

2019 UMATILLA COUNTY LOCAL WORK GROUP MEETING MINUTES

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

Date: January 29, 2019

Time: 10:00am – 12:00pm 12:00-1:00 Lunch

Nate James led the work group meeting. He discussed the agenda and topics, along with a slide presentation. After a recap of previous Farm Bill expenditures and priorities, the current Farm Bill was discussed including:

- All current programs received funding
- Specific funds were targeted for Energy Use issues
- More funds into the EQIP pool
- Bill in evaluation, full distribution of funding still being decided

This discussion concluded that further meetings will be scheduled within each major resource concern once all changes and funding pools have been finalized.

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

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

Identified as a top priority for the county, target area was identified in Weston Mt/Langdon Lake area. Discussion included lack of participation in previous target area of I-84 corridor/Tollgate; non-targeted approach did not work. Suggestion was made that more outreach/targeted approach to high risk land owners could increase participation. ODF stated they are looking at starting into the new target (Weston) from the end of the previous target (Tollgate). Also, ODF currently has about 25 interested participants in the Mill Creek or South Fork area for possible National funding in that watershed.

Priority concern 1: Degraded Plant condition Wildfire hazard/Excessive biomass

Top Priority area- Tollgate/Langdon Lake “currently working”

Secondary Priority Areas: MillCr, South Fork,

Priority concern 2: Degraded plant condition; insect and disease “Pine Beetle” post wildfire

Top priority area; Meacham, Indian lake

PASTURE/RANGELAND

Expiring CRP options were discussed including grazing and low impact till. Question regarding enhancement of existing grass stands to make area more palatable for grazing. Question regarding fencing, fire in CRP burned fencing.

Invasive species, specifically Yellowstar were discussed. Question asked are we targeting a species or an area; suggestion was made of making a list with target species as well as use of drones to determine a percentage of area needing attention.

Water concerns raised, possibility of pond development rather than spring development however inability to get permits still an issue.

Priority concern I: Degraded Plant conditions/Soil Health

Priority Area I- Expiring CRP

Priority Area II- county listed noxious weeds “yellow star thistle, rush skeleton weed”

Priority concern II: Inadequate livestock/wildlife water

Further discussion needed on developing priority areas for multi-use; including firefighting

CROPLAND

Discussion of where funds are best spent; soil health, new technology/precision Ag, fire management. Issues raised include large variances between tech levels in producers, lack of participation in flex cropping and how to “think like a grower”. One producer stated that cover crops are not realistic for dry land farming, need to look at rotations, forage crops, think outside the box.

There was much interest in the question of if there is ever a “reset” to the double payment rule, especially as the new Farm Bill is interpreted. One producer mentioned his father did previous upgrades that may now need updating.

Priority concern: Soil Quality

Priority areas: Expiring CRP maintaining that soil structure and function

Priority concern: Economics using new technology to reduce inputs

Priority application 1: Variable rate fertility “using full capability of the technology”

Priority application 2: advanced herbicide application “weed it” or other chlorophyll sensing application technologies “using them appropriately and to their full potential”

IRRIGATED CROPLAND

The group discussed the best strategy moving forward. More emphasis placed on reducing water usage, i.e. moving from flood irrigation to circles/wheel lines rather than upgrading existing pipelines. Producers asked if there was help available to plan group contracts, especially when individual water rights are involved. Mention was made of possibly crossing county/state lines to include more producers. Nate suggested further individual meetings on this aspect.

Priority concern: Water quantity/quality

Priority Area 1: Umatilla Basin "LUBGWMA"

Priority Area 2: Walla Walla Basin unincorporated water users/basalt wells

Priority concern: Larger projects with multiple producer participation

Misc. Discussion

CTUIR and the First Foods was discussed as well. Representatives attending agreed with proposed list of priorities which include insect/disease issues as well as water. Further discussion was agreed on to explore Tribal capacity, acreage available and priorities and the need to treat the whole area regardless of ownership (Tribal, private, National).

- CREP - further clarification to come with new Farm Bill
- Prescribed burning
 - Liability issues to land owners
 - ODF has been writing plans for land owners who have contracted private services
 - New program mentioned in Umatilla National Forest to unite across OR/WA border in enough interest from land owners
 - Producer input "We are learning that everything we do on forest land creates slash ... to burn"

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