December 15, 2021

Harney Coordinative Weed Management Area

Monthly meeting minutes

Present: Randy Wiest (State Department of Lands); Sam Cisney (BLM); Karen Moon (Harney Watershed Council); Jim Campbell (Harney County Weed Supervisor); Tyler Goss (Ag/CWMA Coordinator); Jason Kesling and Barbara Pearson (HSWCD).

Remote: Bonnie Rasmussen (ODA), Jessi Brunson (USFS)

Jim called the meeting to order at 9:09 am.

Agenda Items:

1. Reviewal of October 2021 meeting minutes. There were no additions or corrections. Jason Kesling moved for their approval; Sam seconded. All present eligible to vote were in favor.
2. Reviewal of Financial report: Jason explained the submitted financial report. BLM/Forest Service contracts are done and the funds can be moved to admin. Jim asked where funds were spent could be seen and Jason explained. He said there was plenty budgeted for Tyler’s salary. The Forest Service funds shown were carryover due that was part of another fiscal year that could not be changed. These funds have been on the books for a while. He is attempting to clear this up. Randy moved and, Jim seconded approval of the financial report.
3. A motion was made for agenda item 3 by Jim to take remaining funds from BLM/Forest service to move to admin. Randy seconded. All present eligible to vote were in favor.

Project progress and updates

1. Tyler gave an update on Weed Control on the Refuge. The grant was submitted today. The draft had previously been reviewed by Bonnie and Tristan. Tyler met with landowners adjacent to the refuge regarding boom spraying with the project area. Five acres of spotted knapweed were located and it will also be treated, if funded. One landowner has pepperweed along fence lines and banks where he can’t access with a swather. That area was included with the grant. Jim said the grant reflect more on what the refuge had been doing for weed eradication. The Refuge will again look into requiring tarped hay loads traveling through. It’s possible to reduce the spread of pepperweed alongside the highway. Bonnie added that the grant need clarification and those edits were made before submission. Zero dollars going toward public entities.
2. Poison Creek Grant has been submitted to address spotted knapweed infestation on four private lands at Hwy 395 and Poison Creek. Bonnie asked Jim if the county only project was African Rue. He said yes.
3. Tyler distributed HCWMA hats for board members, and asked the remaining hats to be distributed to ranchers to promote the committee in the county. Tyler also presented the newly manufactured vinyl banner intended to go in front of table for fair and other outreach. Jim commended Tyler for these projects, felt the banner worthy of every event.

New Business:

1. HB 762. Tyler said committee members have been working on it and researching. Basically, the bill is for fire risk prevention. HCWMA has plans in the Stinkingwater area on private lands. Five million dollars has been requested for Juniper cutting/fuel breaks, spraying, reseeding. Twenty million dollars in total is allocated for this funding cycle. At least one project on east side of the state will be funded. Spraying budget in $900K, (note: this area needs further refining) treat approximately 13k acres. CWMA applied for one year of admin, 85K. Half of salary for HSWCD as well, 45k. Tyler will coordinate with the BLM to do adjacent private land next to BLM’s spraying projects.

CWMA will be busy—mapping the 13K acres, contacting landowners and mapping their properties. Jim suggested a helicopter to aid aerial photography and mapping. The next phase of Beaver Table is the Crane-Buchanan road. There was concern about spraying BLM and private lands and the effect on grazing restrictions. Sam said the spraying isn’t with Imazepic. Randy said the Department of State Lands recommends resting the land for one growing season. Jason agreed and said that decision is left to the landowner to choose to graze or rest. Won’t make it a requirement, just a recommendation. The whole landscape has to be completed in one year. BLM, HCWMA both asked for $1M, state $175K. Contracting will be done through the High Desert Partnership. HCWMA will not handle the bids but would do on the ground management with multiple contractors.

Jim said could be treatment could be difficult since helicopters are dedicated for fire control first. Sam said the deadline for the Senate bill January 8th, and fund allocation announced in February. There was discussion about affected counties, determining priority areas, and the application form as well as the possibility of non-OWEB grant money being used to purchase equipment (pick up).

