

**YAMHILL COUNTY  
ROAD IMPROVEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
2023 ANNUAL REPORT**

This report summarizes the activities of the Yamhill County Road Improvement Advisory Committee (RIAC) for 2023. RIAC meets the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of each month from 6:00-8:00 pm. Meetings are held in person with accommodations available for virtual participation. RIAC did not meet in September.

**RIAC PURPOSE**

RIAC was created in 1976. Its purpose, updated in 2023, includes holding meetings as necessary to:

- review master plans for the construction, maintenance and improvement of County roads, considering traffic patterns and anticipated resources;
- review crash rates on each of the County roads;
- hear complaints about County roads and identify road deficiencies throughout the County;
- consider petitions affecting any County road; and
- study the existing location, condition, and use of the County roads.

The Committee is to recommend to the Board of County Commissioners (BOC):

- a suggested priority for correcting road deficiencies identified by RIAC by submitting a priority list for all such projects to the Public Works Director on or before December 31<sup>st</sup> each year, for improvement projects to be scheduled, if approved, in the next fiscal year;
- suggested criteria to be used in prioritizing road improvement projects;
- division of effort between paving new roads and maintaining the existing roads, repairing or replacing bridges, maintenance or improvements to ditches and culverts, and roadside vegetation management; and
- other such advice as the BOC may request.

**MEMBERSHIP**

RIAC members serve three-year terms and are intended to provide representation from all parts of Yamhill County to the extent possible. Kit Johnston was the BOC liaison in 2023. The Sheriff’s Office is encouraged to attend meetings and provide input on road, bridge, and traffic issues. Membership, with year of appointment, included:

- Adam Zabinski, Chair/2015      NW Yamhill County (Newberg-Yamhill area)
- Michal Wert, Vice-Chair/1997      NE Yamhill County (Newberg area)
- Jeff Brown/2019      SW Yamhill County (Willamina area)
- Dave Hanson/2019      SW Yamhill County (Sheridan area)
- Bruce Hubbard/2021      SE Yamhill County (Amity area)
- Rocky Losli/1998 (thru Feb)      NW Yamhill County (Yamhill area)
- Chip Mayes/2022      NE Yamhill County (Newberg area)

- Tony Roos/2008 NE Yamhill County (Newberg area)
- Ryan Webb/2023 SW Yamhill County (Grand Ronde area)

### **2023 ACCOMPLISHMENTS/DISCUSSIONS**

- Chair Adam Zabinski presented the RIAC 2022 Annual Report to the BOC.
- The Sheriff’s Office (SO) provided regular crash reports. Locations were mapped by PWD staff to allow RIAC to review critical areas. SO staff raise specific safety issues and suggest solutions, especially where crashes were influenced by things that PWD can fix or change, such as signage and vegetation management. SO reports are created as PWD service requests for quick action.
- RIAC recommended updates to its Bylaws to clarify its purpose and change the meeting time. Updates were approved by the BOC.
- The County Transportation System Plan (TSP) was updated in 2015 and is eligible for a state grant for an update in 2025. RIAC discussed how to approach the next TSP update to better position the County for funding projects. Materials from the last update were reviewed and several topics were discussed at length, including: freight routes, transfer of County roads within city limits, crash reports, and bike routes. PWD considered doing traffic counts in anticipation of submitting a grant application in 2024. The TSP update will be managed by PWD as it was in 2015.
- All County roads within City boundaries were mapped and discussed. PWD is proactively looking at how to facilitate transfers.
- It was agreed that the state sets speed limits so there is no need for a County policy. RIAC recommended where to place four solar-powered speed signs.
- A Kramien Road Cooperative Road Improvement Plan (CRIP) application raised the continuing issue of paving gravel County roads that are not high priority for the County. Limited availability of PWD staff for road preparation and funding makes it difficult to schedule CRIP projects.
- Continued discussions on criteria for paving gravel roads, including review of what other counties do for paving gravel roads.
- Discussed invasive plant species and suggested a policy for utilities to pay for fire mitigation and safety to help fund clearing around poles and vaults.
- Reviewed and discussed the Capital Improvement Projects for FY2024-25, including a continued focus on the bridge improvement program.
- Reviewed the 5-year plan for pavement maintenance.
- Discussed concerns on parents lining up along County roads to pick up students at Ewing Young Elementary School. The Director reported on discussions with the School Principal to address this issue.
- Discussed traffic counts and crash data to support installation of all-way stop signs at North Valley Road and Laughlin/Albertson Roads.

