

**NRCS Local Work Group Meeting Minutes**  
**The Saddle Restaurant & Lounge**  
**January 27, 2015, 7:30 am**

Attendees: Andrea Mann, NRCS; Nick Sirovatka, NRCS; Terry Johnson, NRCS; Tom Straughan, ODA; Dan Long, ARS; Shanna Hamilton, SWCD; Woodrow Star, CTUIR; Tom Demianew, SWCD; Ralph Perkins, Walla Walla Watershed Council; Vern Rodighiero, Blue Mountain Hort Society, Gordy Schumacher, CTUIR, Dan Durfey, Co. Weed Supervisor; Hero Gollany, ARS; Greg Cironi, NRCS; Larry Coppock, landowner; Don Wysocki, OSU Extension; Hunter Mulhall, Marion Jack Improve Dist; Bret Moore, Anderson Perry; Jennifer Svoboda, Tiicham; Larry Coppock, landowner; Clive Kaiser, OSU Extension; Douglas Minthorne, Tiicham; Clayton Johnson, Tiicham.  
Facilitated by: Tom Denianew, SWCD

**Purpose:** To provide a forum to bring together individuals with a variety of expertise and knowledge allowing NRCS and others to build on our collective successes while focusing our efforts to make the greatest impact with our available staff and funding.

**Objective:** Identify partners for the 2016 Conservation Implementation Strategies (CIS).

**January 23, 2014 Local Work Group Meeting Review:**

Resource concerns identified in the January 23, 2014 meeting were:

**Irrigated Agriculture**

- Global Gap – backflow protection
- Food Safety Modernization Act – Purified/Filtered water applied to food crops
- Upper Watershed Storage for slow season long release
- Energy efficiency
- Irrigation efficiency
- Water Quality

**Forestry:**

- Forest Health - Weeds/Fire/Insect/Disease/Productivity

**Range:**

- Range Plant Health and Vigor - Invasive species/Productivity/Recreation

**Dry Cropland:**

- Organic Matter management
- Cover Crops
- Soil Health
- Direct Seed declining soil Ph

**Initiatives available in 2015 are:**

- **Organic Initiative**
- High Tunnel Initiative
- Energy Initiative

Farm Bill 2014 includes a new program Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

FY 2015 funding decisions implemented based on input from the January 2014 meeting and EQIP budget were:

- Hermiston Irrigation District A & B Line Irrigation Improvements
- Forestry fuel reduction – Meacham area
- CTUIR Indian Lakes Forest and Range Health

The group then broke into small groups according to land use. After the breakout each group presented their discussion information. A summary of each follows:

## Irrigation/Watershed Planning/Energy

### New Government Regulations

-Food Safety Modernization Act -Potable water application to food crops – filter systems and water testing systems needed-FDA will implement in 2015

### Resource Concerns

- Automatic Soil Moisture sensors/probes associated with auto sprinklers
- Upper Watershed Storage Reservoirs for extended season long release, fire suppression
- Aquifer recharge in lower basin during winter and early spring
- Update delivery systems
- Irrigation water management
- Irrigation efficiency
- Increase water available in July/August for crops and fisheries.
- Address earthen irrigation ditch water loss
- Address irrigation water loss and effects to surrounding hydrology

## Forestry

### Resource Concerns

- Forest Health – downward Trend
- Forest Production-wildlife/livestock
- Hazardous Fuels-fuels build up due to fire suppression
- Climate Change causing longer fire season
- Water shortage in summer
  - tree overstocking reduces stream/spring flow
  - stressed trees suffering insect damage
- First food/wildlife habitat lacking
- Fractured ownership hindering watershed scale management
- Pollinator habitat

### Solutions

- Collaboration between landowners on a watershed basis
- Determine proper Stocking Rate and thin stands to standard (Education programs)
- Prioritize first foods (fish, game, fruit, roots, hiphow (moss), and fuel)
- Prescribed fire (Hazard Fuel Reduction)
- Establish Pollinator Habitat
- Off Stream Watering
- Forest stand improvement
- Reestablishment of ecological processes

## Range

### Noxious Weeds – More education and research needed

- Sulphur Cinquefoil – Forest Fringe
- Garlic Mustard – Riparian
- Medusa head Rye
- Ventenata
- Rush Skeleton Weed
- Blueweed (Viper's Bugloss)- Riparian/grass edges
- Multi-flora Rose-emerging?
- CTUIR Specific:
  - Yellowstar
  - Whitetop
  - Knapweed
  - Common Crupina

### Resource Concerns

- Improve ecological conditions
- Forage Production
- Water quantity and storage
- Pollinator establishment
- Multiuse vs. single use on same lands.
  - Social Issues
- Multi species grazing eg: goats/sheep for hire
- Grazing of stubble/cover crops require more discussion

### Wildlife Concerns

- Grazing timing and intensity
- Water quantity-spring developments
- Sage Grouse habitat improvements to draws.

### Range Solutions

- Funding – grants, state/federal
- Education – schools, youth, community
- Research – multi-species grazing/use, livestock health
- Pollinator habitat establishment
  - Need more info/education on Bee's
- Partnerships
- Re-introduce fire and controlled burns
- Range and Pasture plantings
- Grazing practices
- Spray programs
- Use extension system more!

## Dryland Crops

### Focus on: Helix area (Athena, Palouse, Walla Walla, silt loam areas)

#### ARS

Greenhouse gas and crop system impacts on emissions

- Direct seed
- Crop rotations

Soil organic matter and system corrections to OM loss

Herbicide resistance

- Tillage vs. chemical control
- Higher intensity in wheat fallow systems to reduce summer fallow while improving profitability

#### ODF (water quality)

Burn plow systems

- erosion still an issue

Horizontal movement of water in direct seed systems is showing an increase in pH changing available crops for bottom ground.

Low pH issues (Columbia Co) variety change

Minimum disturbance vs no disturbance

- Residue Management
- Crop systems
- Organic Matter breakdown by systems
  - Rotations
  - Intensity
- Benefits
  - infiltration
  - wildlife
  - nutrients
  - aggregate stability
  - WHC
  - Ca+ change

\*In-kind from other Federal agency (exclude other USDA agencies)

- not Federal funding but federal equipment and labor

?? Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) can fed \$ match in proposals

- lack of ability to match is a hindrance to getting conservation on the ground

Toxins runoff in groundwater vs./or surface water \*fisheries impact

Phosphate removal ½ #/bu

- amount of phosphate applied is not a correction to the reduction by removal of grain.
- baling straw results in additional loss
- How big is the tank? (Nutrient Management issues)

\*Residue Management is an underlying concern that ties many of the dryland crop concerns presented in the meeting together.

Adaption to climate change by region

- systems
- crops

### **Next Steps**

The next steps for NRCS will be to look at the identified resource concerns and develop conservation implementation strategies. These strategies will address resource concerns in specific geographic regions within Umatilla County using all available partnerships.