

2021 UMATILLA COUNTY LOCAL WORK GROUP MEETING MINUTES

Location: Zoom

Date: January 26, 2021

Time: 10:00am – 12:00pm

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
- FY2020 RCPP proposal being evaluated
- FY 2021 PL566 - 2 current watershed plans requesting funding

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

- Soil Quality
- Water Quantity
 - Ground Water Depletion
 - Surface Water Depletion
 - Irrigation Inefficiency
- Water Quality
- Wildfire Hazard
- Noxious Weeds
- Inadequate livestock/wildlife water, forage
- Terrestrial/Aquatic habitat
- Energy Efficiency
- Riparian Health
- 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 Soil Erosion to the county resource concerns.

FORESTLAND

2020's focus was targeting the Mill Creek/Walla Walla Valley. Discussion of the next phase included the Ukiah/Dale areas, Wildland Urban Interface areas as well as public/private land interfaces. Higher priorities given to areas within a WUI and within a mile of public ground, to leverage the Forest Services treating of public lands. ODF suggested some of the smaller landowners that would not fall in that priority area should be considered as perhaps second or third year priorities.

Biochar was brought up however there hasn't been much usage in this county as there has not been anywhere to send the result.

CTUIR mentioned some locations on the reservation particularly the I-84 corridor, as a future possibility.

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

Priority area: Walla Walla/Mill Cr.

Future Priority Area: Ukiah/Dale

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

I-84 WUI

PASTURE/RANGELAND

An issue with Livestock water was brought out as a major priority concern. Tom Straughan mentioned an area in Coombs Canyon that is or was CRP that appears over stocked.

Invasive species, specifically Yellow star and Rush Skeleton were discussed as a priority. Ventenata was also mentioned as an issue

Priority concern I: Degraded Plant conditions/Noxious weeds

Priority Area I- Noxious Weeds including Yellow Star Thistle, Ventenata

Priority Concern II- Inadequate livestock water

CROPLAND

With the recent CRP sign up of 40,000 acres focus can shift from maintaining expired CRP to other soil quality issues. Erosion concerns seem to have been mostly addressed, quality of existing soil seems to be more of an issue. Don Flagg has a field going into 3 years of organic with alfalfa on it that should show marked improvement and offered it for example.

Priority concern: Soil Quality

Priority areas: Utilize Best technology

Priority concern I: Reduce fertilizer input

Priority concern II: Reduce herbicide input

IRRIGATED CROPLAND

Continuing with the same basic concerns as prior year. Aquifer recharge was discussed

Priority concern: Water quantity/quality

Priority Area 1: Umatilla Basin “LUBGWMA”

We currently have an active CIS in that area and requests for watershed plan from Hermiston and Westland Irrigation Districts

Priority Area 2: Soil Health

Priority concern: Biological soil testing and cover crop diversity

Misc. Discussion

Tom Straughan requested Nate review 2nd action plan in relation to LUBGWMA/Irrigated Ag.

STREAMBANKEROSION

The recent flooding experienced throughout the county has left many areas with extreme erosion concerns.

Misc. Discussion

Willow wattles have been used successfully in the past to stabilize streambanks by Don Flagg. Dave Slaught with City of Echo also had used the willow solution but many areas in the Echo area are having tremendous amounts of sloughing that would require hard scaping, even with current low water levels. He believes there will be significant change and further damage without immediate intervention, even without flood conditions. Technical engineering services already offered have been helpful and are welcome to continue.

Kyle with UCSWCD offered a breakdown of the major hurdles involved in community/area wide projects: Permitting, technical design and funding. The first two are currently under way using both NRCS and UCSWCD, the funding yet to be determined.

Recap and Conclusions

Nate recapped the recent past and current funding pools. He spoke about a possible joint effort RCPP with neighboring counties on addressing weed issues. The county SCD has been working on some soil health and sustainability funding. CTUIR is working on a Umatilla River assessment and the current irrigation project will rank participants higher that are willing to work with them on streambank habitat issues. Annette with HID spoke about the PL-566 project, they are hoping to have something out for public comment around March. No active funds on dryland crop ground at this time. Kevin Martin with Blue Mtn chapter of the Oregon Hunter's Association questioned if there was an opportunity to leverage some resources addressing vegetation management and wildlife habitat.