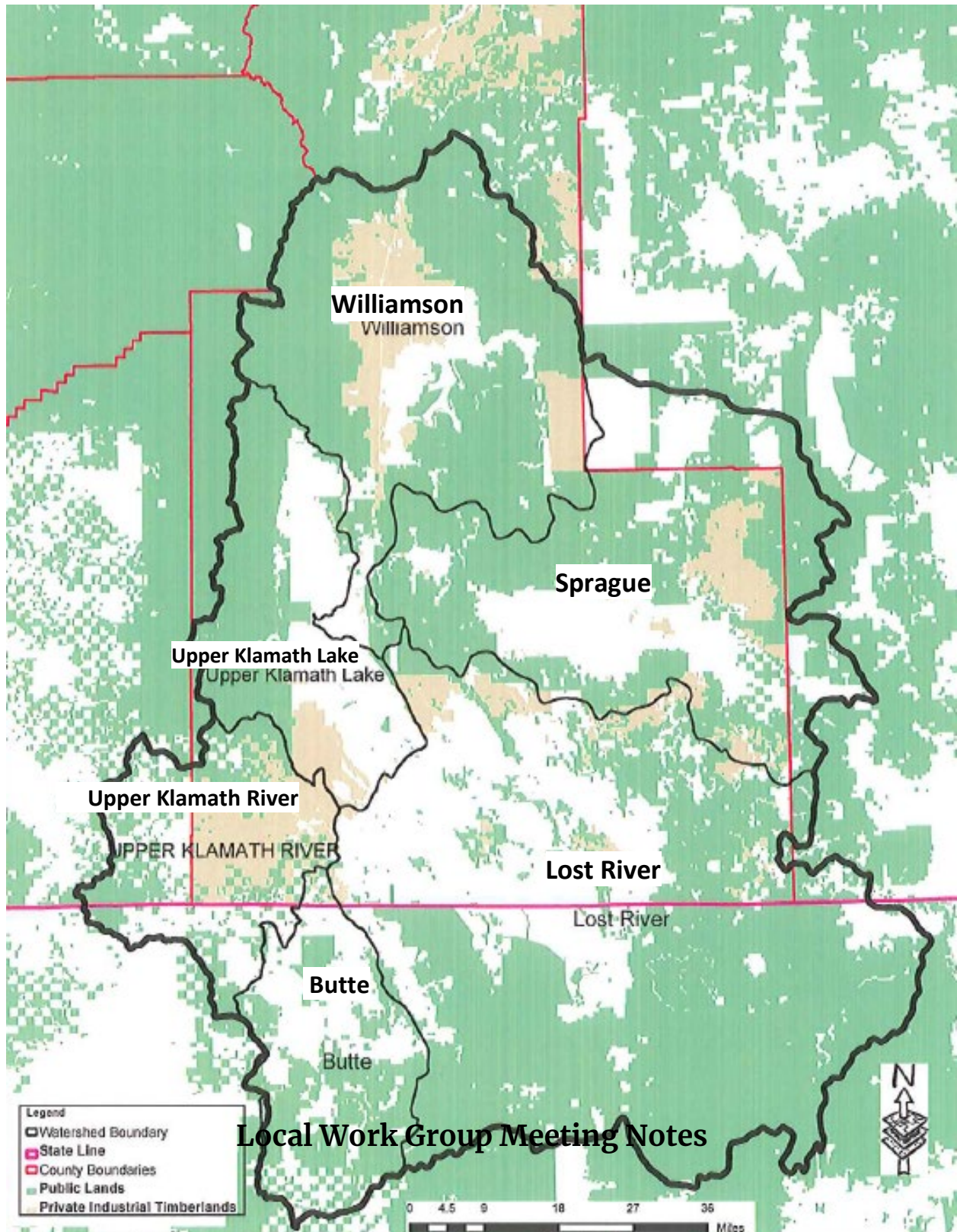


Klamath County with Major Hydrologic Sub Basins



Local Work Group Meeting Notes

9:00–11:45, Government Center Room #219, Klamath Falls OR 97601, Zoom Option Provided

Presenter/Facilitator: Will Natividad (SWCD), Josh Elke (NRCS)

Attendees: (both in-person and virtually)

Organizations: Klamath Soil and Water Conservation District (KSWCD), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF), US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Trout Unlimited (TU), Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA), US Bureau of Recreation (BOR), Klamath Watershed Partnership (KWP), Energy Trust of Oregon, Klamath Irrigation District (KID), Klamath Drainage District (KDD), Horsefly Irrigation District (HID), Oregon Wheat Growers League.

Individuals: Kasey Johnson (ODF), Jason Pettigrew (ODF), Ian Anderson (Sustainable Northwest), Kelley Delpit (Sustainable Northwest), Brian Hidden (USFWS), Tommy Cianciolo (Trout Unlimited), Sam Fletcher (SWCD), Ken Masten (Landowner/SWCD), Justin Eary (Horsefly Irrigation District), Brad Moore (Energy Trust of Oregon), Bill Lehman (KWP), Mark Johnson (KWP), Leigh Ann Vradenburg (KWP), Jeff Kerber (KWP), Nina Andrews (ODA), Henry Robinson (NRCS), Josh Elke (NRCS), Charles Dehlinger (Landowner), Ann Walker (Ann Walker Consulting), Jason Flowers (Oregon Wheat Growers League), Scott White (KDD).

