HCWMA Meeting

February 16, 2022, 1:30 pm,

Harney County Courthouse basement conference room

Present (in conference room and remote): Jim Campbell (HC Weed Program), Zola Ryan (Natural Resources Conservation Service), Kayla Littlefield (High Desert Partnership), Jess Bronson (US Forest Service), Randy Wiest (Oregon Department of State Lands), Bonnie Rasmussen (ODA), Tyler Goss, Barbara Pearson, Jason Kesling (Harney Soil and Water Conservation District)

Jim Campbell began the meeting at 1:32 PM. Welcome and Introductions were waived as everyone attending knew one another.

Action Item

December Meeting Minutes Review/Approval. Jason moved approving the minutes; Randy seconded. All eligible to vote were in favor, and the motion was approved.

Action Item

Financial Report Review/Approval. Jason explained the financial report, which was created as of this date. Jason explained the Senate Bill and said Tyler’s salary will now be billed to this. Zola asked current budget and remaining budget (what HCWMA had at the beginning of fiscal year. The remaining budget is what we have now including the Senate Bill). There were no other questions. Zola moved the Financial Report be approved; Randy seconded. All eligible to vote were in favor, the report was approved.

Project Updates and Progress:

HB762

HCWMA will receive funding through this. HCWMA plans to spray 13K acres on private land in the Stinkingwater region. Summer projects would be nailing down the rest of the area. HCWMA is working with the NRCS EQIP program to prevent duplicate work. Jason said Burns BLM will do Beavertable. HCWMA will do the remainder, with more than one treatment. He also explained the HB762 to those in attendance. Randy said the Dept of State Lands treatments will include Treetop, Malheur Caves, 1800 to 2K acres using Rejuvra. HDP is the lead of this project and the details are continuing to be worked out. HSWCD will also develop projects in juniper cutting and fire breaks in the same area. There is one landowner who has resisted spraying and Jim suggested if the landowner doesn’t want this that the county ordinances could be enforced to allow for spraying. Jason said the spraying would be free and the landowner wouldn’t be under any financial obligation.

Jess asked if BLM treatment would involve the herbicide Plateau, and is the area HCWMA will treat has forest service land adjoining? Tyler told her no, but there is an update on that. Jim believes Rejuvra will reignite the noxious weed battle. This funding totals $5M.

OSWB Weed Grants

Tyler said weed grants submitted last fall will be reviewed the 24th of this month. Bonnie said the group is “sitting 50/50” on approval. Jason asked about district representatives attending the meeting. Bonnie said while the meeting has legislative updates, submitters will have no opportunity to lobby or debate, unless it is during the public comment section at the end of the meeting. The meeting is livestream if someone wants to attend as an observer. She didn’t think it would make that much difference if someone from the district attended.

Zola asked what grants have been submitted and was told one was a Poison Creek grant involving the USFWS and Landowners in treating spotted knapweed. The other is on the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge treating Pepperweed.

New grants

Tyler said he has ideas for two new grants. There is a new cycle coming out March 15th. He invited the attendees to introduce any ideas. Tyler asked Bonnie what would be a good asking price for grants? Bonnie asked if anyone attended the weed grant opening meeting that took place this morning. Tyler may not be on the ODA email list.

The ODA fund is $400K, keyed toward developing new projects, building partnerships, and creating new CWMAs. There is a significant amount ($20K for equipment purchase) if tied to project. Geared toward programs to get on the ground, especially if geared toward (unsure). She is unsure what the number is and will ask Tristan. She suggested $25 to $35K as an asking amount and if a project is a high priority to ask higher. It needs to contain verbiage that the project will have an on the ground control element. What makes her nervous is this is statewide, and if a B level project is submitted and if an A level is then submitted the B level project could be knocked aside. Purchase of vehicles and quads are built into the funding, just tie it into the project submission.

Jason said one treatment will include postburn area in Grant County, and the district will need spray backpacks (Note: Tyler is now fully certified for herbicide application).

Jim said no one thought to apply for the Med Sage Project. He said Tyler could do that and it would allow purchase of equipment. He will give Tyler purchase recommendations.

Regarding Medusahead treatment, Jim said trying to hold an edge (Soldier Creek, Cow Creek areas) to keep it from marching north. He suggested not using the verbiage “buffer”. Bonnie said protecting the forest is important—The grant application should paint a solid picture of HCWMA controlling an area, treating it from back to front vs. just treating the outer areas. Wording suggested included, *“Previously the right chemistry weren’t quite available;… BLM wasn’t fully engaged …,”* as well as notice of bringing ODFW into project could make is sellable.

Jim asked if it would be prudent/wise to mention if Medusahead gets to the USFWS land we won’t be able to treat with aerial spray? Bonnie said addressing protection of the habitat would provide good reasoning.

Jess said the USFWS is on track to get Rejuvra approved. She submitted the request and public will be allowed to comment in March. She believed “It is going to happen this year.” Zola said the NRCS wrapped up implementation strategy with the Lone Pine Fire Agency. She has received requests to address forest health and tie in future projects with ones the USFWS is working on. She is working on a project and believes it will not be a problem to tie this in with juniper control. NRCS will have a Local Work Group meeting on March 2nd and invited attendees of this meeting to come and speak out.

