

Wasco County Forest Collaborative Group

ODFW Screen Shop

April 6, 2017

Attendees

Bill Noonan, Coordinator

Tammy Tripp, Minutes

Steering Committee Members

Kristen Dodd, ODF

Jeremy Thompson, ODFW

John Nelson, At-Large D21

Ryan Bessette, WCSWCD

Pat Davis, Watershed Resources

Rich Thurman, At Large

Harvey Long, NOMECE

Dan Van Vactor, Badger Irr Dist.

Brenna Bell, BARK

Bob Sjolund, CTWS

Collaborative Members

Rick Larson, RMEF

Tyson Bertone-Riggs, ODF

Chris Rossel, USFS

Whitney Olsker, USFS

Casey Gatz, USFS Barlow

Steve Kramer, Wasco Co.

Kameron Sam, USFS Barlow

Andrew Spaeth, Sustainable Northwest

Guests

EJ Davis, OSU Forestry

Scott McDonald, USFS

Kathryn Arenolt, USFS

1:01 PM – Opening Remarks and Introductions

Bill called the meeting to order and reviewed agenda items with members. Review the Request for Support, discussion about the grants and next steps, and an update by the Training Wheels Off Committee on proposals for Retained Receipts.

General Announcements

Tyson reported that there will be a hearing concerning OWEBs part in the Federal Forest Restoration Program in the National Resource Subcommittee with testimony for and against the program. Things are moving forward but no real action is going to happen until after the Legislative meeting. Several entities submitted comments on it.

Brenna announced that there is a new lawsuit (not by BARK this time) from the Pacific Coast Fisheries against Mt. Hood for failure to act relating to the CCR. It names nine Mt. Hood rivers and may affect projects in 15Mile Creek. It was filed March 14th.

Bill reported that he is working with Phil and Senator Merkley concerning appropriations for the Legacy Road and Trails Remediation Program for FY 2018. He handed out copies of the proposed letter he'd like to submit on behalf of the group. He asked everyone to take a few minutes and read through it. Brenna said she could take a look at it and suggest some revisions and send it back to him. Group was favorable to this suggestion.

Andrew said that Sustainable Northwest hosted a PNW Forest Collaborative Workshop in Hood River on March 14th and over 100 people attended. It focused on the Science, the collaborative process, policy, and other collaborative tools to leverage resources. Oregon has more collaboratives than any other state. The budget cuts being proposed are pretty dramatic and will have a huge effect on group's ability to get things done. Rick commented that he went to the NW Oregon group discussion and it was suggested that once a year the NW Coordinators come together on common interests, do workshops, and work with the three forest groups to go over the Forest Plan and proposed updates.

Kameron announced that Lisa Northrup is on temporary detail to Region 4 so she won't be available. Jim DeMag, Deputy Forester will be taking over her duties in her absence.

OWEB Grant

Bill handed out the Application Review Summary on their grant and went over the comments. Despite being well written, there were some concerns. Bottom line though is the fact that there were 9 grants submitted and only 5 were funded this cycle. There was only \$100,000 available. Wasco fell just south of the breakpoint. A couple groups awarded grants were asked to trim their budgets. Most selected were already well established. Key grant criteria is: will the group be able to achieve state goals at pace and scale and how will they do it.

Tyson noted that this was a particularly tight funding cycle and it was basically a bridge grant, so it really can't be considered as a baseline collaborative support grant. Andrew added that Sustainable Northwest received funding through the USFS for a Coordinator position which will work with Wasco and Hood River groups. They will house the position. It is similar to an Americorps position. Bill suggested the Steering Committee discuss ways to fund finding for his services for August, September, and October. He understands that his services are considered expensive, but it is his job and he has the experience and training explicitly in facilitation.

Andrew went on to say that the Coordinator position begins in July or August and should OWEB continue to fund the collaborative program then there will be a new grant cycle this fall. Discussion ensued about grant requirements, funding sources, and the competitive nature of the collaborative environment. Also discussed was the USFS constrained capacity and their limited resources. How the collaboratives are limited by what the forest service is capable of doing at any given time. Suggestions included tying specific grants to specific program areas.

Rocky Burn

Casey said they are working on incorporating recommendations into the project action and design. He'll have it for the next meeting so the group can see how their input was incorporated. Dan expressed frustration at the amount of time that had passed between submitting the comments, which was last summer, to now. Casey replied that it had been agreed at the onset to go slow in order for the newly formed collaborative to get its footing. So while the group was working on its relationship work on other projects did not stop. Because it is the group's first project, they (the forest service staff) wanted to make sure that the goals of the collaborative and the forest service were on the same

page. Each of the proposed actions for Rocky had to be subjected to an effects analysis. There are certain laws, policies, and regulations that have to be reviewed to make sure the proposed actions meet the law. Dan said this doesn't explain the amount of time that has passed and the fact that the group wasn't made aware of the nature of the delay.

Bill called a halt and wanted to clarify the issues under discussion: The first issue is that Dan wants to know why it has taken a year to get to this point. The second issue is where to go from here.

Casey said that the CCR project was an opportunity that arose while the group was putting together their proposed actions for the Rocky Burn. Work on CCR couldn't stop after the group got their RB input completed. Jeremy stated that there was definitely a learning curve the group had to go through as they learned to work collaboratively so it was important to not push through the project too fast. The Forest Service has project timelines that they have to maintain, with limited staff, for all of their work. Just because they were working on Rocky Burn didn't stop their commitment to other projects they had before or during the Rocky Burn process. They always have several projects in process that are being worked on, most over quite a period of time.

