

Minutes of the Malheur County Local Work Group meeting- February 8, 2018

The meeting began at approximately 1:05pm.

Aaron Roth served as the facilitator.

Aaron welcomed everyone, took care of some logistical items and then had everyone introduce themselves. Aaron then went through the meeting purpose and objectives.

Lynn Larsen gave a presentation about current NRCS programs and implementation strategies. He also talked about current county priority resource concerns and led a discussion to find out if priorities have changes. It was generally agreed that the current prioritization of resource concerns is accurate and should stand.

Partners were then asked to give updates relevant to the meeting.

Partner updates:

Jason-BLM-Project in NW Malheur county- Beulah reservoir to Ironside. Updating/maintaining roads and fire lines in that area. Wants to work with private landowners as well. NEPA is complete on this project.

Gary Faw-SWCD: Projects across Malheur working with other partners to complete projects. As far as irrigation projects, trying to work in same areas as NRCS to work together on cost-sharing projects. Lots of stream restoration and juniper projects happening as well.

Nicole Sullivan-Trout Unlimited: Secured \$1.3 million in funds for projects across NV, ID, and OR. RCPP projects main focus. No funds issued yet but working through process of ranking soon.

Karen Linedecker: OWEB- play that LOTTO!!

Duane-Idaho Power: Incentive programs for on farm irrigation implementation (updating of systems). Grants have to be applied before any purchases have been made. ID power has meeting in 2 weeks

Mark Carpenter-OID: Finished Twilight pipeline, working towards Vista pipeline. In future years, funding focus will be towards fixing the several issues on the Siphon.

Clint Shock-OSU Extension: Irrigation scheduling/software to transfer moisture data from sensors to smart phones. Working on foundation seed plots for Bluebunch Wheatgrass. Have 14/16 of the ecotypes.

Break

The participants were asked to join one of two break-out sessions to help NRCS identify future implementation. There were two sessions, 1. Range and 2. Irrigated Crop

Range Break-out Session:

Jason-BLM spread out big map to go over their strategic plan working in the NW Malheur area. They are doing juniper cuts, combating invasive annual grasses and fuel/fire breaks. In the future wanting to move toward heavier forestry areas near Castle Rock. Potentially looking at working with NRCS and getting cooperative agreements with private landowners in the proposed project area (NW Malheur) to enhance and implement road maintenance and plant fuel breaks in those areas.

Ken Jensen wanted to know how the BLM got the county to take a proactive role on maintaining/grading roads. They won't even begin to entertain the idea of grading roads on Cottonwood.

LeRoy wanted to know how do we fund these projects and who funds them? Possibility of partnership/grant money on private lands for this project area. BLM wouldn't fund private land but could still contract and do work (my understanding). Also if NRCS or partners were to help fund private landowners, would have to comply/use BLM's plans and planting recommendations. Aaron mentioned the possibility of CIS in that area/ cooperative with BLM to fund project with them. Keep a continuous fire break.

Fuel breaks are consisting of vegetative practices-resistance & resilience. Using native plants where they can but also low statured plants, non-natives as well. 200 feet wide on each side of the road proposed widths for breaks. Idea is taking a proactive approach to fires and getting them stopped sooner with these fire breaks. Also have proposals for Tri-State area, Soldier creek/Parsnip, Cow lakes.

Walt Scott wanted to know if the BLM's acceptance of using non-natives for fire breaks was different than regular range rehabilitation. Jason said they use non-natives a lot even with ESR projects, just depends on the site and ability to combat invasives etc

Nicole-would this be a potential project for RCPP? What is future of RCPP? Working with partners again to leverage funds (potential to spend \$\$ on BLM lands?? NV had an example of this) Aaron replied with the possibility of CIS and RCPP is looking to continue in future.

Walt- landowners/producers/people on the ground (including BLM) should have a say in the seed mix planting- not from national. Often times plant mix comes from who knows where and cost is so high and likely hood of success is very low. BLM-completely site dependent on low elevation and low precip zones. Have started using non-natives to ensure success in areas.

Aaron-BLM planning on doing any stockwater improvements in proposed project area? BLM plans on doing some spring improvements as well as water for fire (ability for helicopters to use) also planned in NW Malheur.

LeRoy- don't limit project to just one area. This is an issue across county. Try to implement work in all areas.

Ken Jensen- any programs coming up to help spread cattle out on the range by distributing water?

Aaron- EQIP funds have been used under drought funding previously but not available right now. BLM is on same page that stockwater systems (existing) need to be revamped to help spread out cattle.

Irrigated Crop Break-out session

Priority Areas:

- Jacobsen Gulch/Hyline
- Harper/Little Valley
- Valley Views
- Overstreet
- 136 Lateral (Mitchell Butte)
 - 2 owners
 - About 600 acres
- Willow Creek

Strategic Planning:

Proactive approach by OID – District Driven (not just reacting to immediate problems)

- OID – BIP Grant SIP
- OID has data for existing checks, headgates, etc as a good start for overall planning
- Would be great to get input further in advance.

- Think long term

SWCD has water sampling data for many years

LIDAR/Systems analysis

Long range planning needs flexibility to react to factors such as climate change.

Landowner Perspective:

- It would be very helpful to producers if the government process could be simplified and quicker.
- Grants take too long
- Need more consistent delivery
- Problem if just outside CIS
- Reduced runoff from new pivot projects can be problematic to downstream users who depend on use of runoff

Summaries of the break-out sessions were given and then the meeting was adjourned.