Harney CWMA Meeting Minutes

October 20, 2021 1:30 pm

Harney County Courthouse Basement Conference Room

Present: Jason Kesling, Tyler Goss, and Barbara Pearson (Harney Soil & Water Conservation District); Jim Campbell and Jesse Barnes (Harney County Weed Board); Josh Hanson and Kaylee Littlefield (High Desert Partnership), Carey Goss (Malheur National Wildlife Refuge); Bonnie Rasmussen (Oregon Department of Agriculture)

Present, remote: Sam Cisney (BLM) and Lisa Costner (U.S. Forest Service)

Jim Campbell called the meeting to order at 1:37 pm

Welcome and introductions

Josh Hanson and Kaylee Littlefield of High Desert Partnership were welcomed.

Action item/Approval of Meeting Minutes

Jason moved; Sam seconded. All present and eligible to vote in favor and the motion passed.

Action item/Approval of Financials

Jason discussed the financial report. Salary used in last month and there is still $32K. Funds still there for Beaver Tables. Tyler recently attended the OVMA conference, but those expenses will not be shown until when the October books closed. There is currently $6K more when Forest Service pays. Carey Goss asked if the funds from the refuge were put in Admin. Jason said yes, it was approved three meetings ago. The balance doesn’t reflect the Fish and Wildlife funds, but there is documentation in place. Carey moved to approve the financials; Jesse seconded. All present and eligible to vote in favor, and the motion passed.

Project updates and Progress

1. Beaver Tables: Tyler said he put the only submitted bid before the HSWCD during last month’s meeting. Nic Schott’s bid was under budget and was for seeding 1,430 acres. It was approved and he only needs to come into the office and sign. Schott believes he has enough seed and will aerially distribute 10 lbs. Siberian wheat grass 1 lb. kosha per acre. Once this is completed, monitoring next step, for the next two years. In the next two weeks Tyler and Kenny McLean will go to the area to take photos. There was no further questions.
2. Weed Control on Refuge for Permittees: Tyler and Carey are still working on project. Two landowners are interested. A survey completed and there was discussion on how it took place, the area of project, and that the fields will be flooded what will take place after the land dries out. Tyler and Carey plan to meet with Bonnie follow for additional planning.
3. Rejuva test plot: Tyler said an area has been located (Jerry Miller, landowner), but it was germinating. This delayed the test for a year. He plans to discuss the test with Josh from High Desert Partnership (HDP). The chemical have already been purchased, but it is storable. Tyler and Jesse both recently attended the OVMA conference and discussed the three different presentations on Rejuva. The chemical has a 20-month plant back, and has a lot more releases of native forbs than with any other treatment. No grazing restrictions; no cautions on label. . The Forest Service in John Deere will use it next year. There is a concern about its effect on fish—it doesn’t take much to “nuke a stream” There was more discussion on use of Rejuva and Plateau, both pro and con and using one Plateau on year and following up in subsequent years with Rejuva. Jim said NRCS needs to reword some contracts to include one year of Rejuva instead of what is presently written (three years of Plateau). Other herbicide ingredients and approval from Federal government agencies discussed. For landowners offering land for the test plot, Jesse suggested Cody Wilber. Jason said the district hopes to Incorporate other agencies (OSU and HDP) into the test plot project.

New Grant Discussion

Jason said the district is attempting to contact landowners to discuss technical assistance grants. Jesse Barnes said the following landowners are gung-ho Scotch thistle control: Sword, Bentz, Dunten. A grant addressing the headwaters could be successful. Additional ideas mentioned were Poison Creek and landowners John Clemens, Tyler, Forest Service, ODOT, Carey Goss, and Dimmock(?). Present invasives include spotty knapweed, dalmatian toadflax, and scotch thistle. The affected area includes drainages into Poison Creek and Hwy. 20 at the junction to King Mountain turnoff.

