

**Minutes of the meeting for the
South Fork John Day River Watershed Council**

The South Fork John Day River Watershed Council met on the 11th day of March 2019.

The meeting was called to order at 1:15 pm, by Joanne Keerins at the Izee Schoolhouse in Izee, Oregon.

In attendance for regular session:

Phil St. Clair, Director, Vice Chair	M.T. Anderson, Director	Jeff Maben, Director	Scott Hess/Phone, Director, Treasurer	Micah Wilson, Alternate Director	Joanne Keerins, Chairperson
Mike Keerins, Alternate Director	Lorraine Vogt, NRCS	Jay Gibbs, NRCS	Mark Croghan, USBOR	MaryLou Welby, MNFS	Mark Webb, BMFP
Steph Charette, ODFW	Russ Powell, ODFW	Pam Powell, ODFW	Elise Delgado, SFJDWC	Mallory Davies, SFJDWC	Amy Stiner, SFJDWC

Quorum was present because there are currently 8 directors on the board and 6 were represented at this meeting.

Everyone introduced themselves and their affiliations

I. Action Items

- a. February Meeting Minutes: M.T. moved to approve, Micah 2nd, vote passed
- b. February Staff Time: Scott moved to approve, M.T. 2nd, vote passed
- c. Staff Check Request: M.T. moved to approve, Jeff 2nd, vote passed
- d. Phillip W. Schneider Wildlife Area – SFJDWC Cooperative Agreement for Data Collection across the wildlife area. Micah moved to approve, Jeff 2nd, M.T. asked what this project included, Amy and Elise replied that it is an extension of the data collection we are doing for the Malheur National Forest, onto State land. Data collection includes; hydrology surveys, groundwater dependent ecosystem surveys, water temperature monitoring. Vote passed
- e. Flat Creek Juniper Removal Contract – Timber Basin Contractors, Clint Walczyk. M.T. moved to approve, Micah 2nd, vote passed
- f. Magic Lantern Juniper Removal & Aspen Fence Contract – Timber Basin Contractors, Clint Walczyk. M.T. moved, Micah 2nd, motion passed

II. Agency Reports

- a. Mark Webb, Blue Mountain Forest Partners (BMFP) Bark Project Area: BMFP began in 2006, because environmentalist and industry recognized a need for active management. Their goal was to figure out where there was common ground. By 2010-11 the collaborative group was working well together, letting science inform their treatment recommendations. Now, rather than looking at the project-based approach, they take an issues-based approach, and have developed zones of agreement. They provide public input to the Forest Service, showing public support for actions. BMFP uses the best available science for restoration actions and what the treatments look like, always taking economics into consideration. In 2012, they applied for Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Planning (CFLRP) and were awarded funding for

650,000 acres on the Malheur National Forest. They are up to 850,000 acres now, bringing in \$4M annually to the Forest Service. The Bark project, which is what the SFJDWC has been helping gather data for, is just outside CFLRP. The Malheur National Forest brought on additional staff and are now able to start looking outside CFLRP boundary, and that's where Bark is. BMFP is interested in working across entire MNF, and with SFJDWC in Bark. M.T. asked if BMFP is a nonprofit? Mark: it is now, since 2012-13. M.T. – who's involved, who is on the Board; Mark: Susan Jane Brown, Pam Hardy, Zach Williams, Glenn Johnston, Dave Hannibal, Ben Holliday, Rick Minster. Their membership includes interested people from timber, environmental, and natural resources. They include a range of individuals with a wide range of interest. Their membership is pretty open, and just requires that people adhere to a set of criteria. Primary focus has been veg management, for the Bark project they would look at zones of agreement surrounding dry pine, dry mixed forest types, looking to shift species composition back to pine. Mark commented that with veg treatments permittees see benefits through more forage availability. He also commented that in looking at applying for RCPP, past recipients have been successful in trying to compliment federal land projects on private lands. Elise asked when field trips to the Bark area would start? Mark said that the timeline for pre-scoping is in 2020, with a NEPA decision in 2021, so they would start going out in 2020. Mark agreed to share their zones of agreement for the SFJDWC board to review and see if they mesh with our mission. Scott asked what was meant by the comment of whether the SFJDWC wanted to work with BMFP, or continue to work in the Bark Project Area with just the Forest Service? Mark: The Forest Service is obligated by law to engage public, working with BMFP it really helps to have multiple voices speaking similar message to the Forest. Scott commented that from what he had heard, BMFP has been very effective in helping the National Forest not face litigation for 4 or 5 years. Mark: BMFP does claim part of that success, it is complicated though. Pushing to do what this landscape needs at the scale it needs can cause disagreement. It is important to hear all voices, while everyone may still not agree to everything, but keeping mature conversation. They really work hard to get different parties to look at what's best for landscape. Scott asked if there was association between BMFP and Sustainable Northwest? Mark: there is an informal relationship. They provided facilitator in the beginning, and continue to work with them indirectly, nothing formal. MaryLou stated that she appreciates the science-based approach, then when one group or other has concerns, it enables flexibility, and allows for alternatives to be explored. Mark gave the example of using science informed decision making on the post fire salvage or post fire management, as a result of efforts to use the best available science, they were able to develop research on the effects of salvage logging, showing results that justify salvage logging, allowing for at least some economic return on burned landscape.

