

**Strategic Approach to Conservation – Local Work Group Meeting  
Umatilla County**

**Tuesday January 31st, 2023  
10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.**

**Meeting Minutes**

Presenter: Nathan James

Attending:

Heath Hoeft, Trevor Ward, Laurianne Loftus – NRCS

Amanda Lowe-CTUIR DNR

Andrew Addressi-CTUIR DNR

Blair Pottala – FSA

Curtis Engbretson-Westland Irrigation District

Greg Silbernagel – OWRD

Gordy Schumacher – CTUIR DNR

Hans Rudolf, Justin Lauer – ODF

James Baker- Sevin Water (landowner/land manager)

John Punches - OSU

John Warinner-Landowner

Kyle Waggoner - UCSWCD

Louis Landre-NRCS economist

Machados- OSU extension

Tom Straughan- Landowner SWCD board member

---

Nate opened the meeting with review of the past years funding (2018 Farm Bill) and conservation efforts, see Power Point presentation pages 1-7. Nate then reviewed the Long Range Plan resource concerns to refresh everyone prior to discussing by land use.

**Forest Land:**

**Priority Concern: Degraded Plant Condition-Wildfire Hazard**

Current focus is the Ukiah/Dale/Battle Mountain area. Currently have contracts covering 740 acres in RCPP. Looking to add another 830 acres with 2023 EQIP.

Still investigating the I-84 WUI/Macham area. Have had some interest from landowners in the area. Need to start some outreach planning now

John Punches colleague in the John Day area has a tool that may help to refine the areas of interest. Also looking at a multi-landowner management plan rather than one for each.

Gordy mentioned the tribe are doing some work north and south of I-84 currently. Would like to see more state agencies involved. Might need an assessment of readiness on non-tribal lands.

Hans has also been looking at areas in that location for ODF assistance.

**Rangeland/Pastureland:**

**Priority Concern: Degraded Plant Condition, Inadequate Livestock water**

Expired CRP seemed to not become the priority we expected. Most of the acres were re-enrolled. Tom Straughan said there are a lot of acres with weed issues but most of what is coming out of CRP is going into active farming. Definitely need to expand work on invasive species.

County weed has been working with Rejuvra on several areas. Nate passes some daily and it looks like an impressive outcome. Interest was noted in the Grant County applications as well.

Amanda Lowe enquired about expanding the invasive species resource concern to include brush management, Hawthorne particularly.

Huge response to the Inadequate water programs offered across Eastern Oregon. We currently have 15 applications for the funds we have. We will increase outreach to make it better known.

**Cropland:**

**Priority Concern: Soil Quality,**

Expiring CRP fields has been a concern but as discussed earlier that didn't happen. Tom Straughan noted that those CRP fields that did come out seem to be sticking with reduced tillage. They are treating the soil differently than prior to CRP. Reducing this as a priority concern until there is potential for another large amount of acres being released.

Secondary concern of Economics utilizing technology: reducing herbicide and fertilizer input being currently addressed through CSP but some availability with EQIP also exists.

**Irrigated Cropland:**

**Priority Concern: Water quality and quantity – surface and ground**

LUBGWMA area mostly finished with 900+ acres treated. However current issues in that area include widespread contaminated wells. Tom Straughan feels that water testing is the emphasis in that area especially now that POM has been identified as a large part of the issue with improper handling of waste water. The Section Action Plan done 5 years ago doesn't seem to be in play. NRCS will work with SWCD to come up with possible scenarios for assistance.

Walla Walla Basalt Well Irrigators and HID will continue to be developed as future areas of interest.

John Wariner was told about meeting by Nathan Rea. Oregon Water Resources Dept has designated the entire Oregon side of the basin as a Serious Water Mgt Problem Area and are currently studying the entire basin with USGS. Midway through a 3-5 year study. Also a comprehensive water planning effort – Walla Walla Water 2050 Initiative which is also basin wide (OR and WA involved). Most recently the Bureau of Reclamation is starting a study on surface water rather than ground water as the others are doing. Summary is that these studies will be 6-9 years before any assistance will be forthcoming and NRCS programs may be able to help fill in the timeline gaps.

Soil Health also a high priority and we have a current set of contracts on the ground. We are hoping there will be more funding coming for this

**Inflation Reduction Act**

Increased budget for most programs in Climate Smart Ag and Forestry. We are still working on a list of eligible practices and enhancements but any funding through IRA will have to have a positive carbon benefit. More information will be forthcoming as we receive it.

## Land Use Priority Resource Concerns and Areas

### Cropland –

1. Soil Quality- County wide
2. Synthetic input reduction through Ag Technology VRF, precision spray application, precision products, 4R's

### Irrigated cropland-

1. Water Quality/Quantity
  - a. Walla Wall Basalt well irrigators
  - b. Hermiston Irrigation District irrigators
2. Soil Quality- County wide

### Range/pasture-

1. Degraded Pest Pressure –
  - a. Invasive annuals, yellow starthistle, Russian olive, wild rose, other species
2. Inadequate livestock/wildlife water quantity, quality, and distribution
  - a. County wide

### Forestland-

1. Wildfire hazard biomass accumulation
  - a. Ukiah/Battle Mtn.
2. Degraded Plant Condition “insect and disease”
  - a. I84/Meacham