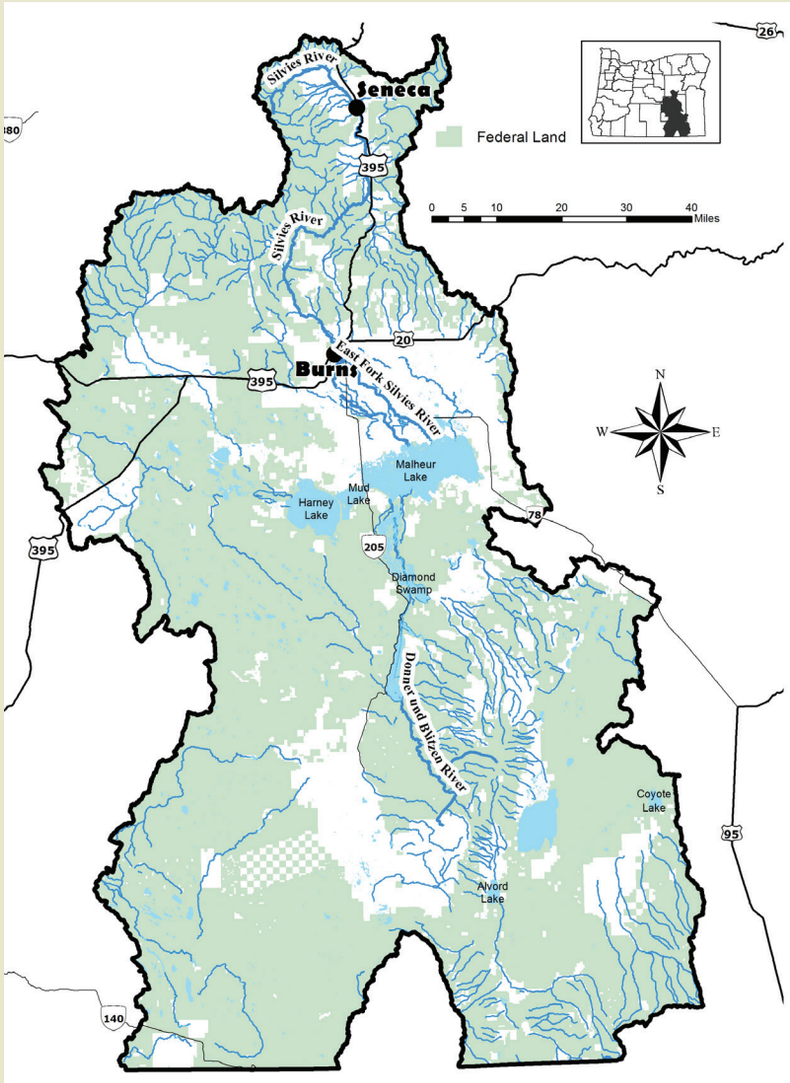
GREATER HARNEY BASIN

Oregon Department of Agriculture

Agricultural Water Quality Management Area Plan and Rules

The Oregon Legislature passed the Agricultural Water Quality Management Act in 1993. It requires the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) to prevent and control water pollution from agricultural activities.

As a result, ODA worked with local advisory committees to develop Water Quality Management Area Plans and Rules throughout the state. Area Plans are reviewed and updated by ODA and the local advisory committee every two years. The original Greater Harney Basin Area Plan and Rules were approved by ODA in 2003.



THE AREA PLAN

The Area Plan guides local landowners and their conservation partners on how to prevent pollution. It includes information on agricultural water quality concerns and recommendations for addressing them.

The Area Plan does not tell anyone how to farm, ranch, or otherwise use natural resources. Rather, it includes recommended practices from which a landowner can choose. The practices can help meet business and conservation goals, while also preventing water pollution.

Agricultural water quality concerns in the Greater Harney Basin are primarily:

- Degraded streamside vegetation due to poorly managed livestock access and farming
- Excess sediment and livestock manure in streams and rivers
- Tailwater irrigation that flows back into stream carrying sediments or nutrients

THE AREA RULES

The Agricultural Water Quality Program focuses on voluntary and cooperative efforts by landowners and others to protect water quality.

However, the Agricultural Water Quality Management Act also includes enforcement to ensure prevention and control of water pollution from agricultural sources.

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THE AREA RULES

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Area Rules allow landowners flexibility in how they protect water quality. Area Rules describe conditions that landowners must achieve on agricultural lands, rather than practices they must implement.

All agricultural landowners must allow vegetation along:

- Year-round streams to provide shade, stabilize banks, and filter out pollutants from overland flows.
- Seasonal streams to stabilize banks and filter out pollutants from overland flows.

In addition, landowners must not pollute ground or surface water by discharging wastes* into waters of the state or placing any wastes in a location where they are likely to enter waters of the state.**

* Wastes include excess soil, manure, fertilizer, or other substances that can pollute water.

** Waters of the state include ponds, groundwater, canals, ditches, and rivers.

The local advisory committee helped ODA develop Area Rules (Oregon Administrative Rules 603-095-3300) specifically for the Greater Harney Basin. These Rules address water quality issues identified in the Area Plan.

MORE INFORMATION

Harney Soil and Water Conservation District: (541) 573-5010

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Agricultural Water Quality Program at ODA: (503) 986-4700, http://bit.do/AgWQPlans

DO THE AREA PLAN AND AREA RULES APPLY TO ME?

The Area Plan and Area Rules apply to all agricultural lands. This includes lands in current agricultural use and those lying idle or on which management has been deferred. They also apply to agricultural activities within incorporated city boundaries, urban growth boundaries, and non-federal forest lands.

WHAT SHOULD I DO?

Landowners should evaluate their agricultural activities and try to determine if they might be:

- Polluting streams, canals, or groundwater.
- Preventing growth of appropriate vegetation along streams.

Then change any problem practices to ensure compliance with the Area Rules and to protect water quality.

WHO CAN HELP?

The Harney Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) is the primary sources of landowner assistance to address water quality concerns. SWCDs are nonregulatory local organizations that can help or direct landowners to additional sources of help.

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