Introductions and Map Review: 9:00-9:25

Will Natividad began the meeting by facilitating introductions of everyone present both in-person and virtually, including their name, title, and organization. A brief overview and map of the area were presented. Josh Elke explained the purpose of this meeting is to look at the county on a watershed scale, in order to explore land uses (cropland, pasture/range, forestry) and assess current needs to be reported back to the State Conservationist. Watersheds discussed were the Lost River, Sprague River, Williamson River, Upper Klamath Lake, and Upper Klamath River and Butte.

Primer Questions and General Discussion: 9:25-9:45

The floor was opened with the primer questions located on the agenda. There was some discussion about barriers to implementation and how data sharing between local agencies can be problematic due to privacy issues. This can make coordination between agencies difficult and duplicated requests made by the landowner have resulted in unnecessary confusion for all parties involved. A local workgroup called the “Upper Klamath Basin Restoration Practitioners” consisting of federal, state, tribal, non-profit is currently tackling how to share more fluently. Another challenge mentioned were the inconsistencies with funding levels requested with general EQIP funds and service areas with Conservation Implementation Strategies. NRCS funding models have recently incorporated new conservation funding models and with larger serving areas to outline watershed

boundaries and their resource concerns. As a result, requests are received throughout a majority of the county.

Lost River: 9:45-10:05

Priority Concerns: Irrigation Improvements, Fuels Mitigation

NRCS currently has a CIS in this area for drought resiliency and irrigation improvements, focusing on converting wheel-line to pivot. The Lost River area also has a large amount of un-piped mainline irrigation ditches, with a lot of landowners interested in piping them. However, there does not currently seem to be a good, clear funding source currently for these larger scale mainline piping projects, other than PL 566, which is not used for any on-farm funding. There is also a growing need for land leveling in this area, which would in turn improve irrigation efficiency for landowners as well. Several local agencies including KWP and the KSWCD have received calls from landowners interested in this conservation practice. According to Josh, NRCS has secured funding for the first time this year for land leveling.

There is a CIS in this area focusing on juniper removal. The current demand from planned projects exceed the budget for funding. There was also discussion on the need to address long-term juniper removal strategies as well. When juniper is cut down, the berries from the trees spread throughout the area, and juniper are very prolific trees. Pesticides or chemicals as a treatment option were discussed, but ultimately treating juniper with burning seemed to be the best solution for preventing spread of the trees, but it's not a popular method with landowners due to the risk. Oregon Department of Forestry Jason Pettigrew discussed how fire would be nice to see more of, but the liability and cost-share available isn't enough to implement. A combination of chemical and prescribed fire may be needed moving into the post-treatment scenarios of our existing work.

Sprague River: 10:05-10:25

Priority Concerns: Irrigation Upgrades, Livestock watering facilities

NRCS does have approximately \$1 Million of projects scheduled to be implemented this year for this area, involving irrigation upgrades. Most of the pasture/rangeland in this area was burned in the Bootleg Fire. A lot of landowners also are still unable to irrigate, however there was a Dryland Forage Workshop held by Ian MacGregor at OSU where landowners were able to learn about dryland forage options. There is still an ongoing need for stockwater wells in the area too. Several agencies including KWP and KSWCD routinely receive landowner calls for stockwater wells. There was some funding available for the wells near riparian areas in the past through NRCS's Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) and most recently through Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) to help address immediate needs.

Williamson River: 10:25-10:45**Priority Concerns: Fuels Mitigation**

There are some ongoing restoration projects on private properties involving water gaps and riparian fencing. As far as forestry, the area has a large amount of either dead or drought-stressed trees, which results in a significant wildfire risk. Jason Pettigrew emphasized the importance of fire mitigation work and landowner outreach and education on the fire risks in this area, and that it should be a priority in the near future.

Break : 10:45-10:50**Upper Klamath Lake: 10:50-11:10****Priority Concerns: Wildlife Habitat, Fuels Mitigation**

This area is in an existing programmatic strategy for Waterfowl production with an RCPP, which will end in 2025. The focus of the program is wetland wildlife habitat. Farmers are compensated for flooding their land during certain times of the year for certain durations.

Leigh Ann Vradenburg has been working on outreach and education in areas with fire risk alongside the Oregon Department of Forestry. They're currently working on mapping and determining priority focus areas for the west side of Klamath Lake. It's a landscape that has a public and private land ownership base that's been difficult to navigate with the Conservation Implementation Strategy approach. Conservation Stewardship Program has also been investigated and had its limitations with immediate pre-commercial thinning financial assistance available.

Upper Klamath River/Butte: 11:10-11:30**Priority Concerns: Fuels Mitigation, Pest Pressure**

This area is mostly forestry-focused, with a small amount of cropland/range. There is a small amount of Ash trees in this area, and the Emerald Ash Borer has been problematic in other areas of this state. However, the Emerald Ash Borers tend to prefer larger clusters of Ash trees, and there are very few in this area according to Jason Pettigrew, Oregon Department of Forestry. It was mentioned that funding for oak could be beneficial in this area to consider in the future and its stretches near Running Y Resort and Keno.

Public Comment/Other: 11:30-11:45

Kelley Delpit emphasized how elaborate partnerships are working together in the Klamath Basin to help increase landowner awareness of federal and state programs now more than ever. There was a consensus from all groups present that building better partnerships to support NRCS could help get funding on the ground more efficiently; operational resiliency compliments ecological resilience. Bill Lehman brought up the fact that more training between agencies would also reduce

any overlap in projects and enable agencies to focus on what they are most experienced and specialized in. Collaboration during initial site visits on resource inventory data collection processes may allow for quicker stacking of programs and incentives to make accomplishing conservation projects easier.

Everyone present was thanked for their attendance and contributions to the meeting.