

Natural Resource Conservation Service
Minutes of the Yearly Meeting of the Local Working Group

February 15, 2019

10 AM

Location of Meeting:

Cousin's Restaurant

2114 W 6th St

The Dalles, Oregon 97058

Present at Meeting:

- | | | |
|--|--|-----------------------------|
| • <i>Facilitator NRCS</i> | • <i>NRCS Sherman County</i> | • <i>USFS</i> |
| • <i>Meeting Leader NRCS</i> | • <i>Wasco SWCD</i> | • <i>ODFW</i> |
| • <i>Meeting Leader & Wasco Soil Water Conservation District</i> | • <i>White River Watershed Council</i> | • <i>FSA</i> |
| • <i>ODFW / NRCS,</i> | • <i>Retired OSU Extension</i> | • <i>City of The Dalles</i> |
| • <i>Wasco SWCD</i> | • <i>ODF</i> | • <i>Producer</i> |
| | • <i>ODF</i> | • <i>Wasco SWCD</i> |
| | | • <i>ODFW</i> |
| | | • <i>NRCS</i> |

Agenda Introduction

- Opened the meeting with agenda introduction, attended to housekeeping, and provided an explanation of the local working group concept and how it aids NRCS to create a long-term plan. Introduced Dan Esposito and Shilah Olson.

Conservational Appraisal

– Presented completed projects by NRCS. *Wasco / Sherman County Fire* EQIP has received national funding of 6 million dollars. Currently, NRCS still has applications that have not received funding due to the government shutdown and the new Farm Bill. As soon as NRCS receiving guidance on how to implement the farm bill programs they will begin funding new applications. Wildfire implementation is ongoing with herbicide application, and cover crops.

Active projects *East Cascades Forest Health Initiative*. The CIS is addressing multiple resource concerns, but the focus is on wildfire hazard with emphasis on restoring Oregon White Oak habitat.

Columbia Plateau Grassland Enhancement and Restoration Project was proposed because of the large amount of CRP expiring out of Wasco and Sherman county. NRCS will be installing practices on expired CRP that will allow the producer to start grazing cattle in the area, rather than breaking it out to farm ground.

Pine Hollow and Jackknife Watershed CIS is mostly in Sherman county, but a small part is in south Wasco. The CIS will focus is on Juniper encroachment.

Proposed projects include *Bakeoven Rangeland Improvement*, *Wasco Grassland Wildfire Mitigation*, and *Mid-Columbia Biodiversity Enrichment*.

No questions were asked at this time.

10 min break

Group Activities

Attendees were grouped together by table. Explained the group activities. Three questions were asked of the attendees. “What natural resource issue needs addressed?” “Which of your current efforts could use additional support?” and “How can you or your agency support others in collaborative efforts?” Each group was given post-its to write their responses on. The leaders grouped similar post-its. The groupings have been listed below.

1. What natural resource issues have a need?
 - a. Wildfire
 - i. No till contributing
 - ii. CRP contributing
 - iii. Fuel reduction and wildfire risk reduction
 - iv. Fire management on crop ground & the need for cover crops
 - b. Wildlife Habitat
 - i. Upland and aquatic 15 Mile watershed
 - ii. Pollinator habitat
 - iii. Wildlife inputs on crop ground
 - iv. Focus on shrub – steppe habitat
 - c. Water Quality
 - i. Improving riparian zones to benefit fish, wildlife and water quality
 - ii. Riparian vegetation and erosion
 - iii. Water quality 15 Mile
 - iv. Irrigation ditch pipeline White River Watershed
 - d. Invasive species
2. Which of your current efforts could use additional support?
 - a. Funding

- i. Opportunity to identify more outside funding
 - ii. Planning efforts better to utilize “good neighborhood authority”
 - iii. Workshop for landowners & contractors
 - b. Water Quality
 - i. Irrigation Effort _ Piping irrigation ditches
 - ii. FAST
 - iii. Riparian _ Basin wide support
 - c. Crop Ground
 - i. Find tuning (adjusting) no till production systems
 - ii. pH levels
 - iii. Crop rotation
 - iv. Pest Management
 - v. Fuel reduction
 - d. Others
 - i. Workshops for Landowners and contractors
 - ii. Continuing education about resource issues and resolutions
 - iii. Volunteers
 - iv. Long-term monitoring of ALL project
 - v. Creating more accountability
- 3. How can you – Yourself / Agency support others in collaborative efforts?
 - a. Meetings / Organizations
 - i. Be available – have a presence
 - ii. Organize meetings _ In reach, outreach, network
 - iii. Wasco Collaborative Group
 - iv. East Cascades Oak Partnership
 - v. Joint training
 - vi. Tag teaming grant proposal
 - vii. OSU Climate Dept providing long term climate change data and research
 - b. Funding
 - i. Watershed Councils available for irrigation TA, Funding
 - ii. ODFW fish screening and passage cost share
 - iii. USFS has a cost share program – on private land adjacent to forestry land for invasive species (Wyden Authority)
 - iv. ODF _ Technical support and grant assistance
 - c. Others
 - i. Write, Talk to our legislators at the state and federal levels
 - ii. Implement projects on farmland, rangeland and riparian
 - iii. Meaningful CRP practice that are enforced
 - iv. Support ODFW Fifteen Mile habitat with fencing and stabilization

Working Group Dialogue and Conclusion

_Can we introduce fire on our terms in relations to crop ground?

_Will destroy soil health. The question is how we can slow it down. No till is very important. We must find other ways to change the management of the land.

_We can use fuel reduction; prescribed fire and we need to combine funding efforts.

_We need to burn off decadent and old CRP ground. On state owned lands the biggest hurdle is political. State agency will not put fire on the ground unless they are protected.

_No one will sign-off on burning CRP ground.

_I believe it needs to be brought to the NRCS state office attention that if we want to stop catastrophic wildfires we must start burning CRP ground and having the state office support. We also need to reach out to our non-target communities (non- agriculture-based citizens) and have neighborhood meeting on the importance of wildfire in the landscape.

_Who is responsible if a federal prescribed burn escape?

_The landowner, and if a local fire department is on site.

_Fire department can you use prescribed burns as practice for the real thing.

_Can we look for NGO to help with prescribed burns?

_We need to address the issue with the community complaining about the smoke.

_We need the correct weather.

_The Oak Restoration can help with the collaborative effort and can act like hub in the future.

_Fifteen Underground Storage Feasibility Study needs money to start the pilot program

_Rock Creek shows how piping draining ditches and riparian work can help with the quantity and the quality of water in the creek. Before the ditches were piped, Rock Creek, would be dry by August and now with riparian work we are seeing a constant flow. This is a benefit for the whole community.

_You need to ask producers for small things that they can do to help. It doesn't always have to have financial backing. I believe that most producers want to do conservation when they can.

_We can have field days with landowners and talk about the different CIS. See on the ground how our projects are working.

_Landowners what to see the conservation work of other landowners.

_Change the structure of neighborhood meetings to show conservation work in the field. Will producers be able to attend if we move neighborhood meeting to a different time of year?

_What about doing neighborhood meetings once every quarter, instead of 4 in one week?

_How are we going to move forward and have accountability? District Newsletter

_FSA is still waiting on if they will get SAFE acres. FSA has submitted paperwork to D.C. FSA is waiting for D.C. to issue funding. Wasco County has been approved for Emergency Forest Land restoration on the forest land that was burned in the wildfires this summer. There will be listening session for anyone that is interest in participating. You will need to register and submit your question no later then Feb. 22.

Meeting closes at 12:32 pm