



Gilliam County NRCS Local Work Group Meeting Minutes

Meeting Called to Order on February 9th, 2023, by Jessica Jones at 2:00 pm
USDA Service Center
234 South Main Street
Condon, OR 97823
Transcribed by Jessica Gillen

Attendees

Norie Wright, SWCD
Roger Lathrop, SWCD
Herb Winters, SWCD
Jess Gillen, SWCD
Jessica Jones, NRCS
DelRae Ferguson, NRCS
Jonathan Moncada, NRCS
Kara Lanthorn, FSA
Justin Sirnio, FSA
Johnny Wayne Johnson
Mike Garthwaite
Tim McDonald
Tom Schott
Tim Campbell
Tanner MacIntosh
Joli and Ryan Munkers
Matt Kamerrer
Dustin Hill and Katie
Lisa Wade and Alex
Ben and Clara S
John Anderson
Craig Robinson

Agenda

❖ **New Business**

- Welcome/Housekeeping/Introductions
- Partner Updates
- Farm Bill Program – FY22-23
- Fiscal Year 2024 Funding Pools
- Inflation Reduction Act Funding/Future Allocation

New Business

❖ **Staff & Partner Introductions:**

- DelRae Ferguson – District Conservationist, Acting Basin Resource Conservationist
- Jessica Jones – Soil Conservationist, Acting District Conservationist
- Jonathan Moncada – Soil Conservationist



- Herb Winters – Gilliam County Soil and Water Conservation District, District Manager
- Kara Lanthorn – Farm Service Agency, CED

❖ **Partner Updates:**

• **SWCD, Herb Winters:**

- **RCPP**-Gilliam County is the lead partner for this program. Main responsibilities for this program include the following: assisting with applications, conducting inventory, organize cultural surveys, certify practices, BDA design work and monitoring.
- **FIP**- \$1,135,000 dollars to date with two more years of funding available. Projects under the FIP include Butte/Thirtymile Monitoring, Snption Designs, East Fork Designs, Wilson BDAs, Thirtymile Floodplain Analysis, Snption BDAs, Upper Thirtymile Monitoring Phase 2, Thirtymile Hydrologic Assessment and Thirtymile Steelhead/Bass Interaction.
- **OWEB Open Solicitation**- Focus areas are Hay Creek, Butte Creek and Ferry Canyon. Will be able to fund the same practices as NRCS. The project cost is \$150,000. NRCS RCPP will be used as match. The SWCD currently has 12 open solicitation large grants open.
- **Place-Based Planning**- Grant started in 2016. It was a 5-step planning process that was locally led with 17 stakeholders. Integrated Water Resource Plan was adopted by the Water Resources Commission in June 2022. The group was awarded \$250k for more planning with biological assessment, irrigation efficiency inventory, municipal need assessment, floodplain analysis for Rock Creek and Butte Creek.
- **CBASS**- The Columbia Basin Aerial Surveying and Sensing grant started in 2018. The Gilliam SWCD partnered with Morrow SWCD. The contract ran from 2018 to 2022 and accumulated over 450 flights. A new CBASS agreement will be executed in 2023 and will be a 5-year contract.
- **CREP**- The CREP program was established in 1999. Currently there is around 3,000 acres under contract in Gilliam County. The Farm Service Agency and OWEB cover installation costs, mid management practice costs and a yearly payment. Cost share for spring developments and brush management are available. BDAs are now allowed in existing buffers of the CREP acreage.
- **Small Grant Program**- Administered by the Gilliam East John Day Watershed Council. Practices include spring developments, brush management, cross fencing, etc. There is a \$15k cap on each project. The contact for Small Grant Program is Katie Garthwaite with the GEJDWC.
- **Other Programs** – Agrimet Weather Stations, Weed Advisory Committee, Avangrid Solar Donation, Lonerock Juniper Planning.
- **Annual Meeting & Dinner** – Will be held March 14th at 6:00pm at the St



John's Catholic Church Parish Hall. Dustin Johnson the Range Scientist and Katie Wollstein Regional Rangeland Fire Specialist at the Western Oregon Ag Research Center will be presenting.

