supervisors will have completed New Supervisor Training.
- Complete effective and efficient operations including accounting, personnel management, training and development, annual planning and reporting.
- In cooperation with Conservation Districts and partnership agencies, develop and carry out an effective legislative outreach program to ensure 100% State matching funds.
- Conduct Conservation District elections.
- Assist with Arbor Day celebrations; sponsor and support “Tree City” annual event, continue to donate trees and conduct tree plantings at Oneida County and Malad City special events.

Water Quality Component

Streams within the Oneida Soil and Water Conservation District boundaries are impacted by sediment, nutrients and temperature. The Oneida SWCD identified streambank modifications, over utilized pastures, sheet and rill erosion, classic and ephemeral gully erosion, and streambank erosion as problems in the watershed. They also identified critical erosion periods as spring rains and runoff as well as summer thunderstorms.

The monitoring indicated that every stream, with the exception of the Little Malad spring, exceeded IDEQ targets for suspended sediment and/or phosphorus. Hill and Wrights Creeks had the poorest water quality above Wrights Creek consistently carried the highest loads of sediment and phosphorus. IASCD recommended that efforts be focused on Hill and Wrights Creeks for the greatest impact on water quality.

List of stream segment of concern:

- *Wrights Creek
- *Malad River
- *Little Malad River

List of impacted waters in the District:

- *Wrights Creek
- *Malad River
- *Dairy Creek
- *Indian Mill
- *Devil Creek
- *Deep Creek
- *Elkhorn
- *Little Malad River

Identify and prioritize Projects

Oneida Soil and Water Conservation District assisted many producers with RCRDP loans and grants and 319 grants to increase irrigation water efficiency, providing containment for animal feeding operations, installing practices on dry land agriculture to reduce soil erosion and improve rangeland conditions.

Past projects:

- *Wide Hollow SAWQP
- *Dairy Creek SAWQP
- *Daniels SAWQP
- *St. John's Irrigation Group project (ditch to pipeline conversion)
- *Installation of wheel lines and pivots
- *Wrights Creek stream restoration 319 project

Current projects:

- *Daniels Reservoir nonpoint sediment reduction 319 project
- *Quagga Mussel and invasive species inspection stations at Malad rest area (Interstate 15)

Future projects:

- *Wrights Creek sediment reduction project
- *Deep Creek – Rock Creek stream restoration (Curlew Valley HUC)
- *Sage Grouse habitat improvement in curlew Valley

Implementation

Staffing Needs

- Conservation District Manager with benefits
- Full-time Conservation District Administrative Assistant with benefits
- Conservation District Technician

Annual Budget Needs

- The Oneida Soil and Water Conservation District needs an annual budget of \$85,000.00 to carry out basic programs. This figure would provide for a full time District Manager with benefits; administrative assistant and information and education specialist. Additional funding is needed for District technical assistance.

