

## **2020 UMATILLA COUNTY LOCAL WORK GROUP MEETING MINUTES**

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

Date: January 28, 2020

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

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### Attendees:

Rick Christian, Amanda Lowe -- CTUIR

Lindsay Olivera -- ODF

Greg Silbernagel -- OWRD

Kyle Waggoner, Tom Straughan, Rachel Nash, Gus Wahner – Umatilla SWCD

Brian Wolcott – Walla Walla Basin Watershed Council

Bill Wohlford – Lower McKay Creek Water

Tom Demianew -- ODA

John Shafer – Umatilla County

Teddy Orr – Umatilla County Weed Dept.

Rob Corbett – Pendleton City

Ben Maney, Robert Emert, Andy Spratling, Jerri Emert, Colin Hemphill, Don Barnett, John Thompson,

Tony Ashbeck, Justin Hunt, Bob Levy, Pake Sorey, Thomas Grimes -- Producers

Nathan James, Nick Sirovatka, Jennifer Wilson, Trevor Ward, Heath Hoeft, Laurianne Loftus, Jason Jeans,

Brian Briski, John Bender -- NRCS

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Nate James led the work group meeting, along with a slide presentation. He recapped previous years and Farm Bills expenditures leading to current objectives and resource concerns.

- All current programs received funding
- Funds available for RCPP
- Bill in evaluation, full distribution of funding still being decided

More detail was offered on the RCPP program; John Shafer County Commissioner spoke regarding their new contract to recharge the aquifer near the I-82/I-84 interchange.

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”
- Streambank Erosion

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.

There were immediate requests to add Streambank Erosion to the county resource concerns. Umatilla County, McKay Cr. and Walla Walla Valley water districts as well as various producers added their vote.

Bob Levy introduced discussion on the elk depredation issue with Amanda (CTUIR) also contributing. The possibility of EQIP and RCPP to address the accompanying increase in noxious weeds was discussed as well as some aspects of CRP. Tom (ODA) brought up a state water quality investigation tied to the elk issue with pilot programs in Baker and Zumwalt Prairie. Nate responded with intent to investigate what other types of resources NRCS can offer to help with this issue.

### FORESTLAND

Last year's target area in Weston Mt/Langdon Lake area is projected to meet the goal of reduced biomass. This year will be targeting the Walla Walla Valley. Discussion of the next phase included the Ukiah/Dale areas, the possibility of reducing elk depredation in the lowlands by opening up forested areas with thinning.

ODF has some new grants to address Pine Beetle infestations, including thinning and masticating slash piles as appropriate burn days are becoming more of an issue.

ODA has some grants addressing water infiltration.

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

Priority area: Walla Walla/Mill Cr.

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

Priority Area: Ukiah/Dale or Possibly Meacham

### PASTURE/RANGELAND

Alternatives to re-enrolling expired CRP were discussed including water and fencing to return to pasture/grazing.

Invasive species, specifically Yellow star were discussed. County Weed control indicated a new biological control in the works for Yellow star as well as a treatment for Ventenata and Cheat grass. They are also available to treat small areas at no cost on Rush Skeleton Weed. Elk related issues were again mentioned including spread of weeds, protected hay storage and fencing.

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"

Priority concern II: Inadequate livestock/wildlife water

## CROPLAND

Discussion of cover crops, specifically what is usable in low rainfall. Nick talked about a joint NRCS/OSU study on dryland cover crops going on now including the timing of planting, soil health, carbon and weed suppression. Rachel with UCSWCD is now a Soil Health Specialist and will also be investigating cover crop use, soil nutrients and will be reaching out to area producers for input. CTUIR brought an issue with RMA that cover crops can't be harvested/baled. A point was made that even beneficial technology installed with CSP/EQIP funds, some find it difficult to maintain. Is there a possibility of some type of management contract?

Priority concern: Soil Quality

Priority areas: Expiring CRP maintaining the beneficial effects while allowing commercial use

Priority concern:

## IRRIGATED CROPLAND

Continuing with the same basic concerns as prior year. Aquifer recharge was discussed in relation to the Walla Walla valley.

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 - RCPP

## Misc. Discussion

Jennifer spoke about CTUIR and the First Foods CIS, including Russian Olive removal, NIPF thinning and other range management practices.

Small farms were mentioned as needing more outreach since there is no restriction on acreage for cost share programs.