

NRCS Hood River County Local Working Group Meeting

January 17th 20203

USFS Ranger Station 6780 Hwy 35 Parkdale, OR 97041

Facilitators: Thomas Snyder and Lauren Bennett

Attendees: Carly Heron (NRCS), Stephanie Payne (NRCS), Hilary Doulos (ODFW/NRCS), Les Perkins (FID, County Commissioner), Kris Schaedel (HRSWCD), Heather Hendrixson (HRSWCD), Patrick Hayden (CTWS), Jon Oliver (ODF), Vance Cates (ODF), Louis Landre (NRCS), Simone Cordery-Cotter (OR State Fire Marshal), Kristin Dodd (ODF), Steve Pappas (EFID), Paulette and Lynn Wittwer (landowners), Damon Brosnan (NRCS), Pattie Wickwire (landowner), Brian Reel (ODF), Thomas Snyder (NRCS), Brian Nakamura (SWCD/EFID), Lauren Bennett (NRCS)

Thomas presented the purpose of the LWG meetings and emphasized the need for local voices to guide the programming and strategies as well as improve the services offered by NRCS. Thomas provided background on NRCS its history and partnership with the SWCD's. Thomas explained that he and Lauren are in a facilitating role so Carly can participate in the meeting. The group went around and introduced themselves and their role in the community.

Carly presented to the group on the NRCS accomplishments of 2022. These included work with the pollinator CIS, the Dukes Valley CIS, RCPP for EFID, Air Quality, the CAP initiative, and the MFID CIS. The group was supportive of all the work that was accomplished. Carly explained that for 2023 there is the Air Quality Program, the RCPP EFID program, the FID CIS and the MFID CIS for irrigation upgrades. Carly applied for the NRCS WaterSMART grant and is looking hopeful that she will be awarded about 4 million dollars for irrigation improvements in MFID. She is hoping to hear officially if the money will be awarded soon. Brian asked about logistics of the WaterSMART grant funds being allocated. Damon said there are still a lot of unknowns and there will be more information coming out. Carly explained that the CSP program may be a better fit for forestry programs in the Hood River Valley than the agricultural programs, simply based on the nature of agricultural practices in the hood river valley.

Stephanie Payne provided the group a presentation on the organic and small farms initiative and the farms transitioning to organic initiatives. She reviewed the projects that were funded. For 2023 the high tunnel program is now under the Food Security Initiative. The Food Security Initiative has a focus on soil health and prioritizes projects that contribute food to low access and low-income areas. She reviewed some of the funded projects. Stephanie expressed interest in having a stronger presence in Hood River County and at educational events.

Lissa with FSA was not in attendance according to the agenda.

Kris Schaedel provided a presentation to the group on the programs from the Hood River SWCD. She also emphasized the need to improve the outreach to landowners on all the different programs from the different agencies serving this region.

Carly presented on the new Forest Health CIS. She explained that Angel had completed most of the work on this prior to taking a new job. Carly went through the CIS and the practices that would be

included in the work. Kristin expressed support and the need for coordination with ODF on the updates to the Oregon Forestry Practices Act. Heather asked about the number of individual landowners that have been identified as potential projects. ODF explained their role in the CIS process of doing the assessments and asked about the procedures with the NRCS programs. Kris expressed that she would like to see the forest health work coincide with the Oregon white oak restoration. This may need to involve education with landowners and follow the developing monitoring protocols groups like ECOP are developing. ODF expressed concerns over the lack of information on treatments and their effectiveness, and also being tied to landowner goals. Simone expressed the support and need for local government to be participating and agencies communicating. She reiterated that there are funds for capacity building. The group was very supportive of the forestry CIS presented and recognized the natural resource need in Hood River and its ability to compliment other programs.

Lauren led a group discussion and activity to discuss what the identified needs on a landscape level are. Damon explained that there will be a lot of funds coming down the line and would like to see the group well prepared to implement these projects and use the money to benefit the natural resources of the county. Heather suggested including a EFID on-farm irrigation improvement CIS. Les asked about PL-566 money for irrigation district infrastructure. Steve expressed a need for water storage and sediment settling in the EFID systems. Brian brought up the long-term need to support crop conversion if due to climate change and water resources it becomes unsuitable to grow pears and cherries in the valley. Kris expressed support to continue the programs that are working. It takes a long time to gain landowner trust and let people know about the programs available, it becomes difficult to make programs successful if they are always changing. Les asked about system upkeep when systems become inefficient after wearing out. The group discussed and it is up to the landowner to maintain their system not for government programs. Heather would like to see a program to support air quality and the use of the air curtain burner. Heather expressed interest in pursuing an opportunity for the HRSWCD and NRCS sharing a position to increase capacity for both organizations. Hillary expressed support for elk and deer/ wildlife corridors and easements. Les also expressed the need for wetland mitigation and riparian corridors. Both Kris and Hillary would like to see the pollinator program continue. Jon asked about carbon credits or the ability of NRCS to hold back funds to ensure that the landowner is maintaining a project. Hillary brought up the idea of an oak specific CIS. Simone also emphasized the need for education among landowners.

The list that was generated by the group and captured by Thomas and Lauren reads as:

EFID irrigation upgrades

Potential PL566

Large infrastructure

EQIP individual on-farm projects

Settling pond for sediment prior to entering canals

Water storage to extend the irrigation season in response to climate change

Incentive to move towards climate resilient crops long term

Water Bank program possibility

Continue to focus on current work don't lose focus on the new thing because good work is happening

Promote use of air curtain burner to treat orchard waste

Staff share between HRSWCD and NRCS streamlined agreement

Elk damage mitigation/ migration corridors/ riparian corridors

Wetland partnership on small acreage/ rural residential

Carbon markets?

Fossil fuel on farm reduction/ cover to renewable energy sources

Continue/extend pollinator cis

Monitoring by partners

Beneficial plantings following structural practices

Weed control

Increase understanding of eastside oak communities and begin to prioritize oak restoration focus

Fire resilience strategies looking at fire resilience landscapes

The group thanked Carly for her work and the meeting concluded at 4pm.

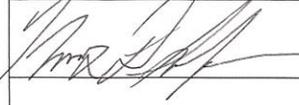
MEETING SIGN-IN SHEET

Project: Hood River County Local Working Group Meeting

Meeting Date: January 17, 2023

Facilitator: Thomas Snyder and Lauren Bennett

Location: 6780 Highway 35 Mt Hood Parkdale

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