Harney Soil & Water Conservation District

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**CWMA Monthly Meeting Minutes**

**Harney County Courthouse Basement Conference Room**

November 16, 2022, 1:30 to 3:50 pm

Present: Sam Cisney, BLM; Randy Wiest, Oregon Department of State Lands (DSL); Andrew "Drew" Donaldson, NRCS; Bonnie Rasmussen, Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA); Jim Campbell, Harney County; Josh Hanson and Kaylee Littlefield, High Desert Partnership (HDP); Tyler Goss, Harney CWMA; Jason Kesling and Barbara Pearson, Harney Soil & Water Conservation District (HSWCD)

1. Welcome/introductions-dispensed as everyone knew each other. Meeting called to order at 1:38 pm by Jim Campbell.
2. Action items for approval
3. Last meeting minutes-Karen moved to approve. Sam seconded. All in favor eligible to vote were in favor.
4. Financials-Jason had not yet arrived. Tyler clarified budget amount included salary, equipment, etc. Jim requested term "budget" be changed to "balance" and there should be a budget line to show what is available. Bonnie concurred. Sam likes the categories but wanted to know what "other" entails. Tyler thought it might be the new truck for HSWCD (which was partially funded through CWMA) and trailer. Karen suggested "income" and "expenses" along with budget. Jason arrived at 1 :45 pm. Jim repeated his concerns and Jason said he could adjust the wording. CWMA doesn't have an annual budget in the same way that the county has. Jason said he could provide estimates of each line item, but that would be comprised of Tyler's salary and fuel. Jason said the CWMA does not have a budget until a grant is awarded and the line items area allocated.

Bonnie also expressed confusion. She said a budget with fluid amounts are difficult to comprehend. The group discussed unrestricted (aka/fluid)and salary. Jason said he had difficulty in understanding how other meeting participants wanted information presented but would attempt to adjust. He said account balances change as new grants are awarded. Jim said what was also needed was "current state". Jason said $50K Pepperweed funding has come in, but it isn't reflected in the report. Josh suggested going back about 10 years and not including salary to show account balance trends. Jason said the trend is downward until another grant is awarded. Karen said she has similar issues in creating financial reports in the Watershed Council, which is also grant driven. She creates budgets based on secured funding and then lists expenditures. Jim wants a trend that shows when the CWMA is in financial trouble. Jason said if there is an HSWCD grant that has a balance and Tyler conducts work on that grant then Jason allocates the salary toward the HSWCD grant. Bonnie requested information on when the funds are gone and how long.

Sam asked about "other"-She said additional information would be helpful. Jason said the "other" reflects OWEB's categories.

c. Jason said CWMA and HSWCD are audited yearly. Randy moved the financial report be approved; Kaylee seconded. All present who were eligible to vote were in favor.

