

Crook County NRCS Local Workgroup Meeting Minutes

The Meeting was called to order on February 7th 2017 at 1:00pm at the Crook County Extension office in Prineville, Oregon by Chris Mundy, NRCS District Conservationist.

Everyone introduced themselves and a sign-in sheet was passed around the table

Chris gave an overview of the Local Workgroup Process then explained the NRCS Strategic Approach to Conservation followed by descriptions and progress relating to the past and present Conservation Implementation Strategies (CIS's). Current CIS's including the Sage Grouse Initiative and ACEP/ALE were explained to the group.

Current Resource Needs and potential CIS's that have been brought to NRCS's attention over the last year were examined.

The Potential CIS's included:

Mule Deer Habitat focusing in the Maury Mule Deer Initiative area - Chris

Mesic Habitat Restoration – Chris and Christina Santana

Soil Health in the Powell Butte Area – Chris and Jenni Moffitt

At this point, Chris asked all the participants to give their input on the suggested CIS's and provide any additional concerns or potential CIS Suggestions they may want addressed or considered.

Tim Deboodt, OSU Extension: Suggested there is a long term and continued interest in the Camp Creek Watershed and suggested moving back to a geographic focus. Also wanted to know how any of the suggested CIS might tie into a Two Chief proposal. Suggested Irrigation Water Management in Powell Butte and is not sure landowners are ready to adopt soil health. Suggested using Mylen Bohle if we do address soil health. Lower Crooked River Irrigation/River Management/Water Quality. Suggested a potential Annual Grass CIS.

At this point, the McKay Creek Irrigation project was explained by Kate Fitzpatrick with DRC. She provided a handout and gave history and planned future of this project. Tim had questions about water and infrastructure which Kate answered. Kate explained they are hoping to secure NRCS funding for the on-farm portion of the project which would potentially involve about 20 landowners

Garry Sanders, Crooked River Watershed Council explained that landowners he has worked with in the area are waiting for irrigation certainty before doing any instream work.

Russ Rhoden, OID explained that the reduced power rate was needed to make the project pencil.

Priscilla Johnson, Crook SWCD voiced concern about landowner buy-in and asked if landowners opting out could jeopardize the project – Kate responded it wouldn't be ideal but will be addressed when or if it arises.

Tim asked if the converted water rights will be flood or sprinkle and Russ answered it must be sprinkle. –Kate and Tim discussed return flow relative to flood/sprinkle/duration of irrigation. Total water right is 11.2 cfs and total irrigated acres are 650.

Back to discussion of proposed and suggested CIS's Stu Otto, ODF suggested re-applying for the Two Chief proposal and voiced concern that the Mule Deer CIS might create a conflict between fuel/fire and mule deer habitat. Brush for deer might be bad for fire.

Christina Santana, NRCS Likes the Mule Deer CIS idea and the potential to focus on concerns already identified by ODFW. She also explained that the Mesic Habitat CIS would improve and enhance Sage Grouse Habitat.

Jenni Moffit, NRCS – Likes Mule Deer and can help with soil health if needed

Andy Gallagher, Crook SWCD– Likes Camp Creek and Mule Deer.

Garry Sanders- Talked of DSL permits for BDA's if mesic habitat CIS is chosen and wants to know who will help the landowners with the permits. Likes the mesic CIS but most will be in the eastern half of the county and has concern with Farm Bill limits and associated participation level. Re-apply for two chief. Suggested potential RCPP for lower Crooked River. Hasn't been much NRCS focus in Powell Butte and suggests looking that way. Hotspots of Dry Canyon, Lyttle Creek.

Nicholle Kovach, NRCS – Suggested use of moisture meters in Powell Butte with IWM for water quality. Reminded Kate that if current irrigation system on McKay is sprinkle, that a 15% water savings must be shown to be eligible for NRCS cost share. Camp Creek structures currently in place that were installed by NRCS are working and suggested more of those.

Darren Mitchell, NRCS– No Comment.

Brenda Hallmark, BLM/Ochoco NF- Liked Mule Deer and thinks it can potentially tie into another Two Chief proposal

Michelle McSwain, Private Citizen - McKay and Mule Deer CIS both good – likes the multi treatment approach. Mentions that there is potential on Grizzly Mountain to do much good. Would like to see a collaborative effort between BLM and private landowners in the next couple years near Grizzly. She believes BDA's are band-aids and should be avoided.

Kevin Keown, USFS- particularly likes the Mule Deer idea – likes multiple benefits and a suite of practices to address the resource concerns. Kevin explained the Joint Chief Proposal and would like to resubmit next year. We need State Office buy in to be successful on the joint chief proposal. Hopes that whatever we decide can be used as match to the Joint Chief Proposal. Perhaps an OWEB FIP could be used to match a Joint Chief.

Kate, DRC – Likes Mule Deer CIS and McKay. Reminded us that there are two groups currently working on IWM in Powell Butte – One is led by Ellen Hammond and the other is OSU/DRC/SWCD/COID – suggested we talk to these groups if we pursue a Powell Butte CIS>

Greg Jackal, ODFW – Mule Deer CIS good Ties into the Maury MDI. Maury MDI has expanded into Ochoco and Silvies. They have three active projects in the Horseheaven area. Discussed the Beaver Transplant program in Crook County.

Priscilla Johnson, SWCD- No comment

Russ Rhoden, OID – Mule Deer Good CIS. We are missing the point if we are only thinking of the McKay Creek project as an irrigation efficiency project. It will benefit the fish and the creek is one of the only ones left intact without a dam on it and fish. They are still working on the FCA project and he gave us a quick summary of how it is going. LIDAR Should be really good when it gets here.

Tim Deboodt, OSU Extension – Mule Deer Thing – spent a week in St. George UT and found out that 1% PJ negatively effects Sage Grouse. Wants to caution sending a mixed message to landowners on juniper cutting. SGI – cut them all --- MDI – leave some for deer cover.

Chris thanked everyone for their input and participation and meeting was dismissed.