

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

The South Fork John Day River Watershed Council met on the 11<sup>th</sup> day of April 2022.

The meeting was called to order at 1:04 pm, at the Izee Ranch, by Phil St. Clair.

**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	Lindsay Bullock, SFJDWC	Phil St. Clair, Vice Chair	Jeff Maben, Director
Brandon Ferguson, ODF	Aaron Roth, NRCS	M.T. Anderson, Director	Scott Hess, Director	Jeffrey Kee, landowner
Maria Snodgrass, Oregon Dept of Agriculture	Richard Nelson, Director	Jim Dovenberg, Widows Creek Ranch		

Quorum was present because there are currently 7 directors on the board and 5 were represented at this meeting.

### 1. Public Comment

### 2. Agency Reports

- a. Aaron Roth, NRCS: 4/12/22 is first annual Grant County Natural Resources Fair. 6-7 speakers, roughly 20 agencies will be represented. Staffing update: Hannah Smith leaving for district conservation position in Baker City, May 9<sup>th</sup>. RCCP update: software finally updated so they can work on contracts from last fall's applications, sending out for signatures in the next week or so.
- b. Brandon Ferguson, ODF: Staffing updates: in process of hiring Natural Resources Manager, announcement going out in the next couple days. Been working on South Fork John Day Partnership recently and contract should go up for bid in the next month or two. Two grants closing May 13 they plan on applying to: one nationwide up to 300k and one Western States Fire Marshal for defensible space and fuels reduction which requires collaboration of 200 landowners in 3 years.
- c. Maria Snodgrass, OR Dept of Ag Water Quality: Big staffing transition. Been down 5 staff members for 2 years, lost 4 more recently so at 50% capacity. Have really been focusing on filling these positions. Strategic implementations schedule is being looked at and the schedule will start in 2024. Also looking at revising ag water quality report memorandum of agreement with DEQ as it's 10 years old, but still in beginning stages of that process.

### 3. Action Items

- a. March Meeting Minutes: Jeff motioned to approve, M.T. second, no discussion, motion passed.
- b. March Staff Time: Jeff motioned to approve, Richard second, no discussion, motion passed.
- c. Reimbursement Requests: Jeff motion to approve, M.T. second, no discussion, motion passed.
- d. Project Request - Indian Creek Diversion: Confederated Tribe of Warm Springs requested sponsorship for a project outside of the SFJDWC Service Area on the upper mainstem of JD, work under our name on OWEB to hasten contracting work. Project background: Indian Creek is a tributary to the upper mainstem JD River, occupied by bull trout and steelhead, with a priority date of 1877. The diversion is in designated wilderness, and the irrigation ditch runs from wilderness to BLM to private and onto designated POU. Ditch is currently unscreened and has observed dead ESA-listed species in it. Landowners would like to see it screened plus improvements to irrigation system (diversion, piping) as the ditch is dangerous to maintain and has failed. CTWS wants to put in a Technical Assist grant for designs first and then put in for another grant for the work. ODFW, FS, BLM, CTWS, landowners (Dan and Steve Mullins) have been working on the project funding as well. Priority for these entities but contracting issues have made it difficult to push forward. Proposal to set up an agreement with the Tribes that we

get admin funding on grant; they do the work. This is out of our district but if we say no, the work will most likely not happen. OWEB's due date is May 1<sup>st</sup> so this a priority to decide on. Questions were raised about the point of diversion and the need for clarification of more landowners potentially existing. A vote was postponed until clarification is met on the landowners, then an online vote will be taken before the deadline and recorded in the Final version of these minutes.

- i. On April 12, Amy emailed the council members to ask for further discussion, which was held over email from April 12-18. Although the concern of other landowners' water rights was mollified, the discussion raised questions regarding the watershed's specific role in the project and why, after years of working with multiple agencies, no progress had been made yet; another concern raised was that while admin money is a benefit to the watershed, it isn't if it is gotten by helping other entities circumvent a process, which it was unclear if we might be doing. We have not partnered with the Tribes before, so some aspects of the project and why we were being asked to help were unclear, but the Tribes sent a letter of explanation and Amy summarized their position: we are being asked for assistance in securing funds to contract out design work, not on-the-groundwork. The new diversion/screen will need designs prior to implementation. This process will take at least a year to complete. After designs have been approved through the HIP III review process, permits will be secured, and the Tribes will work on implementation with their own BPA allotted funds, and we will be out of the picture. The service of taking on contracting for projects is a common service that we provide our public partners. This is often the main benefit and reason other agencies have partnered with us before – low admin rates and quicker contracting processes. When we have partnered, the Board reviews and so far, has voted in favor of signing MOUs with these entities. Phil made the motion to vote, and Scott seconded. The vote passed 5-1, with 1 abstaining.

#### **4. Staff Report**

- a. Project Updates – Amy shared video of juniper being masticated – up to 8–10-inch juniper can be chipped apart.
  - i. RCPP enrollment – Next round of signups is open, taking apps until Fall 2022. No cap is being set at this time; we want to see how much interest there is in the newest round, but also want to reserve some for a 4<sup>th</sup> round.
  - ii. BLM Good Neighbor Authority projects – Since February, 3 of the 6 projects have been finished.
  - iii. Landscape Scale Restoration Project: April 20 Amy and Hannah headed to Dayville School to talk to students and put on a presentation, partnering with ODF and OSU Extension.
  - iv. DEQ 319 Bioassessment is scheduled for June or July, keeping an eye on the water levels.
  - v. Charlotte Martin has about 25 BDAs going in on the Rocking 9 Rosebud Creek
  - vi. Grant Applications
    1. OWEB Spring 2022 (due May 1<sup>st</sup>)
      - a. Mike Martin: Property on the Mt. Vernon end of the SFJDWC Service Area. Looking at Water Developments and Juniper control.
      - b. Bridge Creek Forestry – Forest Health application on the Widows Creek Ranch
    2. Wildlife Conservation Society – Application submitted last week. Pre-commercial thinning, spring development, juniper cutting, etc. Framed in terms of animal habitat and fire prevention.

3. Landscape Scale Restoration – will be meeting with Brandon to discuss.
4. Title II – opening up soon. Project on White Creek; would like to look at BLM land to coordinate with other projects.
5. Western Native Trout Initiative – opening up soon.
6. DEQ 319 – opening up soon.

**5. Discussion**

- a. Jim Dovenberg: Grant Co Court has funded a part time trapper along with other federal agencies. Trying to make this a permanent position. Shaun Robertson working on proposal to Farm Bureau Board for taxing district that includes cities and one that doesn't include them. Overall cost of a trapper is \$100,000 and is broken down to 70% to county and 30% to other agencies.

**6. Coming Up**

- a. 04/12/2022: NRCS Conservation Day, 10 – 3 Grant County Fairgrounds Pavilion
- b. 5/9/2022: May SFJDWC Meeting, Ryan Torland, ODFW Wildlife Biologist, Big Game Report

**7. Adjourn**, Next meeting date: Monday, May 9th, 2022.