USDA NRCS
United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

National Water Quality Initiative Fact Sheet

Irrigation improvements are just one of many conservation practices supported by the Water Quality Initiative in Oregon. Silverton, Oregon

Oregon: Overview

Through the National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI), the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is offering financial and technical assistance to farmers, ranchers and forest landowners interested in improving water quality and aquatic habitats in priority watersheds with impaired streams. NRCS will help producers implement conservation and management practices through a systems approach to control and trap nutrient and manure runoff. Qualified producers will receive assistance for installing conservation practices such as cover crops, filter strips and terraces. For over 75 years, NRCS has provided agricultural producers with assistance to implement voluntary conservation practices that protect natural resources while maintaining production and profits.

Oregon Priority Watersheds

Little Willow Creek-Willow Creek and Poison Creek

The project objective is to use a watershed-wide approach to reduce or eliminate polluted irrigation return flow, improve water use efficiency, and reduce evaporative, and seepage losses of irrigation water. This will lead to cleaner water flowing into the Malheur River from the Willow Creek drainage. Specifically, the project will provide assistance in transitioning at least 12,000 acres of flood/furrow-irrigated pasture and row crop fields to more efficient irrigation systems, decrease demand from Beulah Reservoir, decrease bacterial contamination and decrease sediment and phosphorous loads entering Willow Creek and subsequently the Malheur River.

Brandy Creek Pudding River

The project objective is to work with producers to promote and implement practices to improve water quality through the installation of conservation buffer strips, water conservation, irrigation efficiencies and management improvements, and reductions in surface water concentrations of sediment, bacteria, pesticides and other pollutants.

The National Water Quality Initiative will work in selected watersheds to help farmers, ranchers and forest landowners improve water quality and aquatic habitats in impaired streams.

Best Management Practices will be used to slow and reduce storm water and irrigation runoff from fields and crops using field borders, cover crops and grass waterways, as well as implementing and/or improving management practices for irrigation water, nutrient and pest management.

Upper Fifteenmile Creek

This project will work with producers to use Scientific Irrigation Scheduling to conserve irrigation water from surface and groundwater sources, increase energy efficiency, and improve water quality within the project area. Resources will be provided to assist producers in conservation planning, assessment of irrigation systems, and monitoring activities to conserve resources and help meet state regulatory water quality requirements in the Fifteenmile Creek Watershed.

Conservation Funding and Practices

NRCS conservation professionals will provide technical assistance and planning tools to determine which conservation actions will provide the best results to improve water quality on your land. Nutrient management systems, erosion control, conservation tillage, pest management, and buffers systems are just some of the practices

being offered as part of the National Water Quality Initiative. To help install these conservation practices, financial assistance to share in the cost of these conservation practices is available though the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

Partnerships

NRCS identified priority watersheds through the help of local partnerships and state water quality agencies. Partners sometimes offer financial assistance in addition to NRCS programs. NRCS will continue to coordinate with local and state agencies, conservation districts, nongovernmental organizations and others to implement this initiative. This strategic approach will leverage funds and provide streamlined assistance to help individual agricultural producers take needed actions to reduce the flow of sediment, nutrients and other runoff into impaired waterways.

Producer Benefits

Water quality conservation practices benefit agricultural producers by lowering input costs and enhancing the productivity of working lands. Conservation investments are good for all Americans because well managed farms limit pollution from runoff, produce food and fiber, sustain rural economies, and provide food security to the Nation. All across the country—farmers, ranchers and forest landowners are voluntarily taking action and putting conservation on the ground to improve water quality on millions of acres!

Public Benefits

NRCS is proud to be involved in a nationwide effort with landowners and communities to improve and protect our water resources. The landowners and farmers participating in the initiative will receive conservation payments to work on the land in a sustainable way which provides cleaner water. In addition to the financial assistance, the land will remain productive into the future. Communities benefit by having clean waterways, safer drinking water and healthy habitat for fish and wildlife.

How to Apply

Almost every county in the Nation has a ***USDA Service Center.*** To get started, make an appointment at your local office. You will need to establish eligibility and farm records for your land. NRCS will help you complete an application while explaining which conservation practices are available in your watershed. Remember to check with your local NRCS office to see if you are located in a selected watershed. All applications for funding consideration, during fiscal year 2012, must be received by June 15, 2012.

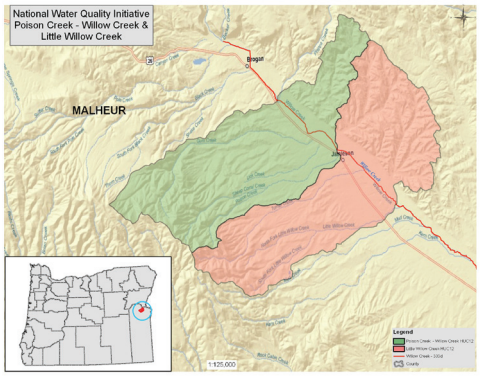
For more Information

For more information, contact your local field office or find us online at:

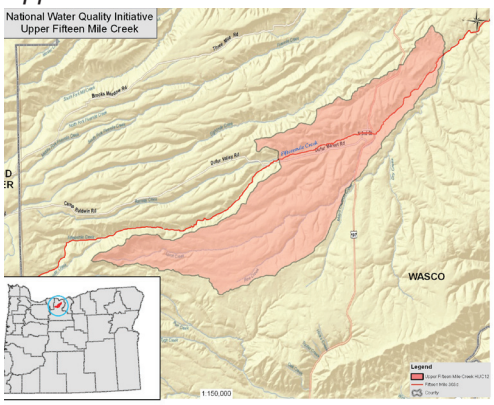
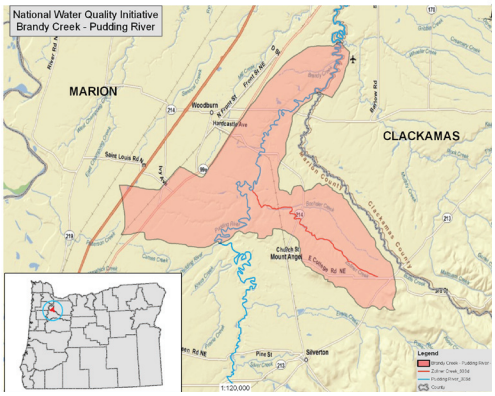
www.or.nrcs.usda.gov

Oregon WQI Priority Areas

Poison Creek - Willow Creek



Upper Fifteen Mile Creek



Brandy Creek - Pudding River