HCWMA Meeting

March 16, 2022, 1:30 pm

Harney County Courthouse Basement Conference Room

Present: Jesse Barnes, Jim Campbell (Harney County Weed Board); Kaylee Littlefield, Josh Hanson (High Desert Partnership); Dustin Johnson (Oregon State University/Eastern Oregon Agriculture Research Center); Bill Dragt (Bureau of Land Management); Travis Miller (Malheur National Wildlife Refuge); Tyler Goss (Cooperative Weed Management Area); Jason Kesling, Barbara Pearson (Harney Soil and Water Conservation District)

Attending Remote: Randy Wiest (Oregon Department of State Lands)

The meeting was called to order by Jim Campbell at 1:32 pm.

Note: Travis Miller recently began his role at the wildlife refuge, so during the meeting the board updated him on projects.

February 2022 meeting minutes (Action Item)

Jason moved that the February meeting minutes be approved; Kaylee seconded. All present who was eligible to vote were in favor.

Financial Report (Action item)

Jason explained the updated report, which included budgeted salary. Tyler has been billing his time to the senate bill. No other expenditures since the last meeting besides the senate bill. The HSWCD will soon purchase a new truck. HCWMA will be involved. Jason said he considered presenting future financial report on a quarterly basis. The USFS grant will require surveys therefore seasonal staff may be considered. Kaylee moved and Randy seconded. All present who was eligible to vote was in favor.

Project Progress and Updates

1. Senate Bill 762 phase change: Tyler said there have been meetings every two week at HDP. HCWMA’s has planned to treat approximately 13000 within the Stinkingwaters areas, starting with phase 2 then moving to other phases. Five thousand acres have been identified to date. Tyler requested to change the order of the phases in treatment. He provided an overview of the proposed changes: areas moved into Phase 3 and Phase 4 and the heart of the infestation will be moved to phase 5, toward the end of the project. The only change would be the order of land plots in attacking the medusahead. There was discussion on the project’s timeline (multiyear, beginning in 2018) and previous herbicides used (Plateau and now Rejuvra, which is effective longer). Jim discussed spray treatments and grazing. Surveying and mapping options for Tyler were suggested. Bill said the BLM budget process is not the most cooperative, and the more flexibility with this project will allow for the BLM’s budget. Jason moved adjusting the order of phases. Travis seconded. All present who was eligible to vote were in favor. Jim requested at the next meeting Tyler have before and after mapping to show CWMA members. Jason added that HSWCD and NRCS have potential for FIP funding within the southern half of the area. Dustin asked if roadside treatments would be a priority and was told yes. Jim said he and Tyler have also discussed with ranchers about spraying the cattle paths as well.
2. Poison Creek/Sodhouse Pepper weed: Tyler said two grants were submitted to the Oregon State Weed Board in December for each location. He provided an overview on each grant: The Poison Creek area has spotted knapweed and the project will involve private owners and the Forest Service. This grant submission was successful, and Tyler will inform the ranchers. The Sodhouse Pepper Weed project covers lands adjacent to the refuge. That grant was not successful. There was discussion on how the Oregon State Weed Board evaluates grant submissions (funding amount, the types of weeds to be targeted, the areas prioritized, and that restoration is not normally considered part of the weed board funding. Jim told to Travis that Bonnie Rasmussen should be contacted for any potential grants submitted to the weed board.
3. Soldier Creek Medusa—Tyler said 500 acres, $23K Oregon State Weed Board grant has just been submitted. The landowners will provide $8K match. Jason said it may not be a priority for the board and may not be funded. Tyler added the grant may be lower priority since it involves only one landowner. Alternative funding through NRCS RCPP or USFWS was discussed. Jason said one option was the “Two Chiefs Program,” and he explained.
4. Marshall Med Sage: Jim said this project was on what was formerly known as the Johnson Complex on back loop road. Med sage appeared a few years ago. The CWMA applied for funding again. Owner put in a pivot, and Jim thinks the alfalfa may push the med sage out. The same landowner wants to flood irrigate too and Jim is concerned the water will end in the Silvies drainage. This grant has built in requests to purchase an ATV, trailer, spray pack, and safety spill kit.
5. A Hay Grower Class took place on February 24, 2022. The class included two Zoom presentations and there was a Bayer representative attending. Bayer provided the lunch. Tyler asked Josh and Jim (who also attended) how the event went. Jim thought it went well. He suggested advertising any future events through the local radio. Tyler said the event was advertised in the newspaper, Facebook, the HSWCD webpage and local towns.

New business:

1. Drone for monitoring and for taking photos for grant purposes. OWEB likes drone presentations. He is currently thinking about a $2K price point and thought a drone might be a good selling point for landowners. Use of the drone, the different types of drones, visual sighting vs. GPS, LIDAR, infrared were discussed. Tyler said he would need to be certified, and a drone will need to be licensed if used commercially. Any modifications to the drone would require FAA notification. Examples of where drones had been used in the past through the different agencies present were discussed. Jason said drone footage and photos would show the unit, which photographs taken on the ground would not show if landowners would be willing to have a drone used on their property. Tyler thought it would be a worthwhile investment and he would keep board up to date. Dustin said he would be in favor of purchase and training. Tyler will send link on training to Kaylee. Jason said the CWMA is “cash flush” now and he would be in favor. He recommended a maximum budget amount of $7K for drone purchase and training. Jesse moved that $7K be allotted to research drone and purchase training for CWMA employee Tyler Goss. Dustin seconded. All those present who were eligible were in favor.
2. Free spray day: Jim said in the past the County Weed Board presented a Free Spray Day where herbicide was given to Burns and Hines residents. The Burns Fire Department contacted him to see about joint venture, since getting rid of weeds is also a fire prevention measure. The day there are proposing would be at Big R and BFD would also have a BBQ. Jim said BFD will have a planning meeting next week. Jim said he is looking for assistance from the CWMA board, since people may bring unacceptable weed spray containers. He plans to include a yard weed display. The County will purchase the herbicide; the only CWMA expenditure will be Tyler’s salary. When things are finalized, Jim will contact the board. The Free Spray Day usually works best the weekend after Memorial Day.
3. Annual updates: Tyler asked the board if there should be two meetings set aside in the year where the agencies bring maps and inform the other agencies of their projects and the locations. It would involve past and future projects. Bill had brought a map to the meeting and reported where BLM future treatment areas would be. The Board’s consensus was in favor of two meetings per year, February or March and then October to review.

Tyler said that Beavertable being seeded today and tomorrow by Nick Schott. The CWMA May meeting may be changed to Tuesday or Thursday—Grant County is planning a field day and he would like to attend.

Jesse asked Tyler if there are any plans for education or outreach other than hay growers’ class and fair? Tyler said there is a Seed Day March 26 and then pointed out the Free Spray Day. Jesse suggested doing something in the schools, educational events, get corporations involved, have a BBQ, do calibrations. Tyler said he will contact ag teachers and have a poster contest. Dustin asked if there would be another recertification class. He would help if one was done in December. Scheduling classes and when earned credits expired were discussed. Tyler said next year’s hay growing class would be moved to January to not conflict with calving season. Jesse asked if ODFW had weed info in the hunter synopsis this year, and she suggested the winning poster in the contest could be included the in the ODFW synopsis. Dustin also said future years will have the medusahead demonstration plots—that can be worked in to and information display discussed. Budget on panels and posts for the test area were discussed.

Update: Tyler is waiting for the weather to warm up to take care of the CWMA trailer and purchase the shipping container.

There was no further discussion. Meeting adjourned at 2:58 pm