

## Strategic Implementation Areas 2019 – 2021 Implementation Process

### Partner Overview

Oregon Department of Agriculture in collaboration with the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (coordinated streamside management)

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This document provides an overview of the Oregon Department of Agriculture's (ODA) Strategic Implementation Areas (SIA) and the implementation process for the local SIA Project Lead, which currently are local Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs).

### Introduction

The SIA initiative concentrates technical and financial resources into specific geographic areas to address agricultural water quality concerns and includes three key components:

1. Compliance with Oregon's agricultural water quality regulations.
2. Monitoring to track water quality and landscape conditions.
3. Voluntary, incentive-based conservation.

The SIA partnership includes the SWCDs, Watershed Councils (WC), Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB), Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (ODEQ), Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF), Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) and other local partners working toward similar water quality objectives. The SIA process also engages other stakeholders and interested parties.

### How is an SIA Selected?

Individual SIAs are selected based on ODA's statewide prioritization of watersheds (12-digit Hydrologic Unit Codes - HUC) containing agricultural lands. The prioritization criteria include:

- Water quality parameters: temperature, bacteria, nutrients, and sediment (data from ODEQ).
- ODFW identified priorities for native fish recovery.
- Input from stakeholders.

### SIA Process Overview

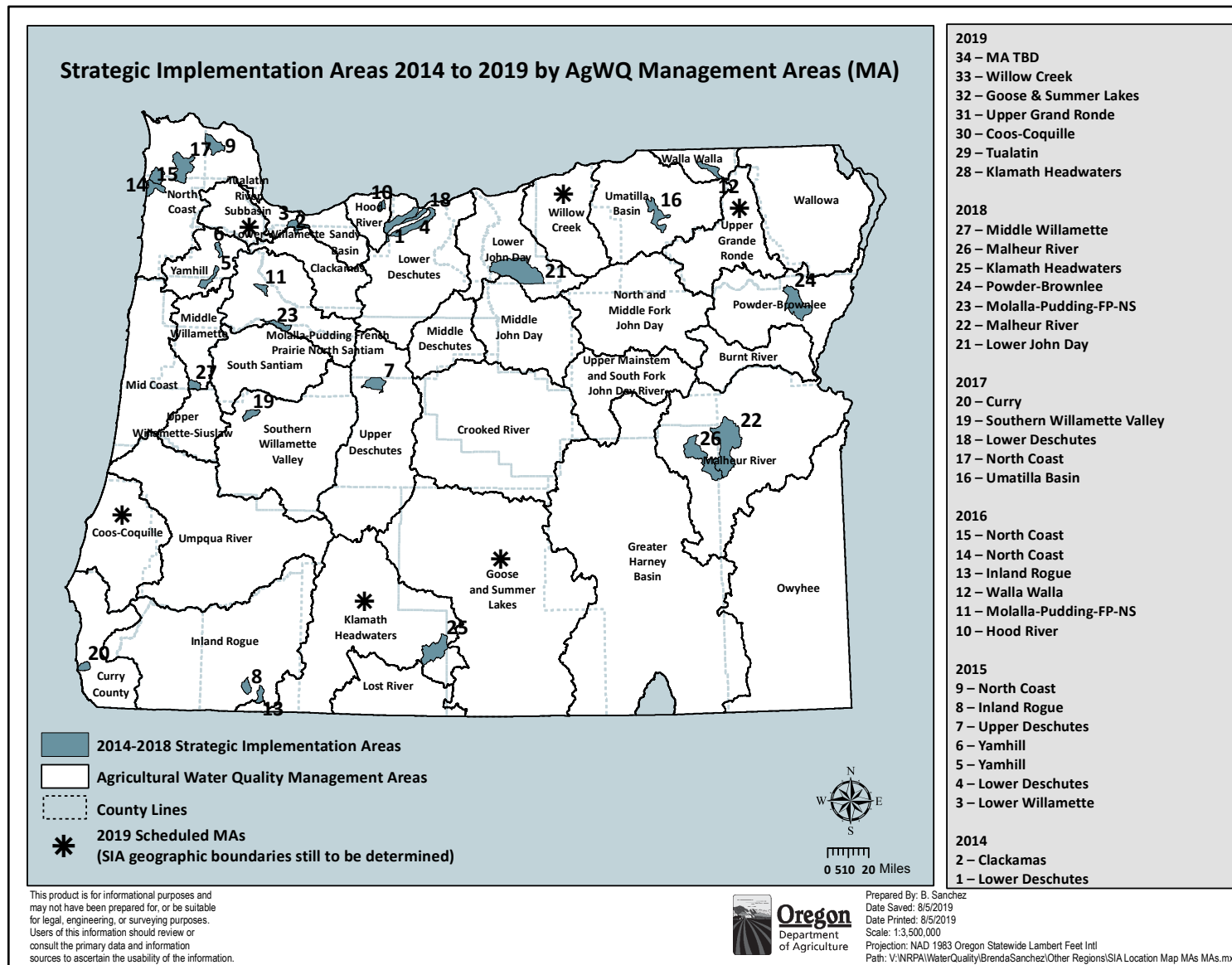
*(See Appendix A for a suggested timeline to complete SIA activities)*

