Streamwork

A newsletter from:

~Gilliam County Soil Water Conservation District

~Gilliam-East John Day Watershed Council

~Farm Service Agency

~Natural Resource Conservation Service

Inside This Issue

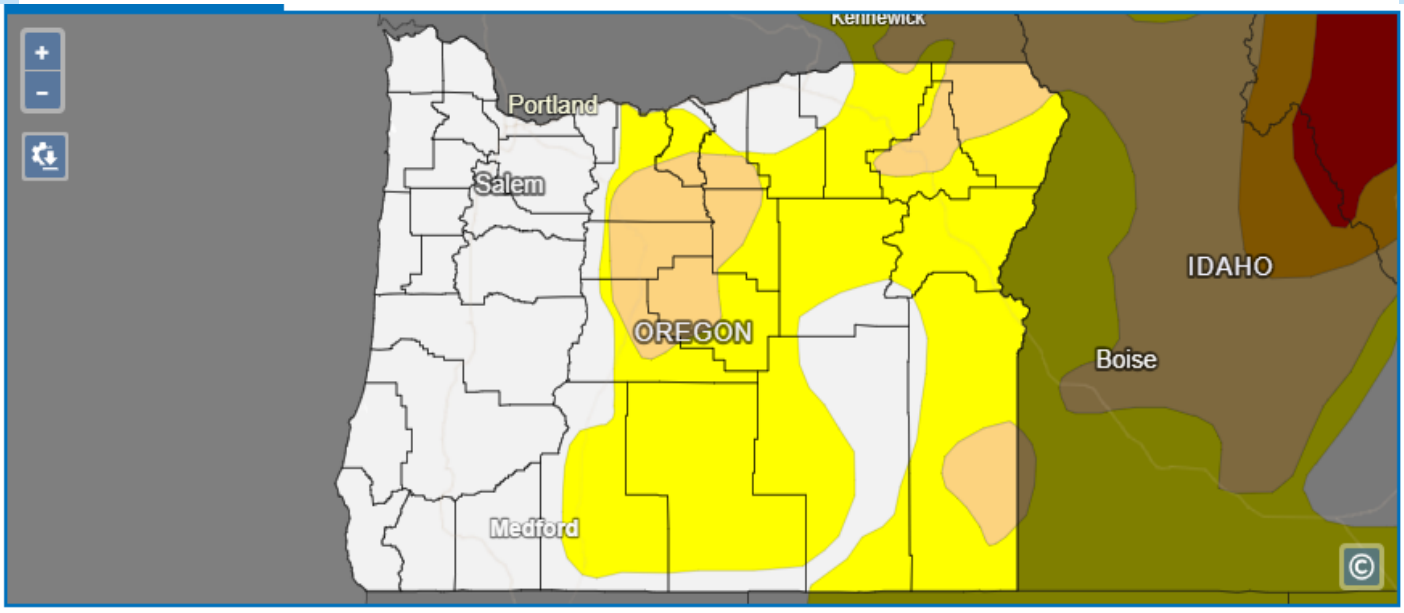
First Virtual Fence Tower to be assembled and placed in Gilliam County by the Gilliam SWCD.

Lonerock Fire Response Plan—Virtual Fencing

Condon FFA Chapter assists Gilliam SWCD with the construction of 10 virtual fence stations. Read more on the Lonerock Fire Response Plan and the community wide involvement on page 9.

Current U.S. Drought Monitor Oregon

The U.S. Drought Monitor (USDM) is updated each Thursday to show the location and intensity of drought across the country. This map shows drought conditions across Oregon using a five-category system, from Abnormally Dry (Do) conditions to Exceptional Drought (D_4). The USDM is a joint effort of the National Drought Mitigation Center, USDA, and NOAA.



The U.S. Drought Monitor depicts the location and intensity of drought across the country. The map uses 5 classifications: Abnormally Dry (D0), showing areas that may be going into or are coming out of drought, and four levels of drought (D1–D4). The map is jointly produced by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and National Drought Mitigation Center. Authors from these agencies rotate creating the map each week, using both physical indicators and input from local observers.

This map is used by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to trigger some disaster declarations and loan eligibility. Individual states and water supply planning may use additional information to inform their declarations and actions. Learn more.

