

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

The South Fork John Day River Watershed Council met on the 14th day of February 2022.

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 pm, at the Double R Horse Barn, by Joanne Keerins.

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88994789228>, Meeting ID: 889 9478 9228, Dial by your location: +1 253 215 8782

In attendance for regular session:

Amy Stiner, SFJDWC	Hannah Latzo, SFJDWC	Joanne Keerins, Chair	Phil St. Clair, Vice Chair	M.T. Anderson, Director
Jeff Maben, Director	Russ Powell, ODFW & Director	Mike Keerins, Alternate Director	Amy Charette, Director & CTWSRO	Scott Hess, Director
Richard Nelson, Director	Caleb Cargill, IZ Ranch	Brandon Ferguson, ODF	Kyle Sullivan, Associate Director & Grant SWCD	Matt Wenick, Grant SWCD
Aaron Roth, NRCS	Kathleen Cathy, Ron Wyden's office	Josh Giles, ECRD Malheur National Forest	Angela Yost, ECRD Malheur National Forest	PJ Klavon, ECRD Malheur National Forest

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

1. Agency Reports

- a. Updates from attending agencies.
- b. Brandon Ferguson, Oregon Department of Forestry: approval of grant for 25-30 landowners for wildfire protection practices, approved for \$77,500 for landowners within the John Day/Mount Vernon/Canyon City/Prairie City area within the Grant County community wildfire protection plan. ODF is operating at Full capacity, with 6 full time foresters, this is up from 3.
- c. Aaron Roth, NRCS: Finalizing EQIP applications for this year. Grant County Local Work Group Meeting will be on Wednesday from 1-4pm, via zoom. CSP classic application deadline = March 18th. Working on annual contract review. Anyone with existing contracts, reaching out to see how they're sitting.
- d. Amy Charette, CTWS: BPA annual statement of work started this month. Contract with SFJDWC for partnership coordination. ISRP, BPA & power planning council released final report last week on ISRP webpage.
- e. Kyle Sullivan, Grant SWCD: They have many projects in the works, they are working with NRCS, and CTWS on the Belshaw ck irrigation diversion consolidation. Also, a diversion retrofit on Middle Fork John Day. Working with BOR for airborne electronic survey, looking for opportunities for aquifer storage/groundwater development.
- f. Matt Wenick: 25% cost share program for annual grasses. They were successful with a Landscape Scale Restoration funding from ODF for \$1.7M to treat annual grasses. Planning to do about 25,000 acres Rejuvra treatment. With Rejuvra they are seeing that with 1 treatment get 3-5 years control for annual grasses, giving perennials a chance to establish and not needing to go back for re-seeding. Hoping to get to up to about 35,000 acres treated. A lot of BLM spray work coming up and National Forest treatments. If anybody ever needs any consulting give them a call, they're happy to come out.

Annual SWCD meeting is May 18th. Matt has 3 reps from Baer coming out, talking about technical aspect of herbicide and results. Site visits available the next day, Thursday morning. Phil questioned about engaging BLM in annual grass treatment. Matt: have been working with Malheur FS, and that they have been communicating, but BLM is not as far along as FS.

- g. Russ Powell, ODFW Habitat: Planning on Tex ck in SF this year, and 2 projects in the Middle Fork, 1 in Wheeler County, and scheduling for next year.
- h. Emigrant Creek Ranger District Project Updates for Dove and Boundary
Angie Yost, Acting Silviculturist on ECRD.

Dove Project Area: older project, signed in 2017. Approximately 43,000 acres. A lot of the restoration and commercial treatments are complete. Restoration still to complete: juniper treatments (6000 acres). May have some more PCT. 2700 acres of PCT and 4200 acres of commercial.

Utlely Roadless Area (URA) treatment: no plans for mechanical treatment, maybe late season or early season burning. No treatment for this Dove NEPA document. They have looked at possible controlled burn options, but they have to be careful, have to light right before season ending event, like a snowstorm. They don't want it to burn on its own, want to try to control burn. Richard: fire waiting to happen, ecological disaster waiting to happen. Commodity Credit Corporation funding enormous amount of money for huge projects from \$5-100M projects to sustain environment. Any chance for collaborative project? ECRD: Trying to be creative on how they work in there without litigation hold up.