1. Project progress and updates-Tyler asked about current projects since budget cycles
2. DSL is continuing with Beavertable and SOWR projects. The DSL doesn't have funding for large projects on its own and instead partners with other agencies. Jason said the NRCS has funding through RCPP and state lands are encompassed. Said he was late due to discussing this with the NRCS regional lead and for agencies to drum up interest in funding in the next two years.
3. BLM-Acres proposed for treatment in 2022 were moved to 2023 due to a protest, which was ultimately decided in the BLM's favor. Next year contracts it will go through the national contracting center, and Sam informed the attendees of the contracting process for the agency. Another contract for groundwork is in early stages. The SWAT crew is targeting the same areas as last year: pile cut, areas of disturbance, wildfire, med sage sites, purple loosestrife. BLM will now be doing contracts yearly. Tyler asked if NEPA has been completed in the Soldier Creek area. Sam said yes. Jason suggested agencies speak with landowners/allottee's re: 2023-2024 through NRCS, and Drew many have contacted his agency already. Sam asked about the med sage located at Hwy 20 near Drewsey-it was brought up at a previous meeting, and she wondered if the county had followed up. Jim said he contacted Joe Arnold and gave him Sam and Linda's information and suggested he contact them. As of the meeting time he had not. Jim said med sage is an "on the move weed".
4. USFS-no one present. Tyler said he was emailed from the agency and told he attend the Title 2 interview in Baker. Tyler doesn't know how much funds will go toward CWMA. Jim said county weed department runs roads for the USFS and all the roads were treated, Riley to county line and work over. Rejuvra can be used in forests (not aerially}. Jason said $241,320 Title 2 funds are budgeted for CWMA.
5. USFW-Tyler reported for the refuge. The Pepperweed grant will be completed next year (due to dry conditions}. Tyler may have another landowner on board to complete Sod House. Jesse will bill for chemical and possibly for one landowner. She may have additional information on spraying. She may also report on Salt Cedar locations. Jim said the county treats Russian Olive infestation and surveys and treats other locations on the refuge. He thought county SWAT crew would complete more contract work for the refuge. Jim thought the refuge would also be working on Medusahead.
6. NRCS-Drew is working on Stinkingwater RCPP, and applications are due November 18th. The state office used old ranking criteria, so it won't be able to work in units 3, 4, or 5 but if RCPP renewal funding comes through may pe able to open new in 2023. If any Crane, Buchanan, or Beavertable landowners come into agency offices for seeding, fire breaks, access road improvement to forward them to NRCS. Drew had maps for Stinkingwater and forest fringe (see attachment}, the new CIS forest-range initiative. It will cover Hwy 20 Riley to Pine Creek, top portion of the county and will include annual grass treatment and forest thinning. Front range priority area for Medusahead would cause land to be ranked higher and applications for that are also due on November 18th. Jason mentioned regarding the RCPP Stinkingwater renewal that the district was not allowed to request more money than the original amount of funding in the first RCPP (~$900K}. Bonnie asked Tyler if he was ready to reapply for the grant. Tyler said he saw these funds coming so he did not and felt the NRCS proposal would be adequate. Jim asked if plan for spraying skips could be done with Rejuvra. Drew thought so and that a contract could be written up. Tyler said he advised landowners if they saw any skips to contact HSWCD. If Rejuvra can't be applied, then impazepec could be used. Jason said the NRCS pays a set amount to the producers. Jason also said the NRCS, district, and Forest Service will have a Two Chiefs meeting this Friday. He asked agencies present if they had idea of weeds there.
7. HDP-Josh said projects were wrapped up in fall. Sixty-nine thousand acres treated with herbicide, half with Rejuvra. Kaylee reviewed the monitoring process. She is in the process of hiring monitoring crews. She said if any agencies present need seasonal technicians, they could be hired through HDP and managed by the other agencies, which could cut red tape. Kaylee is also hiring a project crew to gather data for other agencies (the technicians would not analyze data}. She has names of various technicians to refer to the agencies. College students from TVCC coming home for summer are being sourced. She is also attempting to work with Eastern University and COCC. Kaylee requested the agencies begin letting her know now. HDP may become a clearinghouse for hiring and having a list. Jim said Harney County uses its website, Oregon Employment and Indeed for an application pool. The county has a structured process with scoring, etc. While many county employees come via word of mouth, he thought it would be good to have other avenues. Kaylee is also planning a weed class. Jim suggested Bonnie as a resource
8. County Weed Department-Jim said he is mostly the agency but there are seasonal employees. The department manages 600 miles of right of way up to 10 feet out from the road. The department has a contract with BLM of right away through its land. The department had additional plans for treatment, but then winter hit. The county also does a lot of seeding for BLM. His main problem is employee retention since SWAT crews are seasonal and the state law mandates if employees work a certain number of hours their status is full time with benefits, etc.
9. ODA-Bonnie hopes it will be back to full staff this spring. One seasonal employee left and the department had been unable to fill. Her department has agreements with BLM and other class A priority projects but is currently in a "wait and see status" with election results and subsequent state government turnover. Tim is retiring, but will remain on for some projects. Grant programs are where they are supposed to be but she doesn't know the amount (she anticipates it will be the same as previous}. Regarding projects, the state will attempt to mesh with the county and off load what it can due to staffing. Jim, Bonnie and Sam will meet later to discuss budgets and travel, etc. She said 20 years prior the local ODA had two additional staff but now is just committed to seasonal staff and one regional employee. The ODA is not able to kill the weeds but seeks to empower other agencies. ODA is seeking board members for the Oregon Weed Board, SE Oregon area. There is one person from Lakeview interested but if CWMA meeting attendees present know of anyone to let her know. Jason asked Bonnie to explain the granting process (how goes through OWEB} and she elaborated. INW (Interagency Noxious Weed Symposium)} will be held in December. She suggested all agencies represented at the meeting to consider attending.

New business

1. Grants
   1. County wide Med sage-Tyler will meet with Bonnie for Med Sage locations in Catlow, Riley, Blue Bucket and Marshall Lane. He will get photo points when there is treatment. He needs a good map with locations. P Hill could be with BLM for cost share, could either be free for landowners or match. Poison Creek had hounds tongue.
   2. Poison Creek Knapweed/ Hounds tongue
   3. Purple Loosestrife is a potential grant. The infestation begins at Lamb Ranch. Tyler said there is still no road easement present. Not having legal access is holding up the sale of ranch. Many present may not be familiar with the Loosestrife plant but treatment timing is important. Deer will eat the plant, even if it's not favored. Bonnie said she would support a grant for Loosestrife treatment. Another option would be to combine with another grant for funding. The last time the weed was treated was about 18 years ago. Present treatment would include BLM and some landowners. Bonnie will see if this could be tied into other weed treatments for funding.
   4. Juntura will also go for another grant. Bonnie experienced some push back from landowners during a meeting held the week before. Tyler said he could work with another agency in writing a grant. Skeleton weed moving into that area.
   5. Puncturevine update: Tyler said Teresa Wick (who was recommended for this project} had one weed pull scheduled in Boise that didn't take place. She would be interested in one for Harney County next spring/ summer. Tyler said he would contact a local business or chemical company to see about donating a round of beer and CWMA would donate food for participants.

Meeting adjourned at 3:50 pm. The next meeting will be in January 2023.