How has drought impacted this state in the past? Explore **historical Drought Monitor maps**.

Source(s): NDMC, NOAA, USDA

Drought Index | Water Supply | Agriculture

Legend

Drought & Dryness Categories	% of OR
D0 – Abnormally Dry	23.5%
D1 – Moderate Drought	47.7%
D2 – Severe Drought	0.0%
D3 – Extreme Drought	0.0%
D4 – Exceptional Drought	0.0%
Total Area in Drought (D1–D4)	47.7%

Updates +

View county conditions

VIEW COUNTY MAPS

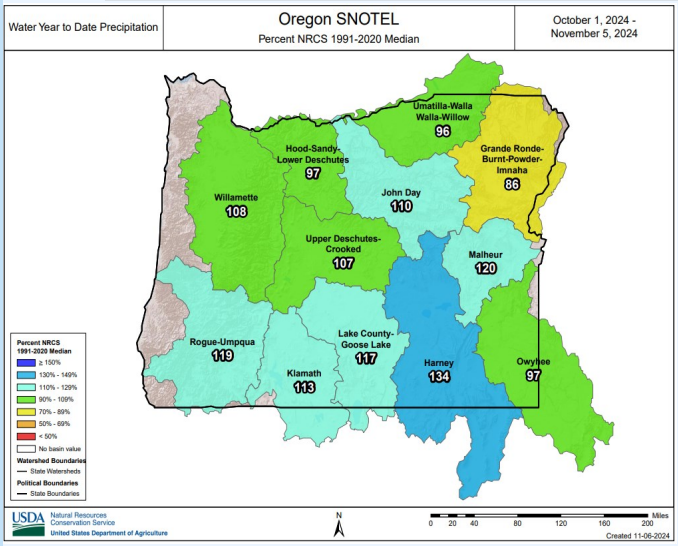
LEARN MORE

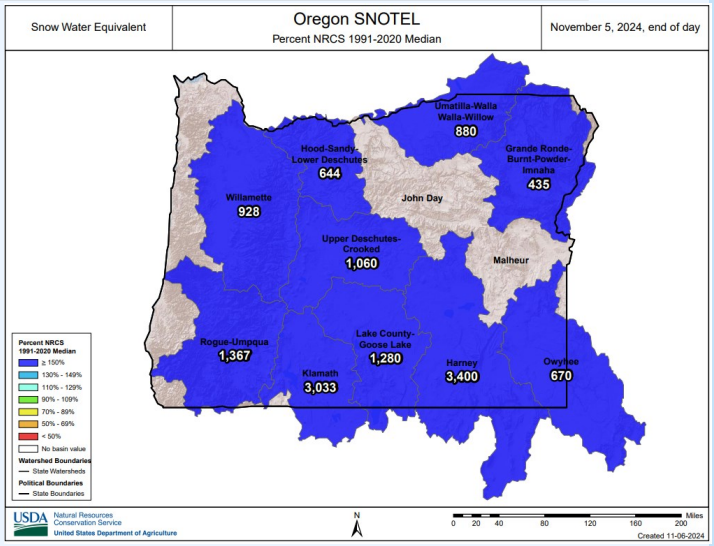
DATA VALID: 11/28/24

For more information on the current drought conditions, Visit https://www.drought.gov

Oregon Basin Outlook Report;
The Current Water Supply Conditions In The John Day Basin

(As of November, 2024)





Summary of Water Supply Conditions in the John Day Basin

Snowpack: As of November 2024, snow pack is greater than 150% of median.

Precipitation: As of November 2024, precipitation is 110% of median.

For more water supply information, visit:
https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/resources/data-and-reports/snow-and-water-interactive-map

USGS **14048000** JOHN DAY RIVER AT MCDONALD FERRY, OR

Drainage area:	7580 mi^2
Discharge:	430 cfs
Stage:	2.50 ft
Adj. stage:	394.77 ft
Date:	2024-11-06 08:45:00
Percentile:	54.65 %
Length of Record:	117 years
Class symbol:	●
% normal (median):	102.87 %
% normal (mean):	96.20 %

USGS **14046000** NORTH FORK JOHN DAY RIVER AT MONUMENT, OR

Drainage area:	2520 mi^2
Discharge:	160 cfs
Stage:	2.74 ft
Adj. stage:	1962.38 ft
Date:	2024-11-06 10:30:00
Flood stage:	14 ft
Percentile:	30.00 %
Length of Record:	96 years
Class symbol:	●
% normal (median):	83.55 %
% normal (mean):	74.49 %

Streamflow Summary: McDonalds Ferry, OR
As of November 2024

Streamflow at McDonalds Ferry is at 102.87% of median.

