**CWMA Monthly Meeting Minutes**

**March 6, 2024 at Harney County Courthouse Basement Conference Room**

Present: Jim Campbell and Jesse Barnes Harney County Weed Board; Tyler Goss, CWMA; Kaylee Littlefield, High Desert Partnership; Travis Miller, Malheur National Wildlife Refuge; Sam Cisney, Bureau of Land Management; Jason Kesling and Barbara Pearson, Harney Soil & Water Conservation District

Present, remote: Randy Wiest, Department of State Lands

Jason called the meeting to order at 1:28 pm. The introductory time was dispensed as all present knew one another. There were no changes or additions to the agenda.

**Item #1—Approval of December, February Meeting minutes**

Jim moved to approve both months’ meeting minutes as presented. Kaylee seconded. There was no one opposed and the motion passed.

**Item #2—Approval of Financial Report**

Jason presented the financial report that showed current grants opened. There is currently an agreement with BLM, but waiting to hear the funding plan for 2024. SOWR II money is not received yet, since there is no agreement with HDP. SOWR II received half FTE for the CWMA. The report showed the primary expense was for salary. Jesse moved; Jim seconded approving financial report. There was no one opposed and the motion passed.

**Item #3—Project Progress and Updates**

1. Tyler provided updates. The CWMA applied for three Oregon weed board grants. The board received more applications than grant funds available, and the only Harney CWMA grant that was funded was for purple loosestrife. Med Sage will be run through Title 2 and there was discussion about how much of an area would be covered. The state didn’t approve the Med Sage grant because there was no landowner buy in. A grant to fund salt cedar treatment will be applied for in fall. This will give additional months to survey using drone. Discussion followed regarding the weed and how to promote the application for funding. While the weed isn’t currently abundant in Harney County, there is an urgency as cattle migrate to and from the refuge. Jesse suggested meeting with affected landowners. She offered to donate her time to survey and explain to landowners. Jason suggested a way for the refuge annual funding to be used for surveying. Jim said he had spoken to Bonnie (from ODA) and felt CWMA has a good chance of the grant being approved in the future; the CWMA just has to present the need for the grant better—perhaps include sage grouse in the proposal.

Tyler suggested the CWMA obtain a newer drone that could survey, and there was discussion if the newer drone could be used on federal land. Jason suggested not purchasing a spraying drone until knowing future funds would be coming in.

Tyler spoke to Matt Wenick from Grant County regarding a drone that can be used to apply herbicide. Matt told him there are applicators from Washington State that work in Grant County, $15-$20 per acre. There is also another drone applicator in Pilot Rock. Jim said there isn’t a drone approved to apply herbicide that can fly on federal land.

Jim said he would like to get a survey drone for BLM federal land purposes. He said he knows of some approved, but (as stated previously) are unable to apply herbicide.

1. Harney CWMA Bylaws/MOA

This was tabled for the next meeting. Tyler will send out a cleaned draft to members following this meeting.

1. Recertification class 2024: Tyler said some people present at today’s meeting attended the recertification class. Tyler said he received mostly positive feedback—the only criticism was the weed ID portion wasn’t as detailed as hoped. There were three vendors present and their participation was appreciated. Sam suggested that when the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) does its regulatory talk it has so many topics; it would be best for ODA presenters have topics pertinent to the area. Tyler said he had confirmed ODA reps would participate with three weeks’ notice. He gave the presenters latitude on subject matter. Jim said in times past the CWMA has requested specifics to the area.

Tyler said he would give better topic direction next year. Jason suggested the CWMA present class agenda items at least two months prior. Tyler plans to schedule the class sometime between January to early February next year so as not to conflict with OVMA. Other scheduling conflicts, additional presenters, and credits awarded to attendees were discussed. Jim said many come to the Harney County class since it’s free. Jesse said it used to be in March (calving conflicted then) so ODOT from Ontario would attend. Tyler asked the group for recommendations or discussion about new products. Jim said the group can help out with subjects to be covered for the class.

1. Member letter (see attached copy): Tyler drafted a letter to be sent to CWMA’s nonactive members to encourage attendance and participation. He asked those present for their opinions and editing suggestions.

Jesse suggested the letter emphasize that as a CWMA member the nonparticipators would be provided the opportunity to addresses concerns on noxious weeds and vegetation and utilize resources not necessarily available to the agency and encourage neighbors. Sam suggested the letter address *why* the CWMA was formed and that participation by those not attending could help achieve formation goals. Jesse said the CWMA provides a voice to agencies who otherwise have none to get assistance in funding. If it’s on private land, then there’s regulatory assistance. Jim said the agencies that currently don’t participate don’t come because they don’t see a need.

Jesse suggested Tyler contact Charisse Soucie from the Burns Paiute Tribe to encourage participation. Discussion on previous projects with tribe followed.

Jim felt letter was a good starting point. Jim moved that the letter be approved pending edits mentioned; Sam seconded. No one was opposed. After the edits, the letter will be mailed to the nonparticipators and active CWMA members (for their information).

**Item#4—Plans for next month:**

1. Jesse informed the CWMA that the Oregon Water Resources Department will change use of ground water for irrigation within the Harney Basin. Water will be shut off on 140 acre pivots and the land will go into dry land wheat production, turn to native plants, or remain unused. She said it would behoove the group to think of ways to present control of noxious weeds. Jim said he has spoken to State Representative Mark Owens, who believes much of the area will go into wheat production and also suggested landowners apply for CREP. Jason said the district will have opportunity to ask NRCS to fund position to work on the groundwater CREP.

Tyler said Klamath County’s weed management has in its bylaws that a landowner wanting to apply for CREP has to address noxious weeds. The county will go after landowners who aren’t treating. Jim said that Rep. Owens supports going after landowners who aren’t dealing with noxious weeds. Jason explained CREP details (Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program) funded through FSA. Jesse mentioned weeds most landowners will address are Russian knapweed, perennial Pepperweed and white top. Jim said there are currently over 40 pivots shut off now and there is not a big noxious weed problem (Harney basin, particularly Lawen area).

1. There are also a couple of new solar farms that will come to Harney County—one off of the Double O Road, an extension of the present farm on Best Lane, and another at Wagontire, on DSL with some private land mixed in. Randy said it will be installed in next couple of years. Jesse said that solar farms have to maintain 80% of plant cover and will have to work with local weed boards and get the approval of landowner. She gave examples of vegetation permitted in solar farms. She said she recommends immigrant forage kosha, since it’s a fire deterrent. .
2. Sam said she will be out of the country end of March/early part of April. The BLM budget not in place yet. She submitted a request for $65K for the CWMA 2024 work.

No other new business. The meeting adjourned at 2:22 pm