Jason asked what CIS stood for and Zola told him it means Conservation Implementation Strategy. Each Oregon county has a long-range plan that sets forth conservation efforts. NRCS then produces a project plan (how big, who will we work with, fund amount, etc.). The NRCS state office needs to approve. Jason said if some of the projects may involve sage-grouse country—any chance for that? Zola said no, because of the power lines in the area. Jim said the land involved are elk habitats.

Jason said the district has written a grant for that we can cut and paste for another. Jim said there’s a pivot in there now, relationship issue. One landowner owns a reservoir, another the water right—could be complicated.

Tyler said another grant he has in mind is for a Drewsey rancher who has previous applied for EQIP, to treat 30 acres of Medusahead. He’s trying to put in for a grant. Bonnie said a single partner grant is always a challenge to get funding. “Don’t put all of your eggs in a Medusahead basket.” She asked if there was any county cost share? Jim said there is every year. Tyler said the landowner wanted someone to spray vs. HCWMA giving him the herbicide for him to treat. Bonnie suggested this could be tied in with one of these grants if he is willing to do any of it. Tyler said no, he wants a contractor to do it. Bonnie felt the landowner needs to be more involved and Tyler agreed. He wanted to bring it before the board so he can then let the landowner know the board believes he should do it.

BLM agreement

Tyler wanted all to know that the BLM agreement has been submitted, with some changes. The BLM may run some projects through HCWMA. Funds also include education, etc. Jason said the HCWMA is normally allotted $15K. Under the new agreement, the remainder will go toward contracts, each year for the next 3 years and budget written for this. If the need is higher, a whole level of contracting is implemented. Jim asked if this is turning HCWMA into the contract officer. Jason said yes and that it could provide $75 to $135K per year for admin. This agreement will also aid BLM in avoiding contracting problems which they have been previously overwhelmed by.

New Business

Trailer and Sea Container

Tyler reminded the attendees that he had been given permission from the CWMA to get rid of the trailer. He wanted them to know that the HSWCD board of directors also gave permission. He plans to get a sea container and then get rid of trailer. Jason added that HCWMA still needs to get permission from landowner of the NRCS/FSA building to park container.

Black Butte Footprint

Jess said she has to review the agreement with HCWMA because the previous one had expired. HCWMA will need to review. The new agreement is almost exactly like the old. The BLM has a push to keep agreements shorter, more targeted. The end date of this agreement will be 1/21/2024. CFLN funding of $5K and HCWMA aware of that. Also $15990 of beer money (bear money?) to hire an assistant and treatments. Grant County also getting funding, with targeted projects. Jess said she would like to send money to the HCWMA to hire someone but it has to be done by 9/30/2022. Black Butte is located at Crane Crossing, at the north fork of Malheur River, in the middle of fire footprint. Some of the fire in that area came into Harney County. Jim asked if Matt Wenick from the Soil and Water District in Grant County is fine with this? Jess said she has not yet specifically asked him. Grant County has all the equipment for roadside treatment. What is needed is someone who can walk and survey the affected area. It’s usually something USFWS technicians or Grant County will do. She will talk to Matt Wenick and doesn’t think this will be an issue.

Jess asked if this is that something the CWMA would like to do? Is there capacity to do this? Jason answered yes--this could be a nice break for Tyler. Jim said he was unsure if Tyler has the right license. We can get away with it on roads but unsure about a backpack weed sprayer in forest. Jess said she didn’t see that as a barrier. Tyler can do the survey and she or another field tech can do the treatment. Tyler asked what sort of license he needed and Jess and Jim both told him a Forest certificate. Jess said it would involve another test. Jim suggested Tyler get a regulatory certificate. Jason said the HCWMA can do the surveying. He does want HCWMA to have the certificates, but the district needs to weigh the options if it’s cheaper to do the surveying and then hire a contractor or have USFWS complete the treatment. Jess thought the project should move forward. She will have conversation with Grant County. I want to make sure the budget (sent to Tyler and Jason) is reviewed and contact information is good. Tyler said he removed word “county” from HCWMA and changed the contact information. He made some other little changes and saved the changes under the document name “edits.” Jason said Tyler can send it to him and he will return it to Jess by Friday.

Hay Growers Class

There will be a recertification class at HC Chamber of Commerce. He will see if the class counts for four credits. Jim asked Bonnie to please send him the presentation she puts together. She added that OVMA won’t happen in 2022, INW will take place. OWMA will be back 02/2023. Bonnie had to leave the meeting, so Jim advised the INW is put on ODA every two years in Corvallis, more education oriented and OVMA. “Big level folks” (from BLM, USFWS) advise what they are doing to fight invasive weeks. There are usually two or three CWMA coordinators that give a presentation. Oregon really tries to keep CWMAs going.

Jason said the HSWCD held its annual meeting recently and the HCWMA was incorporated. Tyler gave a presentation, the CWMA banner was present and the HCWMA donated door prizes.

Jason also said the High Desert Partnership, HSWCD, and Watershed will plan to meet in Fields this summer and will incorporate HCWMA. The district’s Zone 4 not well represented and there are not a lot of projects there.

Jason asked if future quarterly reports are wanted. Jim said only if there unless there are big costs. There was no other discussion.

Meeting adjourned at 2:35 pm.