Streamflow Summary: Service Creek, OR
As of November 2024

Streamflow at Service Creek is at 83.55% of median.

For more information on current stream flows visit:
https://waterwatch.usgs.gov/?m=real&r=or

Invasive Plant

Scotch Thistle

Onopordum acanthium

PLANT FACTS

- CAN GROW UP TO 12 FEET TALL.
- REPRODUCES STRICTLY BY SEED.
- SINGLE PLANT CAN PRODUCE 40,000 SEEDS.
- SEEDS CAN REMAIN VIABLE IN THE SOIL FOR 20 YEARS.

Plant Identification

Mature plants have dark pink to violet flowers that are 1-2 inches in diameter. The leaves are grayish-green in appearance, have sharp pointy edges and can grow to 2 feet long. Mature plants are typically 2-6 feet tall, but can reach heights of 12 feet.

For more information visit plants.usda.gov/home

TAKE ACTION

- **Mechanical Control**– Pulling or digging the plant below the crown before going to seed.
- **Biological Control**– There has not been a proven biological control for scotch thistle. Maintaining good established perennial grasses
- **Chemical Control**– 2-4-D, Weedmaster, or Milestone. This plant needs to be sprayed in the early stages of life.

Thirtymile Steelhead-Bass Interaction

Thank you -

Figure 2 - Matt Raines, Cort Colby and Kailey Rogers

I have officially wrapped up data collection for the bass-steelhead interaction project and so begins data analysis! As I transition into data analysis, I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who played a pivotal role in the success of the 2024 field season. A HUGE shout-out to Kailey Rogers, an undergraduate from Oregon State University. Kailey spent five months living in Condon and working in Thirtymile with me. She balanced a full credit course load online during three of those months and achieved making the dean's list for that term! I also want to acknowledge the hard work of Cort Colby and Matt Raines, who have dedicated many hours to data collection for this project. Together the three of them have been instrumental in the success of this project.

A big thank you to my partners at SWCD—Roger Lathrop, Norie Wright, Herb Winters, and this year's intern, Kallyn. Your support and passion for Thirtymile is invaluable, and I cherish it deeply. I am grateful to my mentor, Lindsy Ciepiela, and my major professor, Jonny Armstrong, for their perfectly timed guidance and words of encouragement. To the Colby family, thank you for always making me feel like one of your own and often extending this kindness to my entire field crew. And to the entire Condon community, it has been an absolute honor to engage with you all. Through field trips with Mr. Colby, I have had the opportunity to work with many of your children. Believe me when I say this community has some of the best bass anglers I've ever seen! A special shout-out to Liv Lathrop who has accompanied me in the field on several occasions, her enthusiasm and curiosity is contagious! Thank you, everyone, for making this experience so memorable. I am excited about the next phases of our project and continuing to share our findings with you. So, lets get on with it!

Lizz– ODFW

Figure 1 - Live Lathrop collected a diet sample from a smallmouth bass she captured!

Thirtymile Steelhead-Bass Interaction Continued…

2024 Tagging and Diet Overview

Site	Marks	Recaptures	Diets Sampled
John Day River	196	29	42
Thirtymile Creek	148	32	174

We captured in total 405 smallmouth bass throughout the 2024 field season. 225 of those smallmouth bass were captured in the Mainstem John Day River largely by Condon students, community members, and project partners! 180 smallmouth bass were captured in Thirtymile Creek where we collected 174 diet samples. Of those diet samples, ~32% of them contained steelhead that were identified in the field. Similarly to last year, there are a number of unknown fish in diet samples. We will be using DNA analysis to further identify these unknown fish. In 2023, by using DNA analysis we were able successfully identify an additional 37 steelhead and 58 dace spp. in smallmouth bass diets.