- b. Mark Croghan, US Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), Murderers Creek Ranch Project: Mark introduced himself and gave a background on the BOR. They are a non-regulatory entity that provides technical design for restoration projects. Currently they are working with ODFW, and BPA on the Murderers Creek Ranch Project. The BOR is at their 15% design stage. They have ideas down in writing and are now working to find an approach that will make everyone happy.

BOR started with an assessment of the reaches from the Ranch house down through the wet meadow system. In the 1960s the channel was straightened, and gravel berms resulted along the banks of the creek. This has since created channel incision and instability. The channel was fenced from grazing soon after ODFW purchased the property. The woody vegetation is coming back. The main goal of this restoration effort is to re-connect the floodplain, re-charging the meadow system, and reduce the energy in channel to increase sediment supplies. Currently the juvenile rearing habitat is limited due to a lack of woody debris. The beaver dams in the meadow system cannot withstand the high flows. If the floodplain was to be re-connected, this would increase the wet meadow system, and riparian zone, which would mean the current riparian fence location would not be manageable in places.

Project components would include Beaver Dam Analogues, and woody debris placement, mostly using Juniper. Other project components include; removing the berms and re-activating existing side channels. They are also looking at expanding the riparian fences to protect the newly developed riparian zones. When discussing the different alternatives with ODFW, ODFW preferred the low profile, low impact approach to restoring this system. ODFW is in conversations with the grazing permittee to try to come up with solutions for the moving of the fences that won't greatly impact the permittee.

The plan moving forward is for BPA to secure ESA clearances, and archaeological clearances. Submit an OWEB request for the bulk of the funding, which is estimated between \$75,000 and \$250,000. ODFW staff would provide staff for construction and implementation.

BOR is the design component of the project, and ODFW will be working with their grazing land permittee. ODFW has begun discussion with the permittee and are working with him to address the fencing concerns.

M.T. and Pam Powell suggested that this presentation be given to the Dayville Grazing Association.

M.T. asked if water righted ground would be included in the new fenced in areas? ODFW: they believed some would.

Mike Keerins commented that if the floodplain was reconnected, the forage production would increase.

Lorraine asked how many acres there were total in wet meadow. Mark/ODFW: about 95 acres

The proposed changes would fence an additional 16 acres out. Which is a 17% reduction in acres.

M.T. stated that he had not heard positive things about this project, and that when the Wildlife Area was formed, the Dayville Grazing Association formed an agreement with ODFW that grazing would not be removed.

Phil stated that the watershed council values the private landowners in our watershed, and the Council needs to think about the effects that projects have on their livelihoods, and that the Council needs to protect their rights.

M.T. stated that water righted irrigated ground is vital in the Murderers Creek country, the alternative rangeland is just rock and medusahead. If ODFW is looking at trading meadow ground for more upland acreage, it wouldn't be a reasonable trade because it would be medusahead or rock.

MaryLou wondered about the possibility of creating a riparian pasture. Phil commented that areas that he has seen enrolled in CREP, and are completely excluded from grazing, turn out wolfy and unproductive, and that the grazing causes needed disturbance for plant health.

The goal for ODFW is to begin implementation in 2020.

c. Russ Powell, ODFW Habitat Program:

Russ is the ODFW Fish Habitat Biologist for the John Day Basin, the program works to increase quality habitat for anadromous fish such as this Mid-Columbia river steelhead.

As of 2012 there were 39 projects in the Lower Mainstem; 41 in the Upper Mainstem; 24 in the North Fork; 12 in the Middle; and 5 riparian enhancement projects in the South Fork - for a total of 183 stream miles within project areas.

In 2018, there were 76 landowners enrolled under Cooperative Agreements with numerous other expired leases that still maintain habitat enhancement objectives

In the South Fork John Day Watershed there are currently:

1. Murderers Creek Riparian fence 14.8 miles
2. Bark Cabin Creek 2.0 miles riparian fence
3. Blue Creek 3.0 Miles Riparian fence
4. Tex Creek 8.0 Miles Riparian fence
5. SF Murderers Creek 5.8 Miles Riparian fence
6. Total 33.6 Miles Riparian Fence in SF Watershed so far!
7. Future Projects
8. Spring Developments
9. Riparian Fence
10. Stream Barriers
11. Aspen protection
12. Instream work to increase Habitat for both Fish and Wildlife Species
13. Upland Habitat Work
14. Meadow Restoration work

Tex Creek: In 1961, they had a screw trap on Tex Creek, and they counted 46 adults, and 43 redds. After 1961 the redd counts dropped drastically, and they haven't counted any redds in Tex creek since 2014. After Jeff Neal's passage barrier inventory, Russ came to the SFJDWC and requested assistance to secure funding to have a design firm (Tetra Tech) explore restoration options for the stream.

