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Harney Soil & Water Conservation District Regular Monthly Meeting
90 W. Washington, Burns
August 22, 2024

Present: Vice Chair (VC) Scott Franklin, Board Director (BD) Carol Dunten; District Manager (DM) Jason Kesling, SONEC Biologist Alex Dohman, CWMA Coordinator Tyler Goss, Admin Assist (AA) Barbara Pearson

Present, remote: Board Chair (BC) Jeff Hussey, BD Stacy Davies and Secretary/Treasurer (S/T) Ryan Peila. Note: Some participants were not able to remain on the call for the meeting's entirety and the time they left the meeting is not known.

Guests: Turen Alfred Dunten, Susan M. Ramsay

The meeting was called to order at 3:32 pm. As BC Hussey was participating remotely, he asked VC Franklin to direct the meeting. At 3:33 S/T Peila joined the meeting. The first four items on the agenda required a vote and after a quorum would not be necessary.

Item #1: Agenda (Action Item)
BD Davies moved to approve the meeting agenda without changes. S/T Peila seconded. All present who were eligible to vote were in favor and the motion passed.

Item #2: Financial Reports for May, June and July (Action Item)
Financial reports for the three months were included with board director packets prior to the meeting and included in their notebooks. VC Franklin asked if there were any concerns, and DM Kesling said no—the district is paying

contractors and salaries and closing some contracts; business as usual. He said the district is in a good financial position. BD Davies moved to approve the three months financial reports as presented. BC Hussey seconded and the motion was approved unanimously.

Item #3: May Meeting Minutes (Action Item)

The meeting minutes were prepared and reviewed by DM Kesling and AA Pearson. Board members received a copy via email the week following the meeting. Another copy was emailed prior to today's meeting and is in their notebooks. BC Hussey moved and BD Dunten seconded approving the meeting minutes as presented. All present who were eligible to vote were in favor and the motion passed.

Item#4: Audit (Action Item)

A letter from accountant Rob Gaslin was included in the board director material. DM Kesling said Mr. Gaslin has indicated this will be his last year in conducting an audit for the district. He said the letter sent by Mr. Gaslin included more legal verbiage and terms. He recommended we proceed with Mr. Gaslin for this year. BC Hussey repeated what was said for clarification purposes and then asked if the district would search for another accounting office for the future. DM Kesling agreed; he said in 2025 the district will need to secure a new auditor, beginning the search in March-June. BD Davies moved and BD Dunten seconded having Rob Gaslin's accounting firm do the 2023-2024 audit. All present who were eligible to vote were in favor and the motion passed.

The rest of the meeting was updates and discussion. The board members participating remotely said they would remain on the call as technology allowed.

At 3:40 pm, Sue Ramsay arrived.

Item #5: SOWR II Update

DM Kesling and CWMA Goss provided the update on the Stinkingwater grant through the Oregon Department of Forestry. Good progress has been made on the grant. The information provided in the director's notebooks from July (the meeting did not take place as there was not a quorum) Five contractors are currently working on projects with thirteen private landowners and one state landowner for a total of $567K in projects to date. There were no questions.

Item #6: Board Election Discussion

AA Pearson read a prepared statement to the board. At the time of the meeting, only one candidate has completed filing for election with the state (position #2 held by VC Scott Franklin), though candidates Doverspike and

Davies are in process. Once the signatures have been reached, the candidate must take the paperwork to the county clerk for completion. Other than signing a petition on behalf of a candidate, HSWCD staff are prohibited from assisting in any manner.

Next Tuesday, August 27, 2024 is the last day to file. Beginning Wednesday, August 28, 2024, a candidate can notify the county clerk that he/she wants write in votes applied to election. Later in the meeting BD Davies advised meeting attendees he received an email from the state letting him know he is now listed as a candidate.

Item#7: BLM Sage Grouse Amendment

DM Kesling and BD Dunten participated in meetings discussing this. DM Kesling said in the discussion he asked via email for clarification on how the amendment will affect grazing, including timing duration and AUMs. He received a response that it would not affect the current management and has the potential to open up more grazing in the state of Oregon. BD Dunten and DM Kesling said they reviewed the amendment last Friday and said they were unable to provide additional comment. BD Dunten said research and natural areas may see an increase in grazing. DM Kesling said both he and BD Dunten believe the topic will be pushed to the local area.

VC Franklin said the district had eleven or twelve concerns regarding the amendment—were any addressed. BD Dunten said no, the district would have to look at each rule and research. DM Kesling said not specifically since the amendment was nationwide. The district's goal is to be part of the process and the district took more of a grazing-only stance. Mining and energy were more scrutinized in the amendment.