Thirtymile Phenology a Course Overview

Compared to 2023, this year's timing of smallmouth bass entry is less clear. We first captured a smallmouth bass on March 6th during a sampling event not specific to this project. After this capture event, smallmouth bass remained present in Thirtymile in low numbers, 1 – 3 individuals captured per sampling event throughout March and April. They increased their presence the week of May 15th. Steelhead fry started emerging the week of April 26th and the first fry present in a smallmouth diet sample was May 9th. Smallmouth bass densities started decreasing in mid-July and by August few individuals remained. On October 11th during bi-annual juvenile steelhead sampling 1 SMB was captured.

6th Grade Field Trip –

In September, Joe Colby and the 6th graders got to join me for a day of smallmouth bass hook and line sampling with the goal of catching bass that has a radio tag. While we were unsuccessful in capturing a radio tagged bass we successfully captured and tagged 84 bass, which is no small effort! Each student watched and often participated in PIT Tagging, measuring and weighing these bass while I recorded data. For some of these students it was their first time fishing, and I am grateful to have been a part of their experience! It is no small feat taking 11 6th grade students for a day of bass capture, a huge thank you to Roger and Norie for keeping students safe, getting rods set up and getting bass off hooks and to the work up station!

Comstock Basin Riparian Fencing, Planting, and Livestock Distribution

The Comstock Basin Riparian Fencing, Planting, and Livestock Distribution Project, led by the Gilliam Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), has recently received full funding. With this support, the project aims to address significant ecological concerns in Thirtymile Creek and its surrounding habitats in Gilliam County, Oregon. This project is in partnership with the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) and other regional stakeholders and will encompass restoration work on 1.9 miles of Thirtymile Creek and nearly 1,900 acres of adjoining pastureland.

Project Background and Objectives

Thirtymile Creek, a key steelhead tributary to the John Day River, has experienced degradation due to past land management practices, including overgrazing and fire suppression. These practices have led to increased sediment in the stream, elevated water temperatures, eroded banks, and reduced riparian vegetation. The primary objectives of the project are to improve the creek's water quality, stabilize streambanks, maintain both environmental and economic benefits.

Key Project Actions

The project will implement several targeted actions to address these concerns:

- Riparian Fencing and Planting: Approximately 20,300 feet of riparian fencing will be installed along Thirtymile Creek, creating protective buffers around 95 acres of riparian habitat. Additionally, 3,500 native trees and shrubs, including coyote willow, black cottonwood, and red osier dogwood will be planted to improve bank stability and habitat quality.
- Cross-Fencing and Off-Site Watering: To support improved grazing management, 11,500 feet of cross-fencing will be added to facilitate rotational grazing, allowing plant regrowth and reducing erosion risks. Additionally, three off-site water sources will be developed, proving reliable water access for livestock while minimizing their impact on the riparian zone.
- Wildlife-Friendly Fencing Replacement: Over 5,500 feet of existing woven-wire fencing will be removed and replaced with wildlife-friendly designs to enhance the movement of local wildlife across the landscape.

Anticipated Benefits

The project's restoration efforts are expected to improve the health of Thirtymile Creek and enhance its resilience to climate variability . By establishing riparian buffers and increasing native vegetation, the project aims to reduce water temperatures and improve floodplain connectivity, creating a more favorable environment for species protected under the Endangered Species Act, such as steelhead.
For the agricultural community, the project provides a model of sustainable land management by integrating conservation and productive grazing practices. Effective grazing rotation and improved water management can help protect water quality and soil health, ultimately benefiting both the ecosystem and the agricultural landscape.

Project Timeline

Project implementation is set to begin in 2024, with riparian planting projected for completion in 2025. The SWCD and partners will continue to monitor the project's progress and outcomes, assessing its impacts on stream health, habitat quality, and land use practices.
The Comstock Basin project highlights a collaborative approach to watershed management, balancing conservation and agriculture to address ecological concerns and community needs. Further updates will be provided as project millstones are reached, offering insights into the benefits and applications of these conservation practices.