1. ODA convenes a local **Pre-Project Planning** meeting with the project lead and local partners.
2. ODA conducts a **Remote and Field Evaluation** of agricultural lands.
3. Project Lead applies for **OWEB funding** to support SIA activities.
4. ODA, with the Project Lead, conducts a **Partner Meeting** to engage and inform local partners.
5. Project Lead convenes a **Monitoring Workgroup**.
6. ODA conducts an **Open House** to engage and inform landowners.
7. **Phase I** and **Phase II**.

### 1. Local SIA Pre-Project Planning Meeting

ODA works with the Project Lead to convene a Pre-Project Planning meeting. The objective of the meeting is to determine the SIA HUC boundary and discuss local water quality concerns on agricultural lands as well as consider expectations and partner engagement. ODA will work with the Project Lead to schedule and coordinate.

Figure 1: Strategic Implementation Areas by Management Areas 2014 through 2019



## 2. Remote and Field Evaluations

The Remote Evaluation uses remote imagery such as ArcGIS and Google Earth to identify manure piles, bare ground, or potential impacts to riparian areas from farming operations. ODA considers the presence of an agricultural activity (such as livestock or cropping) and its proximity to waterbodies. Field slope, stream type (seasonal or year-round), and other factors are considered when identifying potential water quality concerns. ODA then classifies each property into one of three categories (Table1).

The Field Evaluation evaluates the accuracy of the Remote Evaluation by examining properties from public view points. ODA does not go on to or enter private property without permission and does not determine compliance without a site inspection.

<b>Table 1: Compliance Evaluation Designation Categories</b>
<b>Limited Opportunity for Improvement:</b> ODA identified that there are likely no regulatory concerns.
<b>Opportunity for Improvement:</b> Agricultural activities may impair water quality or remote and field evaluations were inconclusive.
<b>Potential Violation:</b> The field evaluation from publicly accessible locations indicates a potential violation of the Agricultural Water Quality Management Area Rules.

## 3. SIA Available Funding

For the 2019-2021 biennium, OWEB has approved \$1.6 million (\$100,000 per SIA) of grant funds. These funds can be used for landowner engagement and technical assistance activities such as on-site assessments, conservation and project planning, and assistance in applying for project funding within the boundaries of the SIA. OWEB also authorized an additional \$400,000 (\$25,000 for each SIA) to support monitoring activities.

## 4. Partner Meeting

Once the Remote and Field Evaluations are completed, ODA meets with the Project Lead, WCs, OWEB, ODEQ, ODF, ODFW and other key partners to engage in the SIA process. The partner meeting provides an excellent opportunity to communicate water quality concerns, discuss potential solutions, share current information about conservation activities, establish mutual objectives, and discuss next steps. ODA's local SIA Lead and the Project Lead coordinates and schedules the partner meeting together.

## 5. Monitoring

SIA monitoring is a partnership between state natural resource agencies and local partners. ODA, OWEB, ODEQ, and ODFW collaborate through a statewide Monitoring and Assessment Group (MAG) to provide guidance, templates, and training related to SIA monitoring.

The focus of SIA monitoring is to assess watershed-scale status and trends in response to land management actions. SIA monitoring may include stream temperature, sediment, bacteria, nutrients, or other water quality and landscape conditions as appropriate to evaluate the results of conservation actions.

The SIA Project Lead convenes a local monitoring team, including representatives identified by ODA, OWEB, ODEQ, ODFW, as well as other local partners. Refer to the Coordinated Streamside Management - Strategic Implementation Areas (SIAs) Monitoring and Assessment Proposal Guidance V 2.0 (November 2018) for detailed guidance on SIA monitoring.

## **6. Open House and Landowner Engagement**

Key to achieving the goals of the SIA Initiative is to engage the agricultural community. After the partner meeting, ODA hosts an Open House in the SIA. The Open House engages landowners in an informative event that describes the SIA process, answers landowner questions, and shares the Compliance Evaluation results with landowners whose property has been evaluated.

The Open House allows ODA to communicate local Area Rules and connect landowners to local partners for technical assistance related to water quality management. The Project Lead and local partners attending the Open House are encouraged to present available opportunities for landowners to participate in incentive-based voluntary conservation. Additionally, a landowners property may be re-categorized at the Open House.

