



Small Watershed Rehabilitation Program – PL-566

The Oregon Water Resources Congress (OWRC) strongly supports coordinated federal agency watershed planning and the Small Watershed Rehabilitation Program under the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The Watershed Rehabilitation Program helps fund rehabilitation of aging dams that are reaching the end of their 50 year design lives. These dams pose a significant concern to public health and safety. In Oregon, two of our member districts, Middle Fork Irrigation District (MFID) and Sutherlin Water Control District (SWCD) operate three of the aging dams covered under the program. **The Small Watershed Rehabilitation Program must continue to receive appropriations funding in order to meet the high cost of rehabilitating the aging dams across the nation.**

OWRC was established in 1912 as a trade association to support the protection of water rights and promote the wise stewardship of water resources statewide. OWRC members are local governmental entities, which include irrigation districts, water control districts, drainage districts, water improvement districts, and other agricultural water suppliers that deliver water to roughly 1/3 of all irrigated land in Oregon. These water stewards operate complex water management systems, including water supply reservoirs, canals, pipelines, and hydropower production.

Small Watershed Rehabilitation Program and Watershed Planning Needs

OWRC strongly supports the Small Watershed Rehabilitation Program. Two of our members, MFID and SWCD have dams that were built under PL-566 and are eligible to acquire funds under this program. SWCD and MFID have received funds to begin the long and expensive process of updating their 50 year old dams to today's standards for safety, however; both districts will need continued funding from the Small Watershed Rehabilitation Program to fully update their infrastructure.

Middle Fork Irrigation District, Clear Branch Dam

MFID is responsible for the management and maintenance of Clear Branch Dam, a PL-566 dam within the Hood River watershed, which provides a clean, dependable water supply and distribution system for the irrigation of pears, apples, cherries and other crops. Rehabilitation of the dam is needed to protect the public from flooding, for access to a clean and dependable water supply, and to maintain agricultural productivity. Additionally Laurance Lake, which is formed by Clear Branch Dam, and its tributaries, are the primary spawning and rearing habitat for Hood River Basin Bull Trout, a threatened species under ESA. Rehabilitation of Clear Branch Dam will improve fish passage connectivity for Bull Trout and improve water temperature for spawning, rearing and migration.

During FY15, NRCS was successful in obligating \$275,000 of funding to MFID for the planning phase of the Clear Branch Dam Rehabilitation. In FY16, NRCS will continue to work with MFID on funding requests for Clear Branch Dam. An estimate of future funding requests for MFID include:

- **Planning: \$150,000**
- **Design: \$500,000**
- **Rehabilitation Construction: \$9,800,00**

Sutherlin Water Control District, Plat I and Cooper Creek Reservoirs

SWCD has two dams built under PL-566 and while they were built to seismic standards 50 years ago, they do not meet today's standards for earthquakes. SWCD's dams serve as multi-purpose storage for the community; providing flood control, irrigation water, municipal water and recreation. Additionally, it is important to note that even a small earthquake has the potential to severely damage the dams and cause intensive flooding and damage in the surrounding area. To date, SWCD has been authorized to receive funding for planning, design and construction of one of their dams and planning and design on the other. However, SWCD will still need considerable funding dollars to complete construction on the second dam.

During FY14, NRCS was successful in obligating \$1.3 million in funding to SWCD for the planning phase of both the Plat I and Cooper Creek Dam Rehabilitation. In FY15, NRCS obligated an additional \$600,000 for rehabilitation design of Plat I and \$3.4 million for rehabilitation construction of Plat I.

SWCD will continue to work with NRCS on funding requests for the remaining phases of the Cooper Creek Dam rehabilitation. An estimate of future funding requests for SWCD include:

- **Design & Rehabilitation Construction: \$6- \$10 million**

Once planning and design studies are complete, both MFID and SWCD will know what the actual costs will be to make the necessary improvements to their dams, which is currently estimated at over \$10 million for Cooper Creek Dam in SWCD and \$9.8 million for MFID. **In light of the high costs to fix just 3 of the PL-566 dams, a minimum of \$250 million is needed to address and repair high priority dams like the ones here in Oregon.**

Contact: April Snell, Executive Director

Email: aprils@owrc.org Phone: 503-363-0121 Address: 795 Winter St. NE, Salem, OR 97301