Kathleen Cathy asked if they would be removing the juniper or looking at using. ECRD: Most juniper will be piled and burned.

Phil: when Utlely first proposed as roadless, not meant to be locked in box. But to take a hard look at whether it should be roaded at all due to soils. Izee Community wouldn't have said yes if they knew where it was going to go, but they supported as community. Hopes there's information in the files and how it was scoped, and the understanding was that it would be revisited.

Richard: The National Forest approached Izee Ranch for access for fire fighting in URA, agreed if can maintain 1 of FS roads in the URA. Signed agreement, but without little piece of road in RA fires out of control.

ECRD: Fact of matter is, if put a bunch of resources into project with a high probability of litigation they are not using time and resources to the most benefit. Use method of highest probability of success. Richard: in general people are understanding that work is needed to suppress wildfire. Thinks people's attitudes more willing to change, eyes opening after recent wildfires. Maybe time is right for trying to do something in Roadless area.

Kathleen Cathy: Baker City working on plans for work in roadless area, maybe template for how to work in RAs.

Phil suggested a field trip to look at Utlely. Not just IRA also wildlife emphasis area. Needs to be dealt with.

The Forest can do a prescribed burn with Categorical Exclusions, this may be an option moving forward. Part of plan for Dove was to treat around RA for protection.

Boundary project area. 37,892 acres estimated draft completed and out for scoping by Jan 2023. Reduce fuel loading, bring back favorable species. They are in the very beginning stages of proposed actions, but are considering commercial thinning, PCT, fuels reduction, prescribed fire.

Kathleen Cathy, Senator Ron Wyden's office: In the bipartisan infrastructure bill, \$42M for hazardous fuels reduction, funding for additional CFLRP. Working to reduce fire borrowing. NRCS funding for watershed protection programs. Reduce fuel loads, more fire resilient. Ron wrote to regional office, in support of 10-year stewardship contract. River Democracy Act. 4700 miles Wild and Scenic designations proposed, working through process of removing segments. Concerns about restrictions. ½ mile buffers, goal behind the increased buffer was to create a fire management plan, making fire prevention work more successful. Can include commercial harvest, PCT, invasives treatment & prescribed fire. Kyle: will there be opportunity for public input? Kathleen: can write and give them specific segments and reasons why they should be removed. Amy S: What is the timeframe for the bill? Kathleen: Had a hearing. Put out proposal, had hearing, next step is markup, make language changes to clarify. Unsure on timing of final draft. Working with partners to figure out how to make changes. On segments that do make it through will have comprehensive river management plan.

2. Action Items

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

3. Staff Report

- a. Project Updates
 - i. Bark project: Scoping for Bark, September 2022. Meanwhile the IDT will be working at revising and fleshing out the proposed activities in a general way for that document. The Record of Decision is scheduled for winter 2023-24.
- b. Grant Applications & Results
 - i. ODF Small Woodlands: SFJDWC applied for Juniper removal in the Upper Mainstem portion of their service area and were unsuccessful.
- c. Fall OWEB results
 - i. Recommended for funding on the Sunflower Allotment projects, but not on the Caribou Aspen Health.
- d. Spring OWEB Applications
 - i. Widows Creek Forest Health

4. Discussion

- a. River Restoration Northwest Hannah Latzo report: 3-day conference, focused on large-scale projects, Klamath dam removal, in John Day, stream net data store, models steelhead and chinook densities. Factors in how climate change will affect streams.
- b. Project Manager Position Update, with a lack of candidates Directors agreed that trying to hire an office manager may be a better option.
- c. Annual Self-Assessment: postponed

5. Coming Up

- a. 2/16/2022: 1:00 pm, NRCS Local Work Group Meeting, <https://www.zoomgov.com/j/1608633185>
- b. 2/18/2022: 10:00 am, Hole in the Ground Bid Tour
- c. 5/9/2022: May SFJDWC Meeting, Ryan Torland, ODFW Wildlife Biologist, Big Game Report
- d. 6/21-6/22/2022: Murderers Creek Range Research Summary, Murderers Creek Ranch House

6. Adjourn, Next meeting date: Monday, March 14th, 2022.