

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

The South Fork John Day River Watershed Council met on the 8th day of July 2019.

The meeting was called to order at 1:04 pm, by Joanne Keerins at the Izee Schoolhouse in Izee, Oregon.

In attendance for regular session:

Phil St. Clair, Vice Chair	Joanne Keerins, Chair	Jeff Maben, Director	Amy Charette, Director	Scott Hess, Director	Amy Stiner, SFJDWC
Jack Vaughn, ODFW PWSWA	Genevieve Purdue, BMLT				

Quorum was present because there are currently 8 directors on the board and 5 were represented at this meeting.

I. Agency Reports

- a. **Amy Charrette, CTWSR:** They will begin their in-stream projects next week, and their projects on Fox Creek.
- b. **Jack Vaughn, ODFW Phillip W. Schneider Wildlife Area Manager:** Not much changed. Getting new technician on board, first round of interviews complete by next week, then 2nd round to pick final candidate. Chuck’s last day is the end of July. Jack will be there by himself for a period of time until new folks start, but he plans to continue working through projects, and keep things moving forward.
- c. **Genevieve Purdue, Blue Mountain Land Trust:** She is the BMLT’s outreach and education liaison for the John Day Basin, so she is getting out to local meetings. BMLT moved into basin in 2017, working with landowners for conservation easements. BMLT also has a broad education and recreation activities, Learning on the Land series, they try to create fun community outdoor education events.

II. Action Items

- a. June Meeting Minutes: Phil moved to approve, Jeff 2nd, motion passed
- b. June Staff Time: Phil moved to approve, Jeff 2nd, motion passed
- c. Staff Check Requests: Phil moved to approve, Jeff 2nd, motion passed

III. Staff Report

- a. Open Projects
 - i. Flat Creek Irrigation Efficiency: We have a fully executed grant agreement with OWRD, and work can begin. We will need to work with OWRD on amending the project. The irrigation “ditch” is really not a ditch, but a naturally occurring drainage that runs water as long as there’s water in the lowest pond. The lowest pond has an issue with headgate/pipe coming out, it is leaking, this project will fix leak to control water outlet coming from pond. We will work with ODFW engineers, and we may be able to sleeve or expand the pipe to stop the leak and seal the area on the pond side to further seal off the leak, allowing water release control.

- ii. Wind Creek Assessments: The RSI team has completed the private land section of Wind Creek and all of Frazier creek. They are back at it this week working on the Forest section of Wind and completing Squaw Creek. We are finding that Wind Creek dries up not far onto the Forest Service, and that our funds may be better spent assessing the North or South Forks of Wind Creek. We are working with RSI and OWEB to find a solution.
 - iii. Izee Allotment Spoon & Outhouse: We have about \$5,000 left and have tried to explore many other options for this funding, each being rejected by OWEB. We will have to just finish the completion reporting and return the funds.
 - iv. Big Flat Juniper Removal: We have a bid tour scheduled for Thursday the 11th.
 - v. Snow Mountain: Greg Ontko has completed all of the Juniper thinning units
 - vi. South Fork Collaborative Data Collection: We have tied up the FFR Bark funding and will now continue the same data collection work through our OWEB funding.
- b. Grant Applications
- i. Landscape Scale Restoration (LSR): We were selected to move onto the National Round of applications
 - ii. DEQ 319 Grants, Upper South Fork Bioassessment, and Drone Monitoring: We were recommended for funding on both.
 - iii. Johnson-Tunnel Juniper Removal: We were recommended for funding
Phil asked what the Wildlife Area plans to do for annual grass control, and if there would be any re-seeding. Jack stated that that is the plan. The group discussed different options for annual grass control: Open Range G, seems to work, as long as application rate is heavy enough. Limiting factor is getting it applied, spreader pull behind tractor, but not a lot of places conducive, label on chemical said no aerial application, but label changed so can use helicopter. Further complication, on Forest Service ground no aerial application of any kind. This could be disheartening to spend funds on State ground when annual grasses persist on the Forest Service and BLM right across fence. Jack stated that annual grasses are a major contributing factor to slowing down Mule deer habitat and good range conditions. Maybe if can show good results on state or private the Forest Service will be more open. Phil: good time to make the change with FS investing dollars into Bark project. Jack: maybe with this being dry chemical would be less concerning, as far as drift.
 - iv. Biocontrol funding: Just last Friday an RFP was sent out for entities that would like to apply for Capacity funding for biocontrol monitoring efforts like we have been doing for the last 5 years, so I will be sure to apply.
 - v. John Day Basin Partnership FIP Capacity: We are getting the application put together and trying to get an accurate estimate on the proposed budget. We will be requesting about \$390,000, which will include about \$8,000 for staff time and \$39,000 in admin fees for the next 2 years. Included in the application will be capacity funding for partners to attend and participate in the partnership. Funds to contract a team to develop a project tracking system, funds for a GIS consultant, funding for a Partnership Coordinator, and funds for a Facilitator.