Butte & Rock Creek LiDAR Based Restoration Prioritization Framework

The Butte and Rock Creek watersheds, located in Gilliam, Morrow, and Wheeler counties, will soon benefit from a comprehensive restoration prioritization project, recently funded by a grant from the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB). The "Butte and Rock Creek LiDAR-Based Restoration Prioritization Framework" aims to address critical watershed challenges and enhance strategic planning for habitat restoration in the Lower John Day River basin. The project, led by the Gilliam Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), has secured $41,424 from OWEB, supplemented by additional resources, bringing the total funding to $66,424.

The watersheds in Butte and Rock Creek are critical spawning areas for the summer-run Mid-Columbia River steelhead, a threatened species that relies on these habitats for successful reproduction and juvenile development. However, these areas are frequently impacted by low and intermittent summer flows, which contribute to elevated water temperatures and limit riparian vegetation growth, adversely affecting steelhead populations. By applying advanced LiDAR technology, this project aims to identify and prioritize restoration opportunities that address these conditions, making restoration planning more targeted and efficient.

The primary objectives of the project include:

LiDAR-Based Floodplain Assessment: The project will use LiDAR and imagery to map and evaluate approximately 200 miles of the watershed network. This analysis will provide detailed data on the current condition of the watershed and identify areas with the potential for increased floodplain connectivity. This focused assessment will guide the design of interventions that enhance floodplain and channel connectivity to benefit fish habitats and riparian areas.

Development of an Integrated Data Tool: The project will consolidate restoration data from multiple watersheds, including Thirtymile, Hay, and Ferry Canyon Creeks, into an accessible, web-based tool. This resource will help stakeholders and partners evaluate priorities and plan restoration actions across the Lower John Day basin.

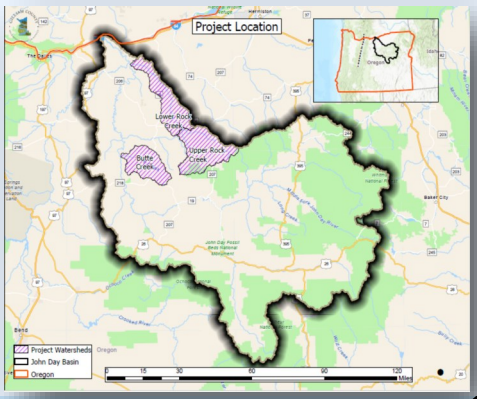
Utilization of Riverscapes Consortium Resources: By integrating tools and datasets from the Riverscapes Consortium, the project aims to improve data accessibility and application for watershed restoration. Training sessions with a Riverscapes Consortium specialist will help local staff maximize the use of spatial data and GIS tools for planning, monitoring, and project management.

Anticipated Outcomes and Long-Term Impact

Upon completion, the Butte and Rock Creek project will produce a five-year restoration prioritization plan and an associated data set, equipping restoration practitioners with a framework for efficient allocation of resources. The project aims to improve riparian and floodplain habitats' resilience to climate variability, address water quality concerns, and support ongoing efforts to improve conditions for steelhead populations. The project's web-based tool will also allow local stakeholders to access restoration data and planning resources, supporting transparency and engagement within the community.

Next Steps

Project activities are expected to begin in late 2024. The Gilliam SWCD, along with partners such as the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and local watershed councils, will oversee each phase, ensuring alignment with existing conservation strategies for the Lower John Day. This project represents a coordinated effort to address significant environmental stressors in the region, applying modern spatial analysis and data-driven planning to support habitat resilience and resource sustainability.



Lonerock Fire Response Plan Virtual Fence Continued….

In July, Gilliam County landowners near the town of Lonerock experienced a large and devastating wildfire. The Lonerock Fire burned an estimated 137,222 acres. This fire consumed approximately 50,000 acres of grazed rangeland that supports approximately 2100 cow-calf pairs in Gillam County alone. In Gilliam County this fire occurred on 28 different entities, some of which lost nearly 100% of their grazed rangeland. An initial inventory conducted by the Gilliam SWCD identified approximately 300 miles of fence within the burn boundary in Gilliam County with an estimated replacement value of roughly $9.5 million dollars.

The Gilliam SWCD has worked to provide immediate assistance to these producers by implementing virtual fence systems to assist these community members until infrastructure can be rebuilt. Additionally, these virtual fence systems will be used to respond to future fires and assist this agricultural community as well.

