HCWMA Meeting

April 20, 2022, 1:30 pm

Harney County Courthouse Basement Conference Room

Present: Jim Campbell (Harney County Weed Department); Randy Wiest (Oregon Department of State Lands); Linda Watts, Sam Cisney (BLM); Kaylee Littlefield (High Desert Partnership); Zola Ryan (NRCS); Tyler Goss (HCWMA); Jason Kesling and Barbara Pearson (HSWCD)

Jim Campbell began the meeting at 1:31 pm

Action item #1: Approve March CWMA Meeting Minutes

Randy advised of an incorrect word. Instead of SB (SOWR) being a “house” bill, it is Senate. Jason Kesling moved to accept the March meeting minutes with the listed correction. Sam Cisney seconded. All who were eligible to vote were in favor, and the motion passed.

Action Item #2: Approve Financial Report

Jason walked group through the financial report. He said the current Beaver Tables project is nearly complete. Most expenditures were fuel. There were no questions or comments. Zola Ryan moved to approve the financial report; Randy seconded. All who were eligible to vote were in favor, and the motion passed.

Project progress and updates

1. South Eastern Oregon Wildfire resiliency (SOWR): Tyler has been contacting and working with ranchers. He said he has moved onto Phase 3 at Hwy 20 and has completed 75% of that phase. Two thousand acres have been identified in the area, also BLM property. He has spoken to Treetop Ranch manager; the ranch has a lot of invasives to be treated. Tyler will contact landowner Chris Venell tomorrow—he’s in 5th phase. Seventy-five hundred to 8000 out of 1350 acres have been identified. He will find enough acres but not prior to May 1st. Jim praised Tyler’s work in contacting ranchers. Tyler will also set up a date to photograph the project.
2. March 15, 2022 Grants Submitted: Tyler submitted grants for Marshall Med Sage and Soldier Creek treatments; both were declined. The state has $715K worth of projects but $450K to spend. The state said the reason for decline was both grants only had one landowner (though one grant actually had two landowners. One had a pivot and was not counted). Jim urged Tyler to continue work on the Marshall Med Sage project as the invasive could be problematic if it reaches the Silvies. He suggested resubmitting. Tyler plans to talk to a rancher about chopping Med Sage when it is in bloom. ODA advised Tyler the agency would try to work with HCWMA regarding med sage treatment.
3. Annual updates from Partners:
4. BLM staff Linda and Sam provided three maps—one for aerial ground treatment on annual grass (planned for this year and next), ground (last year treatments), and weed infestation. Due to COVID the maps are not representative of usual years. The aerial ground treatment also showed fire treatment and pile burning. The purple area of map indicated where Scotch Thistle, White top, Canada Thistle and Med Sage were treated in the Warm Springs area. Chalk Hills showed treatment for Scotch Thistle. Otis Valley Road area was treated for White top, med sage, and morning glory. The Crane-Riverside area has areas of Russian knapweed and Scotch thistle; Palomino Butte has medusahead. Cinder Butte has infestations of Spotted and Diffuse knapweed and medusahead. Hat butte has an area of Russian knapweed, as well as Lamb and Sheep Reservoirs. Across from one treatment area is a landowner that doesn’t usually treat, and the public land has seeds that travel from the wind. The Dick Miller Canyon and Reservoir has spiny cocklebur, Scotch thistle and Spotted knapweed. There is also Fence knot and medusahead on the road above. More and more musk thistle being seen in the county, such as on Jack Mt., alongside the road at either end. P Hill, Trout Creek, and the Mountain Loop Road are showing infestations of med sage. Diamond is showing med sage on Kiger View Road. Scotch thistle, Canadian thistle, Diffuse knapweed has been found on Riddle Mt. Lookout Road has Med Sage and Bull thistle going up the mountain. Trout Peak is showing White Top, Scotch Thistle and Bull Thistle. There is a patch of medusahead across from the White Horse Ranch and Scotch and Canadian thistle near Bone Creek. Other areas have similar invasives.

Jim said the county tends to treat Miner’s Field nearly every two years. It also has medusahead. The County will begin taking gravel from a pit in the area so there is a greater risk of medusahead spread. He asked if other invasives such as Scotch thistle, Russian knapweed, and Pepperweed could be treated as agencies are treating other invasives. Sam said the BLM could work these areas into its workplan

1. Zola provided maps to meeting participants and said NRCS has a new strategy for the forest fringe. The agency has three objectives, and the strategy is currently being drafted. She sought input on prioritization. Hwy 395 to Buchanan is a priority but she also wanted to know if there were other areas the group wanted to make a priority. The objectives:

1)Forest health (thinning)