VC Franklin said the BLM will soon have a change of management (Jeff Rose from the local office is retiring) and that is important. DM Kesling agreed. BD Dunten said Oregon's rules are different than other states. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and the state office of USFWS are working closely to avoid complications that Wyoming is now facing. VC Franklin asked BD Dunten how she felt about the amendment. BD Dunten said she felt towards it as she feels with similar rules. This is still in draft mode and until the final plan is out, we won't know what is in it. DM Kesling said the local BLM is not involved with the amendment at all. Only one BLM staff in Oregon was working on it and left with a position change midway. BD Davies asked if RNAs and ACEC are still the same number. DM Kesling said names no changes to the size or number of RNAs or ACEC.

A participant asked if language was softened or adjusted and BD Dunten said possibly. She and DM Kesling only heard possible increased grazing but not

what the amount was increased from. DM Kesling said public comment will be received in September and the amendment will be finalized in December.

BD Davies thank BD Dunten and DM Kesling for staying involved and paying attention. BC Hussey encouraged directors and staff to get to know the new supervisors and range cons, contact and visit to give them the chance to know what is going on. DM Kesling said the HSWCD could do that.

Item #8: LGIP Investment Update

The report in the director notebooks were for the July 2024 meeting, but an additional increase has been received since board material was printed. The account is doing well. Some funds in the account will need to be pulled out to pay for juniper cuts near Drewsey. There were no questions or further comment.

Item #9: Grasshopper Funding Update

Note: Funds were provided through the state to the counties and the county board requested HSWCD/CWMA administer the funds. DM Kesling and CWMA Goss provided an overview: 34 landowners were assisted; they hope it will be a continued program. DM Kesling spoke to State Representative Mark Owens about including administration money in the future.

Tyler described how the funds were administered. He admitted there was some miscommunication between the CWMA, the State, and Nic Schott (aerial pesticide applicator). He said he is hoping to receive an additional $7K to reimburse those who have sprayed. Some landowners/managers signed up and didn't spray once they heard funds were depleted.

VC Franklin asked if more money can be received in the future. CWMA Goss said that is a question to ask Rep. Owens. If the CWMA funded continued spraying it could have expended $125K. The Fields area received $23K and the rest was in the Harney basin.

BD Davies suggested the district write a letter to Rep. Owens, the County Court, and everyone else involved in the Grasshopper funding to thank them for their efforts and provide a report, indicating it was an effective project. The letter should be framed in a positive voice. DM Kesling agreed; he said the district is required to submit a report to the county.

VC Franklin said the program was much better than in previous years as it was more prompt. He reviewed what happened in years past. He said he has spoken to people in the south who concurred the program was a success. On a personal level it was the first time he had success in spraying.

DM Kesling said the district "learned a ton." He said if the district continues it will remain a "first come, first served" basis. CWMA Goss said Harney County is the only county to distribute funds this quickly; other counties are waiting until December and then will distribute to everyone.

DM Kesling was told by Nic Schott that areas that received treatment may not require future treatment so if the district receives future funding it may be able to help others who may not have received reimbursement. BD Dunten asked if HSWCD pay out 75% reimbursement (it did). Will the additional $7K the district hopes to receive will pay those who otherwise wouldn't be reimbursed. CWMA Goss said yes. He said those who did not receive reimbursement knew funding was no longer available but still proceeded in treating.

BD Dunten said, "I think you did a good job." VC Franklin said he liked Stacy's suggestion of the letter. DM Kesling said the landowners were paid as contractors. Some areas that weren't sprayed are still dealing with grasshoppers. He had praise for County Commissioner Kristin Shelman and Oregon Rep. Mark Owens.

Methods of spraying and chemicals used were discussed.

Item #10: Public Comment

Susan Ramsay introduced herself to the board. She said she has a state lease and asked about the BLM amendment and how it would impact her. DM Kesling explained the CCAA program and said in this case the State of Oregon is a landowner. He suggested she contact Randy Wiest of the Oregon Department of State Lands to address her allotment unless the bird is listed.

She said there has been sage grouse on her land and allotment in the past. She was unsure as to what to do. SONEC Alex Dohman and DM Kesling discussed sage grouse behaviors and habitat needs. SONEC Dohman provided numbers of current sage grouse populations. DM Kesling presented a map that provides ODFW sage grouse habitat areas. Escape ramps were discussed.

Ms. Ramsay asked if there was a correlation of sage grouse population and other game birds. Her property is "having a super quail year." SONEC Dohman not usually but there is a 30-40% increase in chukar population. The high precipitation levels produce the forbs that game birds use. DM Kesling said precipitation at the wrong time can have a bad effect.

DM Kesling noted that besides water levels the juniper thinning has assisted in the sage grouse population increase. SONEC Dohman then explained the sage grouse predators use high places to perch and hunt for the bird.

There were no further public comments. Note: conversation continued between DM Kesling, SONEC Dohman, CWMA Goss and Ms. Ramsay after the meeting ended.

There were no further comments. The remote participants were thanked for their efforts in the meeting.

BD Dunten moved; BD Davies seconded adjourning the meeting. All present were in favor and the meeting adjourned at 4:35 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Pearson, Admin Assist

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District Representative Date