

## Hood River Local Working Group Meeting

Date: 1/30/2019

10:00 am Meeting called to order

1. Introductions

Carly welcomed everyone and thanked them for coming. It was noted that there was such a large group and hopefulness of a lively discussion with so many people in attendance.

2. Carly reviewed the agenda in brief and then gave an overview of what the programs that are most utilized in Hood River County consist of. EQIP has been the most useful program in terms of getting funds directed at the specific projects the Local Working Group has identified as priorities. CSP has been a difficult fit for the county given the available practices/enhancements/activities. RCPP is currently being utilized to fund a larger scale project. Cindy Thieman gave the background on what that project entails and how it came to fruition.

Carly then explained Conservation Implementation Strategies, what they are, and how they are used in this process to get funds directed at specific areas to accomplish goals. How different implementation strategies had been written in the past for different areas and different resource concerns and how successful or unsuccessful they had been.

After giving the group the background, she then explained which strategies were currently in place in the county.

She then explained how she and Les Perkins had come up with the idea of what is being called the "pollinator super highway". An idea to do a state-wide implementation strategy that would allow for the re-seeding/planting of pollinator friendly species on the tops of where the irrigation districts are installing their large delivery pipelines. This would create miles of corridors that are under relatively low disturbance and no motorized vehicle use for beneficial insects and pollinator species. The benefits would be for wildlife habitat, but also help with weed control as species could be selected that would compete with invasive species.

This idea was met with a lot of enthusiasm from the group. There was discussion about the site prep and weed control and how that would be accomplished. How the specifications would be written to promote the best survival of the new seedings.

There was also some concern over whether a state-wide implementation strategy would have support at the higher levels in NRCS. The group was assured that this idea had already been discussed with upper management and had champions at the higher levels.

Farmers Conservation Alliance volunteered to write the strategy to help bolster its partnership viability.

Carly then asked Adam McCarthy what his interest was in pollinators and how he could see a CIS playing a role in the Hood River valley specifically. Adam explained that as a fruit grower, they are constantly dealing with overwhelming pressure from insect pests and anything that they can do to help increase the natural predator populations plus increase the natural pollinator species

populations will only help to increase their fruit production while reducing their overhead. Carly asked Adam if he thought if there would be a large enough scale interest in such a project. Pollinator habitat practices had been included in EQIP ranking/opportunities in the past and had not been as popular as expected for a variety of reasons. This elicited a group discussion of what the issues of pollinator/beneficial habitat next to active farms could be and how we could address those concerns. One idea was that there are Best Management Practice trainings for the growers and their field men who do the spraying and the idea of incorporating the discussions of why these (example) hedgerows are being planted, their multiple purposes and how their behaviors (example) turning off the nozzles on that side of the sprayers can help to foster the system we are trying to encourage.

Eric asked about the idea of a county wide CIS and how that would not likely be focused enough for leadership. There was discussion about how in Hood River county, it could be focused to orchards only and therefore become focused, and that we could also invite Wasco County to join the CIS in order to include their orchards. Kris from the SWCD is going to be giving a brief talk at the OSU winter Hort meeting and has agreed to give a quick update to folks on NRCS programs and will ask the question for a show of hands to see who would be interested in a pollinator/beneficial funded program.

Carly shared with the group that another part of this pollinator/beneficial plan was to build a demonstration garden out in front of the Forest Service building. She has been working with a variety of partners to start the coordination of planning/funding for the garden. The SWCD and USFS are already on board and other groups have indicated an interest and willingness to help.

Carly then asked John if he felt that Dukes Valley (the next area in his district up consideration for a focus area) would be ok to wait a year or so. He felt that would be ok given that the participation rate had not been stellar from the Central canal group last year.

Carly asked the group if there was anyone who was willing to champion writing the CIS for the cross-county pollinator/beneficial strategy. Mace volunteered to do that if he was sent some example CISs to use as templates.

### 3. Meeting adjourned.