- vi. US Partners for Fish and Wildlife, Conservation Partnership Program, program focuses on funding projects that:
 - 1. Expertise in comprehensive natural resource conservation planning
 - 2. Discipline-specific expertise: aquatics, forestry, general ecology, rangeland ecology, wetlands, and wildlife
 - 3. Resource-specific scientific expertise to support development of science-based tools. These might include wildlife habitat evaluation and management guidelines; best management practices to be used in association with NRCS conservation practice implementation (e.g., best management practices for the use of prescribed grazing for the management of native prairie for lesser prairie chickens)
 - 4. Scientific expertise and experience to help facilitate integration of current scientific knowledge and technologies into NRCS/NFWF Conservation Initiatives
 - 5. Technical expertise in developing methodologies to monitor, assess, evaluate and report on measurable resource conservation outcomes
 - 6. Farm Bill program and marketing outreach to improve landowners' and customers' understanding of Farm Bill programs and NRCS practices, standards and strategic initiatives and increase landowner and partner participation.
- c. Education/Outreach/Partnership
 - i. BMFP Bark Field tour: We looked at Juniper removal, and prescribed fire in mahogany. Some roads issues, Aspen treatments, and discussed wild horses and mule deer needs.

IV. Discussion

- a. Murderers Creek Ranch Project: ODFW & Amy met on site with Pete Hettinga and discussed the purpose and need of the project, and fence placements. The fence will be kept much closer to the original location, just moving it out a couple feet to reach the required 35-foot buffer. Pete was ok with moving forward and said that he was fine with the SFJDWC sponsoring the project.
- b. Council Capacity: We have been awarded \$122,900; this is a \$4,475 increase from the previous biennium.
- c. Blue Ridge Fire: The Blue Ridge Fire was discovered as a lightning start on Wednesday, July 3. Malheur National Forest Type 3 Incident Management Team is managing the Blue Ridge Fire on the Blue Mountain Ranger District.

Crews are using an indirect strategy that will allow the forest to achieve resource objectives, primarily the reduction of dead and down fuels.

This indirect strategy is similar to spring burning, however the source of ignition is a wildfire. These actions will build upon fall 2018 and spring 2019 burning when the Forest safely and successfully accomplished prescribed fire operations on approximately 13,450 acres. These burnout operations will reduce surface fuels (including needle litter and dead and down wood), increase the height of some canopy, reduce small tree densities, and helped promote fire resilient trees, thereby improving our ability to protect communities from wildfire. Additionally, these operations improve wildlife habitat, promote long-term ecosystem integrity and

sustainability by reducing the risk of high-severity wildland fire.

Operations such as this are designed to both reduce the risk of larger and/or catastrophic wildfires as well to restore overall health of the National Forest System lands. Fire is an essential, natural process, having shaped the landscape for thousands of years, releasing, and recycling nutrients from vegetation, duff, and soil layers, improving the overall health of plants and animals.

Science over the last several decades has shed a great deal of light on the essential role that these low-intensity fires play in a fire-dependent forest like the Malheur National Forest. Fire, when used strategically and repeatedly across larger areas, helps sustain healthy forest ecosystems, reduces the risk of out-of-control fires, reduces the severity of future wildfires when they do occur, and keeps our communities and firefighters safer.

Fire management team would like the public to be aware of potential for light smoke impacts to the cities of Seneca, John Day and Prairie City.

To ensure public and firefighter safety, roads, trails, and areas may need to close temporarily as firefighter operations are taking place. Smoky conditions may also reduce visibility to a level that would require additional temporary closures.

For more information please visit the Blue Ridge Fire on Inciweb at: <https://inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/6421/>

Jack: ODF has been keeping him updated on the fire, since there is State ground nearby in there. They are treating this similar to prescribed fire, black lining, and roads as fire line. around 640 acres of low intensity burn, no spotting or line crossing as of now. Mop up tomorrow. Not much concern getting out of control. Thinks by Friday things will be quieting down. Yesterday they brought helicopter in to aerially ignite areas within fire line to get it burned quicker. Cautiously optimistic. Recognizing value of low intensity fire. Phil: risky time of year to let burn.

d. Vehicle purchase: Phil moved to allow Amy to look for 1 vehicle, and to purchase in a range of \$5000-\$7000, Scott asked about insurance coverage, and wanted to make sure we fully understand the insurance provided, and make sure any liability is covered. Can be lawsuits over whether vehicle is being used for purpose of business or personal business. Need to make sure insurance company providing the insurance is sufficient. Don't want to scrimp on insurance coverage. Jeff 2nd, motion passed. Before any vehicle is purchased, it and proposed insurance coverage will be run by Council. It was suggested that we set aside money for repairs & annual maintenance.

V. Coming Up

- a. July 15-19, Ash Creek Reed Canary Grass Treatment
- b. July 17th, Bark Field Trip – Discussing Fisheries and Vegetation Management
- c. August 5-9, Youth Crew to work on Upper South Fork Riparian Revegetation

- d. August 19th, Small Grant Team Meeting
- e. August 20th, John Day Basin Partnership Meeting - Condon
- f. August 13th – 16th Amy will be off – fair week

VI. Joanne adjourned the meeting at 2:30 pm, Next meeting date: Monday, August 12th, 2019.