

2018 UMATILLA COUNTY LOCAL WORK GROUP MEETING MINUTES

Location: Pendleton Round-Up, Let 'er Buck Room

Date: January 30, 2018

Time: 10:00am – 12:00pm

INTRODUCTION

Nate James led the work group meeting. He discussed the agenda and topics to be covered at the meeting which was followed by a slide presentation accompanied by continuing discussion about the topics being presented.

Objectives of the meeting included:

- Farm bill program expenditures, 2002-present
- Past/present projects
- Review of long range plans
- Develop/review specific resource priorities by land use

The presentation included an overview of NRCS programs and strategizing how to best implement these programs in Umatilla County. Focus was on locally driven programs, such as EQIP. Long range plans were presented and agreed upon by the group. They include the following:

Resource Concerns

- Water Quantity
- Water Quality
- Noxious Weeds
- Soil Health
- Degraded Plant Condition (Forest)
- Overstocked stands
- "Pests & Disease" "wildfire" "noxious weeds"
- Degraded Plant Condition (Rangeland)
- "noxious weeds" "forage quantity/quality"
- Riparian Health
- Energy-inefficient use

Discussion followed to determine how best to spend farm bill dollars within the county. The goal was to identify the top two priority concerns and two areas of focus within each of the two priority concerns, for each land use category. The land use categories included:

- Forestland
- Cropland
- Rangeland/Pasture
- Irrigated Cropland
- Added Riparian

FORESTLAND

Discussion included identifying concerns in forestland and addressing possible mitigation or control strategies. Prescribed fires, insect issues, plant stand density, pine monocultures, and the identification of locations where these issues were a concern were discussed. The following priorities were identified:

- Priority Concern I: Degraded plant condition - Wildfire hazard excessive biomass accumulation.
 - Priority Area I: Meacham and North Umatilla were identified as areas of concern, as well as Weston Mtn. /Langdon Lake. It was posited that NRCS could be involved with the reintroduction of native grasses to this region after fire.
 - Priority Area II: Density in commercial size woods.
- Priority Concern II: Increase in Pine Beetle populations.
 - Priority Area I: Request for larger funding pool to accommodate multiple project sites.
 - Priority Area II: Increase of insect populations after occurrence of fire.

CROPLAND

NRCS presented soil health and quality as areas of focus for cropland management – transitioning from controlling soil erosion to identifying and mitigating the sources of soil erosion. Cropland is important in Umatilla County and has an opportunity to utilize EQIP funding. Discussion followed to decide how best to implement these strategies in Umatilla County.

- Priority Concern I: Soil quality (in dryland systems).
 - Priority Area I: Expiring CRP acres – soil changing after 20 years of being in CRP.
 - Priority Area II: Accuracy of soil tests look at Solvita
- Priority Concern II: Resistant weed populations.
 - Priority Area I: Development of IPM strategies.
 - Priority Area II: Identifying and working with other producers that have experience with the same resistant weed populations.

RANGELAND/PASTURE

Discussed how expiring CRP contracts will affect rangeland and pasture. Waiting for new farm bill to have answers to some of the questions regarding expiring CRPs. Upland ponds were suggested as a way to ease inadequate livestock water supplies, but it was determined that permitting issues regarding the implementation of upland ponds needed to be resolved through the state. Creation of dugout ponds was suggested as an alternative solution.

- Priority Concern I: Degraded plant condition.
 - Priority Area I: Expiring CRP acres.
 - Priority Area II: Developing a suite of practices to facilitate managing as pastured cropland.
- Priority Concern II: Inadequate livestock water.
 - Priority Area I: Drought dollars to drive funding.
 - Priority Area II: Dugout ponds, Range Unit 12 CTUIR

IRRIGATED CROPLAND

The workgroup wanted to identify and discuss programs available through the NRCS that address surface and groundwater quantity and quality issues. Issues of water quantity and quality focused on increasing soil health to increase irrigation efficiency. Riparian areas in the flatlands and hills were mentioned as areas of concern. Implementing beaver dam analogs were mentioned as possible strategies. Discussion centered on trying to determine how best to increase soil health as that has been shown in other irrigated dryland systems in Oregon to reduce water usage.

- Priority Concern I: Water quantity; surface and groundwater sources.
 - Priority Area I: Umatilla
 - Priority Area II: Walla Walla. Currently, there is no application for a funding pool. It was concluded that more time need to be invested into exploring the creation of a funding pool.
- Priority Concern II: Soil Health.
 - Priority Area I: County wide.

MISC. DISCUSSIONS

- Promotion and investments in small farm operations, new farmers, and organic farming in Umatilla County.
 - TIP program – taking CRP acres. Creating a map for younger generations to find small farming opportunities.
 - Targeting FSA and schools for outreach on these issues.