

Pasture Management

Fact Sheet



Pastures provide an important resource to livestock owners.

Good management of pastures and grazing can:

- ◆ Enhance infiltration of precipitation.
- ◆ Help prevent soil erosion.
- ◆ Filter sediments during high rainfall and flooding.
- ◆ Reduce net nutrient loads to waterways through uptake in plant and animal tissues.
- ◆ Help enhance protective and productive soil cover.
- ◆ Provide habitat for a variety of wildlife.



This brochure was produced by the Coos Soil & Water Conservation District in conjunction with the Coos & Coquille Agricultural Water Quality Management Area Plan and in partnership with the Oregon Department of Agriculture and the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

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Bottom ground management in the Coos and Coquille watersheds

is closely linked to the floodcycles of the rivers. Generally, livestock graze on productive floodplain pastures from late May through October, but floodplain grazing becomes problematic during the remainder of the year due to seasonal flooding. Irrigated pastures and rangelands benefit the watersheds by protecting the soil and maintaining water quality. Pasture vegetation also provides the additional benefit of utilizing excess nutrients from manure and urine.



Design sacrifice areas to minimize water quality problems and improve pasture forage.

A sacrifice area is a relatively small, enclosed area designed for:

- Animals to feed under cover.
- Rotating livestock onto when pastures are wet.
- While pasture forage is regrowing.

Using a sacrifice area for soil-disturbing activities:

- Enables the rest of your land to maintain a higher level of health and production,
- Protects water quality.

Locate the sacrifice area on high ground away from waterways.

Plant a buffer around the sacrifice area to filter sediment and nutrient runoff.

Pastures can provide habitat for a variety of wildlife.

A wide variety of grazing systems can be used to enhance habitat conditions. Pastures often provide feeding and nesting sites for upland birds and waterfowl, and habitat for rodents and their predators.

Well-vegetated fence rows also provide an important service to the landscape. Most pastures have borders with herbaceous plants and woody shrubs along fence rows. Such borders and fence rows offer not only feed and cover, but travel corridors for wildlife.



Consider developing a conservation plan for your operation.

A conservation plan is a tool to help you manage your land profitably while protecting natural resources on your lands. It is a totally voluntary process and conservation planners from the Coos SWCD and NRCS can provide you with technical assistance to develop and implement your plan. The following is a list of the steps and processes involved in the planning process.

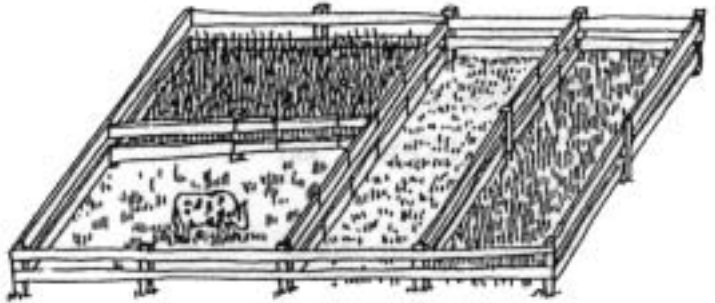
- Identify resource problems
- Identify your objectives
- Inventory resources
- Analyze resource inventory
- Develop alternative solutions

- Evaluate alternative solutions
- Make your decisions
- Implement plan
- Evaluate plan success and adjust as necessary

The following management practices have been recommended by the Coos and Coquille Local Advisory Committee and the Oregon Department of Agriculture as a means to avoid water quality problems.

Positive Management Practices

- ◆ Manage grazing intensity and livestock distribution at a level that will maintain desired species composition and plant vigor.
- ◆ Clip pastures to encourage pasture health and eliminate undesirable plant species.
- ◆ Consider grazing systems that integrate multiple livestock types (e.g. sheep and cows) to increase grazing uniformity.
- ◆ Plan pasture seeding so that plants can establish before heavy winter rains begin.
- ◆ Harrow pastures to evenly distribute manure.
- ◆ Design and use sacrifice areas away from streamside areas to lessen impacts on pastures during winter wet seasons.
- ◆ Off stream water storage is encouraged. Such storage could be used for the benefit of livestock and wildlife and to extend the flow in streams during the dry months. Off stream storage can also reduce runoff during high precipitation periods.



Conditions That May Lead To A Water Quality Problem

- ◆ Agricultural activities causing visible rill or active channel erosion (gully erosion) resulting in sediment delivery to waterways.
- ◆ Unacceptable levels of bacteria, sediment or nutrient delivery to waterways attributed to improper grazing and pasture management.
- ◆ Improper pasture management that causes over-grazing damage to riparian areas, swamps, marshes and bogs.

Unacceptable Conditions

- ◆ Excessive amounts of bacteria, nutrients or sediments entering waterways from improper management.

(There is no corresponding Oregon Administrative Rule for Coos and Coquille Agricultural Water Quality Management Area Plan pasture management because the associated possible water quality problems are adequately addressed in other management sections of the plan.)

Conservation practices addressed here, such as the Positive Management Practices, may be eligible for USDA's Natural Resources Programs, such as the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). These programs provide producers with financial, technical, and educational assistance for implementing conservation practices. Contact NRCS or FSA (below) for more information.

Development of an individual conservation plan for your operation may help you comply with the SB 1010 Coos & Coquille Agricultural Water Quality Management Area Plan. Contact the Coos SWCD Watershed Technical Specialist for assistance.

For More Help Contact...

Coos Soil and Water
Conservation District (SWCD)
382 N. Central Blvd.
Coquille, OR 97423
(541) 396-6879
www: <http://or.nacdnnet.org/coosswcd/>

Oregon Dept. of Agriculture
Natural Resources Division
635 Capitol Street NE
Salem, OR 97301
(503) 986-4700

Natural Resources Conservation
Service (NRCS)
382 N Central Blvd
Coquille, OR 97423
(541) 396-2841

Farm Services Agency (FSA)
380 N Central Blvd
Coquille OR 97423
(541) 396-4323

Oregon Dept. of Environmental Quality
340 N Front Street
Coos Bay OR 97420
(541) 269-2721 ext 27

OSU Extension Service
Coos County Office
290 N Central Blvd
Coquille OR 97423
(541) 396-3121 ext 240

Information in this fact sheet was gathered from the Coos and Coquille Agricultural Water Quality Management Plan, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the Washington County Soil and Water Conservation District.

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