Oregon Department of Agriculture - Water Quality Program - Focus Areas Options   February 10, 2021

Focus Areas (FAs): a consistent process for SWCDs to assess conditions, set Measurable Objectives (MOs), and report outcomes

MOs are set for outcomes to achieve (changes in land condition and/or water quality)

FA Purposes	1. Programmatic: To measure program progress in improving land conditions and/or water quality 2. Statewide: To provide a consistent process for all SWCDs to think, plan, and implement strategically, and to report outcomes 3. Case studies: To demonstrate success in improving land conditions or water quality, and what it takes to make it happen			
	1, 2, and some 3		3	None
Option	Option A	Option B	Option C	Option D
Description	*FA required for each SWCD; ODA reports progress at programmatic level (continue*	*FA required if SWCD does not have a Strategic Implementation Area (SIA)*	*FA optional*	*Phase out or end FAs*
FA Required	Yes	If no SIA	No	N/A
25% SOW Min.	Yes	Get SWCC input	Get SWCC input	N/A
ODA workload	Highest, by far	Medium	Lowest, by far	0
SWCD workload	Highest	Medium	Lowest	0
Would need to change the process used	ODA = Yes (additional staff would need to be trained to assist with programmatic reporting)	ODA = Moderate SWCDs = Moderate	ODA = Minor SWCDs = Minor	ODA = End SWCDs = End
Pros specific to each option	Continue reporting on program progress (average rate of progress and variability among locations); allows ODA to use adaptive management at program level	All SWCDs would implement a program initiative and can put an MO in the Area Plan; opportunity for improved alignment between SIAs and FAs	Fewer SWCDs may participate; case studies would be more likely to show improvements and what is possible with focused voluntary efforts	Simpler to not have two competing program initiatives
Cons specific to each option	Not sustainable with recent ODA staff cuts and other priorities (SIA work; partnerships)	More complicated scheduling and planning	Some SWCDs would not have an SIA or a FA, and may do primarily opportunistic projects across their district	Would end voluntary-only program tool (some SWCDs are showing great progress in Focus Areas); would need to consider adding a land condition assessment to document outcomes in SIAs to answer some monitoring questions

ODA Considerations

Opportunities with FAs
- All SWCDs with a FA will develop milestones and MOs toward WQ goals
- All FAs have a land condition assessment to report outcomes (whereas most SIAs do not have land condition assessment)
- FAs allow SWCD to track outcomes, which are not tracked in other ODA processes (Scopes of Work and SIAs)
- BOA resolution 313 (SIAs and FAs, written 2018, review date 2022): recommends full-scale statewide implementation of SIAs and FAs
- All options allow for continued programmatic REPORTING; Options B-D would end reporting of programmatic (aggregate) RESULTS
- Additional resources and partners make Focus Areas more successful

Challenges with FAs
- FAs are not universally popular with SWCDs, potentially resulting in slow progress if required
- Voluntary approach alone often does not result in much progress
- Progess may appear to be slow because it takes time to develop (1) landowner relationships and (2) big projects
- ODA does not have a definition for a "successful" FA, e.g. how much progress is made
- If Area Plan revisions change to every 4-5 years, align FA reporting of outcomes
- Reducing FA effort could send message to SWCDs that their FA work isn't important (Options B-D)

Alternatives to FAs that may meet one or more of the Purposes
- ODA encourages SWCDs and LACs to develop Management Area-wide MOs; however, automated methods are not generally available
- Showing progress: SWCDs can develop MOs and track progress for any area they want; it doesn't have to be a formal FA
- Answering "% of lands/stream miles supporting WQ": ODA could use Compliance Evaluation category of "Limited" (untested)
- ODA reports on data from DEQ that documents progress toward TMDL ag load allocations (where available)