## **7. Phase I and Phase II**

Following the Open House, each property categorized as a “Limited Opportunity for Improvement,” “Opportunity for Improvement,” or “Potential Violation” are addressed below.

**Potential Violations:** Approximately thirty days after the Open House, ODA contacts the landowner and or operator of parcels identified as Potential Violations to identify the extent of the potential problem. If a potential violation exist, ODA works with the landowner or operator to achieve compliance with Area Rules through ODA’s compliance process. Partners may work with the landowner to provide technical support and/ or financial assistance (where available).

**Opportunities for Improvement:** One year after the Open House ODA contacts any landowners identified as Opportunities for Improvement who have not been in contact with the Project Lead. ODA works with the landowner to identify any potential water quality concerns.

**Limited Opportunity for Improvement:** The SWCD and other area partners work with landowners to provide technical assistance in conducting voluntary water conservation activities.

During and continuing through Phase I and Phase II, the Project Lead implements the landowner engagement, technical assistance, and monitoring activities described in their OWEB funding proposal and the Area Plan. Project Leads are encouraged to provide one-on-one technical assistance and consultation to agricultural landowners regarding the prevention and control of water pollution from agricultural activities with an emphasis on added voluntary conservation.

## **Post SIA Evaluation**

Once the SIA process concludes, ODA will complete a post evaluation that identifies the success of the conservation and restoration work conducted on agricultural lands.

## **Producer Responsibilities**

In Oregon, agricultural operations are not permitted to pollute water. Generally, operators have done well through voluntary efforts. The SIA process helps to ensure both compliance and watershed improvement. Thank you for working with ODA, your local producers, and other partners to help us all “Tell Agriculture’s Story.”

**Box 1: How are SIAs complementing other stakeholder engagement, technical assistance, restoration and monitoring efforts?**

Local conservation organizations engage in a variety of efforts to help landowners enhance water quality and fish and wildlife habitat, and to monitor the results. As they begin to lead SIA work, local conservation organizations are encouraged to leverage efforts to fill priority gaps, and foster strong partnerships. SIA monitoring may complement or fill a niche identified through these other efforts. Examples include the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP); Farm Service Agency’s Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP, administered by OWEB on behalf of the state of Oregon); and OWEB’s Focused Investment Partnership (FIP), in addition to OWEB’s Open Solicitation grants programs.

The NRCS RCPP provides funding to help local conservation partners and agricultural producers work together towards voluntary and results-driven approaches to private lands conservation. Farmers enrolled in CREP are paid to rent their land along streams for conservation and restoration purposes, establishing riparian buffers. OWEB supports monitoring to understand the effectiveness of CREP buffers on stream quality across Oregon. In 2019, work continues to provide feedback to landowners and describe the outcomes of CREP, and many of the CREP technicians working on these monitoring efforts are also involved in SIA monitoring.

OWEB’s FIPs address ecological priorities of significance to the state of Oregon. Partnerships define geographic boundaries, build a strategic plan and take a results-driven approach to achieve clear and measurable conservation outcomes. The FIP grant program encourages local partners to develop a vision for restoration outcomes, and to collaborate, plan, prioritize, implement, and monitor projects working towards that vision.

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**ODA Link to Area Plans and Area Rules:**

<https://www.oregon.gov/ODA/programs/NaturalResources/AgWQ/Pages/AgWQPlans.aspx>



## Appendix A: Timeline 1: Suggested 2019 SIA Cycle of Implementation Activities

Timeline 1: 2019 SIA Cycle of Implementation Activities												
Timeline 1 displays the recommended timeframes to complete one cycle of SIA activities (four years). Activities should occur in the suggested timeline however, there is always flexibility and adaptation as needed per SIA. <b>Note:</b> Timeline 1 will be revised for the 2020 and 2021 cycles as it transitions into a more optimized schedule.												
2019												
Activity	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Local SIA Pre-Project Planning												
Remote Evaluation												
Field Evaluation												
Grant Application Timeframe*												
Partner Meeting												
Convene Local Monitoring Workgroup												
Open House												
Phase I - Start												
2020												
Activity	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Field Evaluation												
Partner Meeting												
Convene Monitoring Workgroup												
Open House **												
Phase I Continued												
Phase II Contact												
2021												
Activity	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Phase I Continued												
Phase II Continued & Wrap Up												
2022												
Activity	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Phase I Continued												
2023												
Activity	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Phase I - End												
Closing 2019 SIA Cycle												
* Start date for the 4 year timeframe is the day OWEB's Executive Director signs the award memo.												
** Try not to schedule January, February and March due to the potential for severe weather and travel hazards.												