MaryLou referenced the Murderers Creek Watershed Assessment, and that it said something about a possible fault that causes the water to go sub-surface, and that it might be worth looking at the geology.

Phil asked if the headwaters of the Tex Creek watershed were included in the Bark project area. MaryLou said that they are. They don't have plans set in stone yet, but she thought it likely they would be looking at thinning the stands and increasing large woody debris in the stream.

Amy stated that Tetra Tech will provide a no-action alternative, which would describe the impacts of no restoration action occurring on Tex Creek.

Russ finished his presentation, showing different projects he has implemented and the successes. These include:

- Stream Miles Protected - 278
- Riparian Fence miles - 379
- Acres Protected - 7300
- Spring developments - 78
- Plantings - 73,567
- Seeding - 3,745 pounds
- Juniper rip-rap - 1.54 miles
- Photopoints - 1500
- Active Maintenance - 230 miles

The Program's future plans are to:

- Identify projects within High Priority areas, taking into account the John Day Subbasin Plan and the Recovery Plan for Mid-Columbia River Steelhead, and Atlas Program that was initiated in 2016 -17.
- Construct many more miles of riparian protection fence along with associated spring developments and instream structures
- Incorporate BDSS into riparian fence projects
- Maintain fence and instream structures on active cooperative agreements
- Continue photopoint monitoring; collaborate on basin wide monitoring programs
- Continue collaboration with other agencies on larger scale projects

- d. Mary Lou Welby, Hydrologist for the Malheur National Forest, Blue Mountain Ranger District: She wanted to thank the Council for the signed agreement, and work that Mallory, Elise, and Amy have been doing in data collection. What she sees as a major challenge in the upcoming Bark project area are; roads, and they will be looking at how to maintain access, and address stream health. Not removing roads, but possibly re-locating roads.

- e. Stephen Charette, ODFW District Fish Biologist: He is enjoying his job. He has been in the John Day Basin, for 10 years, and spent most of his time on the Middle Fork and Upper Mainstem. He has been on multiple tours trying to learn more about the basin. He reported that the steelhead had a low escapement year, and the numbers aren't too good this year. Chinook redd counts last 2 years have been low, but we're still better than some basins. He said that he attended an American Fisheries Society presentation, on chinook migration, by Michael Scheu, which was a project the SFJDWC sponsored and worked for 3 years on.
- f. Lorraine Vogt, NRCS: She is leaving her position in John Day for a position with NRCS in Missoula Montana. Her acting replacement will be Logan Ross, until she can find a permanent replacement. She wanted to thank the Council for working together with NRCS.

III. Staff Report

- a. Submitted Council Capacity Application
- b. Juniper Prioritization Tool complete
- c. Working on Wildlife Conservation Society application for Keerins Big Flat Watering System
- d. Thinking about Spring submittals: We have a fairly open spring slate. The Board reiterated the importance of trying to secure RCPP funding, and that taking up most of Amy's time.

IV. Discussion

- a. Ryan Torland has some Mule Deer initiative funding coming in the next biennium and is open to partnering on projects.
- b. Hiring process
 - i. So far we have 4 applicants. Amy will send all of the applications to Directors March 29th and ask for candidates to interview by Tuesday, April 2nd. We will try to hold interviews at the April 9th board meeting. Suggestions were to hold the interviews in person if possible. Maybe use the OTC conference area for teleconference if candidates cannot make it.
 - ii. Phil requested that Amy check in again with Dirk Renner, regarding Partners for Fish and Wildlife Funding possibilities for upland water developments.
 - iii. Anna Smith from the Prineville BLM contacted Amy, saying that she may come into some funding for upland health projects, such as; conifer thinning (Juniper and Pine), Aspen health, and re-developing springs that have surpassed the life of their equipment. Amy gave her the prioritized list of projects that the Council had assembled for their letter to the BLM. Also, if anyone has additional project ideas of this kind, on BLM ground, they can contact Amy, and she can get them to the BLM.

V. Coming Up

- a. Farm to School – Friday, March 15th
- b. Employee Reviews
- c. CONNECT 2019- April 9-11 in Sunriver, OR

VI. Adjourned at 3:15, Next meeting date: Monday, April 8th 2019