2)Juniper cutting

3)Annual grass treatment

Do any treatments areas fall into what BLM has also discussed? Zola said yes and she will suggest to Brandon to include other noxious weeds into strategy. Jim said could help identify the areas. Jason said there are more landowners adjacent to forest service than BLM. As landowners do treatments, it would be helpful for agencies to be aware. Zola asked the participants if the NRCS should focus on the stretch in the middle of the map. Linda said there is a lot of medusahead in Buchanan area. Weeds are abundant at Soldier Creek, Cow Creek, Lost Springs. The BLM sprayed Mill Creek Road in partnership with the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation. Zola said NRCS sprayed 8400 acres of annual grasses last year, 1200 acres were in Phase 1 Beavertable, 600 in the Crane-Buchanan area, 6400 in what is now called Phase 3 near Highway 20. This current year (fall) 13,660 acres are contracted for treatment. Tyler said the cost share with the senate bill will help landowners (provided the herbicide Rejuvra is used as treatment). Tyler reminded Zola to provide a new cost share. Jason said there is a national push from other organizations and there could be something new soon.

Sam provided an update on Rejuvra use with the BLM. Eight new active ingredients for herbicides are being considered nationally, and she hopes they will be available for use in 2023. Rejuvra will then get incorporated into local NEPA. Many of the herbicide ingredients are preemergent and will target annual grasses. She said to “Stay tuned.” There was further discussion on Rejuvra approval and public land herbicide treatments.

1. Jason said HSWCD areas where grant funding was applied for were in Crane to boundary, and Steens access road. Programs for funding included FIP, RCPP funding, USFWS funding. The District hopes to do other treatments. All projects are for five years, FIP funding would be $3M, RCPP about $4M, and SB about $1.1M. The Oregon Ag Trust has contacted the district to create a cattle placement area in the event of wildfire. There needs to be another government to apply for FEMA money. The district would use these funds for weed management, juniper cutting, water development, and riparian restoration. This would be a $3-5M request over 5-year period. The proposal is pretty undeveloped now. It is due for submission in September.

Other project funding is attempted through OWEB. October will show where HSWCD stands fiscally for the next 5 years. The district will focus on medusahead treatment. He suggested landowners be contacted to see if they would be open for other noxious weed treatments. In the timeframe of June-October he will find out about other funding opportunities, and he is hoping to increase staff. CWMA should be involved with the aerial application weed treatments for these grants.

The south corner of the county listed in the Senate bill is in HSWCD area.

1. Randy said Stockade Block is an area of treatment for state lands. The Senate bill includes Beavertable area, which has been treated since the Buzzard Fire of 2013. Currently there are Isolated plants and patches now. Rejuvra should take care of it. State revenue sparse so he attempts to piggy back state projects with those of other agencies. He would like to work into Indian Buttes area. The state has recently approved building a road through Tree Top private area.

More discussion on noxious weeds and locations throughout the county. Newcomer skeleton weed predominant in Boise area, concerned more headed this way.

1. Jim said Harney County will do all its roads and gravel pits and areas contracted with BLM, using Plateau herbicide (which is required). The county is also treating an infestation of African Rue in the area of South Harney, Oilwell, ad Hutchinson Roads on a yearly basis. It has been treated for 12 years and is currently down to 2-4 acres. There was further discussion as to how the noxious plant came to Harney County and treatment used. The county will work with landowners and will refer them to CWMA for any big projects.
2. Kaylee Littlefield said the High Desert Partnership is currently hiring a crew. She will have crew members report any invasive discoveries on the Pueblos and Stinkingwater areas. Linda said the BLM has reporting sheets; Tyler said he had some he could provide. Kaylee said the crew will also survey.

Tyler said he hopes to continue partner updates twice a year from now on (April and November) to coordinate work, projects and plan for following year.

New business

Free spray day, May 21, 2022. Jim said he is being contacted by interested public. He suggested Tyler contact the radio and referring the public to listen. He is also looking for volunteers. The Burns Fire Department will team up for the event in the event at Big R parking lot. There was discussion as to the types of chemicals provided and their current availability and cost increase. The weed trailer will also be in the area.

Tyler said he was contacted prior to the meeting by Leslie Richman. She told him other areas will be having chemical collection days and wondered if one could be held in Harney County for next week. She wanted to know if it could be collected and then transported to Ontario. Jim said these are done through the DEQ and he was generally not interested. Treatment chemicals are “cradle to grave,” and if HSWCD is involved with this disposal the agency would be attached the chemicals being transported and disposed forever. Jim said Harney County does a collection day every three years, with the last one was in 2021 and it was headed by the DEQ. Jim said there are limits as to what is put in spray trucks and if we had one next week and transported chemicals to Ontario, we would be transporting chemicals near the Malheur River which could really be problematic. The city of Bend has a collection day all the time and it is open year around.

Tyler said next month’s meeting will need to be on a Tuesday or Thursday as he will be attending training in Grant County on the usual meeting day. He will schedule and let the members know.

The meeting adjourned 2:45 pm.