Jesse Brunson joined meeting at 9:26 am via ZOOM.

2) Regarding the BLM agreement. Tyler said agencies are going into contract cycle. The BLM has issues contracting through their state office; another avenue running agreements through the conservation district in place as needed. Sam explained it’s somewhat new (education outreach for now). The deadline is February 2022. She encouraged CWMA to get information in. There was further discussion and Sam requested the group prepare question for next month’s meeting.

3) Forest service grant option: Jim said Medusahead is on some private land adjacent to the Forest Service and is concerned it will spread. Once it hits Forest Service land it can’t be controlled since aircraft use can be difficult. Jessi and Tyler provided information re: Soldier Creek. USFS Wyden Bill authority treatments off forests, has to be same watershed that has FS land. She is concern about the small funds allotted to Harney County. The majority will be to the county and then $5K to HCWMA. The county already has work planned for the funds, mostly treatment alongside roads. If Rejuva is used, it would exceed budgeted amount. Jessi explained long term Title 2 funds. She said Grant County had been successful submitting a program 50% covered cost share with private landowners. In the short term there isn’t enough funds for landscape level medusahead treatment. Other funding option possibilities and funding processes were discussed. Bonnie suggested the committee talk to County Judge Pete Runnels of Grant County’s Matt Wenick prior to submission for Title 2. Jessi will write out suggestions on the process. There is private landowner interest in Soldier Creek/Cow Creek--3800 acres. The BLM last sprayed in 2011ish. Jessi said she is hopeful Rejuva will be accepted for treatment for the USFW. The agency has only approved Hells Canyon for that herbicide now. Jim said the landowners are very cooperative (some initiated contact). Both USFS and CWMA will research.

Jessi also discussed USFS/CWMA agreement: in past this meant primarily outreach, education. Would CWMA want to continue with that SOW? Jim asked if the Forest Service would want boot brush stations? Yes—it would fall under education. Tyler also discussed his education efforts with the Harney County fair, newspaper articles he has written. Next year will be a free spray day and applicators recertified training. Jessi said she’s aware of three places for boot brush stations. Lisa with local FS has set locations. Jim also suggested Tyler go into campgrounds to speak to people.

9:47 am Karen Moon arrived.

4) CWMA trailer. Tyler said the old HCWMA trailer is parked at the county yard and has been used for storage. He would like the agency to get rid of it and replace it with a shipping container and put it in at the NRCS office. He would store hats, banner, swag for fair and potentially chemical and seed. The current trailer is falling apart at this point and is an eyesore. Jim said he didn’t know what you can get through auctioning or even if it were to be given away if anyone would want it. There have been bees all over it, potential for leaking. Jason said if the motion is approved now, we can begin moving things out of it. There was consensus to not keep the paperwork because it becomes dated quickly. Ranchers do like the small weed reference books and notepads because they will fit into a shirt pocket.

There were motions requested. The first motion was to dispose of the current trailer. Motion: get rid of trailer. Jason moved; Sam seconded. All present who were eligible to vote were in favor. The second motion was to approve Tyler researching the purchase of a storage container. Currently Tyler expected a container would cost $1800 to $2K. Karen moved and Randy seconded this. All present who were eligible to vote were in favor. Jim also suggested Tyler take items from SWAT shop to incorporate.

New Business:

Karen said she received an email advising it was time to submit federal financial report. She will forward to Jim (SWAT). Discussion about grasshoppers, mosquitos, possible vector control.

Jason said the HSWCD/HCWMA will hold their annual meeting on February 10, 2022. The group is seeking a speaker. Several present suggested Dustin Johnson from EOARC.

Jim suggested January 2022 would be a good time to get speakers lined up for recertification training and that the training could possibly be in February.

The next monthly meeting will be back to the 3rd Wednesday in January, beginning at 1:30 pm.

Tyler said previous HSWCD District Manager Shannon Brubaker completed overdue forms for BLM and FS.

The meeting adjourned at 10:22 am.