### **INFORMATIONAL ITEMS**

Director Lago and Commissioner Johnston provided information and regular updates to RIAC on several topics:

- Two new positions were filled for Vegetation Supervisor and a Vegetation Technician. The Supervisor will work closely with the Roadside Vegetation Management Technical Advisory Committee (TAC).
- Spring roadside spraying was done by a contractor working with TAC member Susan Aldridge-Markham on routes, maps and scheduling.
- Reports on retirements and vacant positions. Qualified applications were received for management positions, but it is difficult to recruit utility workers for open positions because of the pay scale.
- Status reports for on-going bridge projects, including Deer Creek Park, Pike Road, Gopher Valley Road, Patty Lane, Old Railroad, and Charles Metsker Park bridges.
- Hiring of consultants for data collection on bridge conditions for bridge projects and funding projections.
- Tony Roos discussed the new law that allows cities and two urbanized counties to conduct their own speed studies to set speeds. It does not affect Yamhill County.
- Update on staff assignments and efforts to inventory and document all culverts on County roads.
- Regular reports on project/program status, including paving and chip sealing, striping, grading, brushing, prep work, and the Albertson Road paving project.
- Updates on efforts to coordinate with Yamhill Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) for roadside spraying, especially in remote areas.
- Impacts and PWD responses to severe weather events.
- Surface Transportation Block Grant Program changes relating to Bypass funding and state/local fund exchanges.
- Staff led a tour for RIAC members of the Public Works building and equipment.
- PWD equipment needs and purchases.
- Michal Wert provided regular updates on activities of the TAC.
- Request for a “No Further Action” agreement with DEQ for spill/contamination testing on the PWD site.
- Implementation of Oracle, the new accounting software for the County.
- Audit for chemicals used at PWD and Cove Orchard.
- Staff recognition, including Memorial Day barbeque.
- A summary of the 2023 Annual Compliance Report prepared by Dr. Hammond on Kincaid’s lupine and Fender’s blue butterfly.

### **CITIZEN APPEARANCES**

- Jeff Meader requested PWD to honor previous commitments to do a CRIP project on Ribbon Ridge Road. He will submit an application so the project is considered if staff and funding become available.
- Gary Farmer and Brian Bowey requested dust abatement on Berry Creek Road.

## **PRESENTATIONS**

- The George Fox University (GFU) senior design team made a presentation on final designs and estimates for three intersections: Cruickshank Road at Hwy 233, Stringtown Road at Hwy 233, and Red Hills Road at Hwy 240.
- TAC members Michal Wert and Susan Aldrich-Markham gave a presentation on the summer 2023 roadside vegetation inventory and results.
- Vegetation Supervisor Nick Wilkinson gave an update on erosion restoration activities and the Willamette Basin mercury TMDL (total maximum daily load) project.
- A second GFU design team presented options for improvements to Main Street from Nicholas Way to Crestview Drive in Newberg. Members discussed modifications and encouraged the team to meet with the City of Newberg to ensure that final designs will facilitate transfer of this County road to the city.

## **ROADSIDE VEGETATION MANAGEMENT TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (TAC)**

### **TAC Purpose**

The BOC appointed the TAC in 2014 to update policies and Best Management Practices to guide and assist PWD to manage roadside vegetation in a consistent, conscientious, and cost-effective manner. The TAC reports to and provides regular updates to RIAC. It developed a Roadside Vegetation Management Plan that was adopted by BOC order in February 2016. Members were reappointed in 2017, 2020, and again in 2023 to help implement the Plan. An update on activities is included in this annual report since the TAC is a subcommittee of RIAC. Several PWD projects are supported by members in addition to the work of the Committee.