Jess also mentioned Engstrom Lane to Wright’s Point which has spotted knapweed and scotch thistle. Some people who live there participate in rodeos and may have brought home the invasives. She mentioned landowners Bradach, Recanzone and (need other landowner’s name). She believed there would be full landowner participation.

Another area mentioned was the old railbed to Seneca. Jim asked Lisa if a SWAT crew was sent to that area is the Forest Service would support SWAT treatment? Bonnie said she would add diffuse to that as well as spotted knapweed.

Jason asked if the grants support the landowner doing the treatment or others. Jim said HCWMA can self-treat. Jesse suggested speaking to the landowner if this should be something the contractor should do. Bonnie said if the SWAT crew can do it to discuss with landowner and the landowner decide, but often the State would like contractor or crew to do since knows it knows would be done correctly. Jesse said if a private contactor does the project to budget for at least one week. Jim said it’s an easy grant to write. There was further discussion about writing grants and awarding contractors, presenting a project for bid and liability insurance.

Bonnie encouraged the district to submit as many grant applications as possible. If there is a challenge or limited funds, she would ask the district if there is a priority project. you can. If it’s a challenge, I will return to group and ask for priority. Jesse offered to assist Tyler with mapping needed for grants.

New Business:

1. The ODA grant submit deadline is December 15th.
2. Jesse said chemical prices rising exponentially, and urged the agencies to order now. For now, many chemicals sitting on shipping barges and China shutting things down. She named products that are increasing in prices and may be scarce next year. Bids are currently being amended to reflect prices.
3. With another items, she suggested that the HCWMA place something in the local paper: There is a hay shortage, and many people buying hay from out of the county and state. This hay could bring in invasives. She recommended telling landowners/managers to feed in one location and watch that location next year for any new emerging invasives, such as Skeleton weed. Tyler said the paper has given him a corner in the paper to write about weeds. He submitted a long article and there was still room. Jesse also suggested presenting this concern on the radio as well.
4. Forest Service funding presented by Lisa. She asked Tyler if he conducted any treatment? He said he just inventoried areas, as he doesn’t have his license. His inventory was on paper and submitted to the Forest Service. Lisa said funding not looking good this year; the Forest Service’s budget has been cut substantially. She told CWMA should plan with $5K. The Forest Service would coordinate better for brush stations. She told SWAT to plan for $20K for normal operations. There will probably be $5 to 6K money for the Big Meadow Fire for surveys for next year. Jason asked what is the schedule for contracts, and Lisa said the contracts would be modifications on current agreements and would not be that much work. It would be sent to the district for correction and then submitted. This should be done in February and finalized in March or April . Jim said the district is currently in the middle of an agreement. Jason said yes, but he was learning the process. Lisa said agreements could be extended for five years. She hopes to have update on esplanade soon.
5. Hats/banner: Tyler said the hats he was looking at three to four months ago are currently out of stock. He will wait until they are back. There was a proposed banner included with the agenda and he requested input. Jason said the district’s number (and HCWMA’s) is never going to change. The District has a website with a page dedicated to weeds. Tyler reminded Jim that the county’s website was to have a link to send viewers to the District’s website. Adding a logo to the banner was discussed. Both Bonnie and Jason suggested that once a logo was chosen to use it on everything. With other contact discussion Jim said the HCWMA also has a FB page. Barbara will assist him in reassigning admin privileges.
6. There needs to be recertification classes, hopefully next spring. Tyler said Jordan Valley will be having its next February, and is thinking Harney County’s should be a month or two after. Jim recommended not having them in the fall because the scheduling instructors will compete with bigger areas.

Anything further

The next meeting is planned for the third Wednesday of next month.

Josh and Kaylee (representing HDP) said their goal for this meeting was to observe and learn. Jason said he would love HDP to partner with the Rejuva project. Tyler said he has attended fire meetings hosted by HDP and plans to attend the next one in November. Jason asked if grants need HCWMA’s formal approval and Jim and Bonnie both said yes, to make sure no duplicates and partners can discuss and provide input.

Meeting adjourned at 2:50 pm.