- **FSA, Kara Lanthorn:**

- New CED for the Condon office was hired. Start date not yet established.
- Temporary Program Technician position opening. This position will potentially turn into a full-time permanent position.
- Emergency Relief Program deadline is June 2nd. In 2020-2021 the ERP program dispersed 2.5 billion dollars. The payment limitation is based on number of applicants.
- No CRP signup announced at this time. 5k acres potentially available which will be highly competitive.
- CREP signup is available now.
- Livestock Forage Program may become available if the county enters D2 drought level for 8 consecutive weeks. The county is currently in D1 drought level. CRP grazing will become available when the county reaches D2 for 8 consecutive weeks.
- ALC/PLC signup deadline is March 15th, 2023.

- ❖ **Farm Bill Program – FY22-23:**

- **EQIP (Environmental Quality Incentives Program):**

- Drought & Wildfire Watering Strategy is offered throughout the basin. Livestock watering available on grazing lands with preference given to projects that would provide adequate water storage to support fire management. Currently obligating contracts. There were 5 applications and 3 are expected to get funded. Practices include planting, fence, pipeline, grazing, pumping plant, spring development, watering facility and wells. \$125,000 was requested for Gilliam County fiscal year 2023.
- Wildlife Friendly Travel Corridors is to facilitate natural wildlife movement in deer and elk winter range and decrease wildlife damage to fences. Currently working on obligating contracts. There were 7 applications and all 7 are expected to get funded. Practices include woven wire removal, obstruction removal, structures for wildlife, prescribed grazing and upland wildlife habitat management. \$200,000 was requested for Gilliam County for fiscal year 2023.

- **RCPP (Regional Conservation Partnership Program):**

- The Regional Conservation Partnership Program goal is to protect and enhance over 40 miles of critical steelhead habitat in the Lower John Day Basin. Practices include BDAs, brush management, fence, weed control, prescribed burning, seeding, forest stand improvement, livestock water developments, access road improvements, cover crop and WASCOP's. There will be a Rejuvra spray cost share available as well. Ranking deadline for fiscal year 2023 is March 17th.

- **EQIP-CIC (Environmental Quality Incentives Program- Conservation Initiative Contracts):**

- 41.8 million was given to 4 states to help alleviate drought impacts. In 2021 two contracts were awarded for a total of \$209,624. Current EQIP-CIC focus is on soil health on irrigated annual cropland. The budget was reduced to \$200,000 for the entire basin. In 2022 no contracts were awarded in Gilliam or Wheeler.



- **CSP (Conservation Stewardship Program):**
 - Jason Flowers is the new OWGL Program Director who is planning on adding new enhancements to the CSP program. For fiscal year 2023 the NRCS is currently taking applications for CSP classic (open signup for new contracts). There were 9 CSP renewals (contracts that are expiring), and all 9 were funded.
- **Updated 2023 Cost Share Rates:**
 - The NRCS has increased the cost share rates for practices for the new EQIP and RCPP contracts. In previous years the cost share rates for producers and beginning farmer and rancher (HU) was 50% - 75%(HU). The new 2023 cost share rates are increased to 75% - 90%(HU).
- ❖ **Fiscal Year 2024 Funding Pools:**
 - Year 1 – Livestock water and woven wire removal.
 - Year 3 – RCPP, will run another 2 years and potentially more if extension is requested.
 - No new CIS planned for Gilliam County currently.
- ❖ **Inflation Reduction Act:**
 - Signed into law on August 18th, 2022. Approximately \$20 billion dollars will go to NRCS programs. Most of this funding pool will come in fiscal year 2024 through the EQIP, RCPP and CSP programs. The focus will be climate smart practices that reduce greenhouse gas emissions or sequester carbon.
- ❖ **Public Comment**
 - There was concern from producers on skeleton and other weeds popping up around the county in hard to reach places. Drone Spraying was asked about by a producer and whether there was any funding potential for it. DelRae mentioned the “Weed It” may be an option for FY24. The inquiring producers were encouraged to attend the Weed Advisory Committee Meeting which will be held February 14th at 12:00pm at the USDA Service Center in Condon.
 - DelRae informed producers the NRCS is looking into funding for virtual fence cost share. Virtual fencing requires a GPS collar for the cow as well as a tower for signal. There is a great presentation on virtual fencing on the OSU website.

Next Meeting

- 2024, TBA

Next Meeting Agenda Items

- TBA

Adjournment

Meeting Adjourned by Jessica Jones, NRCS, at 2:48 pm

Approved

Date

3/6/23

Jessica Jones, NRCS