### **Membership**

The TAC met in July and August. Membership in 2023 included:

- Michal Wert, Chair           Retired planning consultant, RIAC member/liaison
- Susan Aldrich-Markham   OSU Field Crops Extension Agent
- Dave Hanson               Naturalist/rural land owner
- Vern Holm                  Retired Western Invasives Network Coordinator
- Great Holmstrom         Greater Yamhill Watershed Council Executive Director
- Keith Nasman             Yamhill SWCD Conservation & Outreach Specialist
- Sam Sweeney              Yamhill County farmer

### **2023 Accomplishments**

- Chair Michal Wert provided regular updates on TAC activities to RIAC, and participated on the interview committee to define the position and hire Nick Wilkinson as the County Vegetation Supervisor.
- Marianna Kemp (2022 intern) and Rachel Kato were hired as summer Roadside Vegetation Inventory interns. Susan Aldrich-Markham managed the program.

- Marianna, Rachel, and Susan gave a presentation to the TAC on the activities and results of the 2023 inventory.
  - Milkweed monitoring – the monitoring process was adapted from the Institute for Applied Ecology methods. Twelve milkweed patches were inventoried; only two of these are designated Special Maintenance Zone sites and three are proposed. The Monarch butterfly is proposed for listing under the Endangered Species Act, and protective action now by the County can be cost effective. A Milkweed Management Plan will be written to guide PWD activities.
  - Old Moores Valley Road Erosion & Kincaid’s Lupine project – this 2021 restoration project was decimated in 2022 with road grading/widening. Nick will meet with crews every morning and will make them aware of restoration and protection activities in the future.
  - Erosion Update & Proposed Restoration Projects – several eroded roads went from severe in 2018 to extreme in 2023, including Kuykendall, Clay Pit, and Mineral Springs Roads. Nick will work with property owners through the mercury TMDL project to address several erosion issues.
  - Abbey-Kuehne-Hendricks Erosion Project – the County reshaped the ditch, added rock and hydroseeded the bank and ditch, but reseeding with a different approach was necessary to ensure seed germination. Susan worked with a Linfield College ecology class to help inventory native and other plants within the intersection.
  - Other – Dr. Hammond’s Fender’s blue butterfly inventory data will be added to the Kincaid’s lupine roadside survey data.
- Susan worked with the contractor for spring spraying for Italian thistle. She worked with Nick in the fall to notify property owners and to prepare for 2024 spraying.
- Michal, Susan, and Jordan Anderson/SWCD will work with Nick for a smooth transition of the intern program from the TAC to PWD in 2024.
- Deer Creek Park will be inventoried for Kincaid’s lupine in 2024 since it is the primary mitigation site for the Habitat Conservation Plan. Efforts will be made to coordinate the PWD lupine survey with SWCD surveys on private properties.
- Dr. Andony Melathopoulos gave a presentation on the program he developed with the Oregon Department of Transportation for pesticide recertification credits, focusing on vegetation management to control weeds and help bees at the same time. He is Pollinator Health Extension Specialist for the Oregon State University Extension Service, Extension Service Master Melittologist, and manager of the Oregon Bee Atlas which collects bees and data on the plants they frequent from around the state. He will use the County Roadside Vegetation Inventory data to identify plants that could be added to our roadsides to increase bee diversity and abundance.
- Michael O’Loughlin, grass seed farmer near Whiteson, reported on his study to identify inexpensive roadside seed that controls erosion as well as providing pollinator plants for bees. SWCD provided seed mixes, PWD prepared the roadside, and Linfield College students collected data on establishment and persistence.
- TAC members brainstormed with Nick on erosion control options and plants. It was noted that County parks are now part of PWD and invasive species in the parks need to be addressed.