Funding was secured through the Ford Family Foundation, Gilliam County, landowners, and GSWCD to purchase ten virtual fence systems. To date, two systems are in place, providing available grazing to 2 producers affected by fire, with more implementation planned in 2025.

The construction of these virtual fence systems was completed with the assistance of the Condon FFA Chapter.

The GSWCD plans to create a fire response plan so that community members have everything in place in the event of future fires and utilize the virtual fence to provide a safe place for cattle. This will allow the community and emergency services to focus on active fire and prioritize the next step as the GSWCD coordinates a secure location for livestock and establishes the virtual fence system location.

Oregon Farm Service Agency (FSA)

USDA - Farm Service Agency

FSA Updates & Upcoming Deadlines

Acreage Reporting: Fall planted crop deadline is December 15, 2024
ECP (Emergency Conservation Program): Deadline is December 17, 2024
ELAP (Emergency Livestock Assistance Program): Deadline is January 30. 2025

* The deadline to turn in County Committee Election Ballots has passed, and FSA will be counting ballots on December 12, 2024 at 10:00 AM to determine who the next COC member is for LAA 2.
* If you own forest ground that was burnt by the 2024 Wildfires, please contact the FSA office to talk to us about our EFRP (Emergency Forest Restoration Program).
* There is still no farm bill or a year extension, yet.
* No word on any CRP signups yet, but keep in mind that Gilliam County is at the 25% cropland maximum.
* We will soon be sending ECP applications up for approval. Depending on how much your cost share request in, it can take longer for some people to get approved due to applications going to the national office.
* County Committee can approve applications from $0-$125,000
* State Office can approve applications from $125,001-$250,000
* National Office can approve applications from $250,001 and up

For more information on these programs, **ALL PRODUCERS** should contact the Gilliam/Wheeler County USDA Service Center at 541-384-4251 Ext 2 or visit fsa.usda.gov/disaster

FARM SERVICE AGENCY

For more information or questions regarding FSA and current programs, please reach out to
Kayla Mims– kayla.mims@usda.gov (541)-384-4251 x100
Kaycee Rogers– kaycee.rogers@usda.gov (541)-384-4251 x103
Adrianna Salutregui- Adrianna.Salutregui@usda.gov (541) 384-4251 x 105

USDA-NRCS Upcoming Important Dates

FY25 CSP Classic Application Deadline is February 28th, 2025

Gilliam County Local Work Group Meeting will be at the USDA Service Center in Condon on Tuesday February 4th from 10am-12pm- Light Refreshments will be served.

Wheeler County Local Work Group Meeting will be held Virtually on Tuesday February 4th from 1pm-3pm- Meeting info will be sent out in January.

Contact: DelRae Ferguson-District Conservationist if you have any questions or need an application (541)384-2281 ext. 107

Contact Jessica Jones Soil Conservationist, DelRae Ferguson District Conservationist for more information at (541)384-2281.

Gilliam Soil and Water Conservation District
Gilliam-East John Day Watershed Council
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GILLIAM-EAST JOHN DAY WATERSHED COUNCIL

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GEJDWC STAFF

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2024 Council Representatives

Don Farrar, Chair, Hay Creek/Scott Canyon
Susie Anderson, Supervisor, Thirtymile Creek
Tom Campbell, Lonerock Creek
Ron Wilson, Rock Creek
J. W. Johnson, Ferry Canyon
Morris Weatherford, At Large
Herschel Lantis, At Large

Meetings held on the third Monday of each month.

The purpose of the Gilliam-East John Day Watershed Council is to address watershed management issues within the drainage and to provide a framework for coordination and cooperation in implementing watershed enhancement programs.

Providing grants and services to citizen groups working to restore healthy watersheds in Oregon

GILLIAM SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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2024 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

At Large ~ Jordan Maley, Chair
Zone 3 ~ John Anderson, Vice-Chair
Zone 2 ~ Rich Harper, Sec/Treas.
Zone 1 ~ Chet Wilkins, Director
At Large ~ Doug Potter, Director

Public Notice ORS 192—Meetings held the second Tuesday of the month.

To promote the wise use and conservation of natural resources within Gilliam County

Oregon Department of Agriculture