Bill brought up the second issue. Even though it's been a year since the recommendations were turned in it is an opportunity to learn from this and move ahead. The group is new, the Forest Service is short-handed and short funded. What kind of time frame can the group expect from the Forest Service in the future going forward? Rich said that when he was with the Forest Service he'd started the Dog River Project about 9 years ago and it still isn't done.

Kameron added that they have many projects on their plates in various stages. He has to be careful on designating specific timelines because they have limited funding, limited staff and there are important steps that have to be taken for each and every project. Projects have to be reviewed against the Endangered Species Act, applicable environmental laws, and other regulations. Then they have to figure out how to get the project done with what staff they have. It is a very glacially slow process.

Bill reiterated Dan's frustration at spending so much time and effort and that he feels one year is being unreasonable. Cameron said he understands, however, he cannot commit to any kind of a timeline for anything because of the varying factors that surround each and every project they have. Casey added that it was mentioned several times in the beginning that there would be a lag and it wouldn't be until January or February that RB would be at this point. Pat said that it wasn't too long ago the group got frustrated and said they felt that Kameron was pushing them too fast. He feels the whole thing averages out now and things are moving along quite well. He understands Dan's frustration about not getting anything on the ground, but again, this is a new group and this was their first project.

Bill asked if there was any more input. Brenna added that the Forest Service is just understaffed. Kristen said in the face of this, the group will need to manage its expectations when it comes to project implementation. Dan asked Casey if the information on Rocky could be sent in advance – the original scoping letter, recommendations, and the proposed action, so members could have some time

to do their own analysis. Brenna asked it was a new scoping letter, Casey said it wasn't, it's proposed actions. He went on to say that the recommendations have to be put into appropriate language, they have to be sure that what they end up with is what the group intended.

Andrew said that it is obvious that CCR did have an impact on Rocky Burn, but moving forward, in the future, clarification on timeline expectations up front might be helpful. Dan asked if they review the project in May, when can they expect the NEPA to be completed. Casey said there is no way to project that. There are just too many uncertainties at the moment – in staffing, political climate, other project needs, including funding. Kameron added that they don't even know what their FY 18 budget is. There are going to be many cuts and they can only work with what they have at this moment. There is no certainty about anything until the budget issues are resolved and they then have to see where changes are going to have to be made to accommodate it. Bob chimed in that there was a project out in the middle of nowhere that took 12 years to get done.

Taking off the Training Wheels Off Committee (TWO)

Jeremy said they looked at those projects with current NEPA, are ready for implementation but haven't been touched due to lack of funding. They are looking at projects being funded by NRCS, ODFW, ODF, and Forest Service. Then they looked at what projects they could do if they had the funds to do the project, such as applying for the 2 Chiefs, RCPP, or GNA, then for a project that could easily be accomplished so they could show they have the capacity to get projects on the ground.

Bill observed that May is looking at the RB Scoping Letter, September they'll be writing the grant, is it realistic to identify a project by June? Jeremy stated that he felt it was pretty realistic. The group should be able to have some good concept ideas by June. Kristen said it would be good to have the Retained Receipts and a bigger grant in play at the same time.

Bill asked if there was anything the group could do that would help the NEPA process for Rocky Burn. Casey said no. Andrew mentioned that the 2014 Farm Bill had a categorical exclusion on up to 3,000 acres that excluded the EA – listing as action/non-action EA. It has to have been collaborated and the collaborative could design it. The group could hashout the EA in advance which might help the process later on. Casey stated he doesn't have any experience with that and doesn't know. However, he does feel it would need to be rescoped as it was scoped under a different authority. Bill said that they need someone to help educate the group on this Farm Bill exclusion. Brenna doesn't think it would help Rocky Burn.

Bill said the next priorities will be the proposed action for Rocky Burn, the TWO Committee progress, education, and lastly information on the Farm Bill Exclusion for fall.

CCR

Andrew said that he talked with Kameron and Casey about the concerns with CCR taking priority over Rocky Burn and Waucoma. Tyson said it is worth talking through how CCR altered the prioritization. Kameron said that CCR is a priority project for the entire forest. For the past four years they have been dealing with sequestration – the move to get government smaller. They have been

adjusting to smaller budgets each year. They still have the work to do, just less money to do it with. Looking at the percentage of cuts they've had to determine how to absorb the cuts and still maintain the organization and complete the work on the table. One way was to utilize the funds from timber sales or stewardship contracting. If they can pay staff from the project funds they are working on, that frees up funding elsewhere. One strategy is to use both retained and KV funds to leverage salary. The KV funds are the Kundsens/Vanderberg Fund for restoration and reforestation. The best way is to look at areas that meet reforestation and restoration goals, can provide forest products to get those funds into the system, then leverage salary on those projects. They will still have to meet wildlife and plant recovery plans, provide fuel breaks, address wildfire goals, plus it will meet their socio-economic goals. This is why they chose to prioritize the CCR project as a means of being sustainable in the face of major budget cuts.

Brenna asked if they kept the KV funds and how much control do they have. Kameron said the KV funds stay in the sale area. It's a Trust Fund Act, whereas Retained Receipts can be spent elsewhere in the forest. Salaries can be paid out of those funds for personnel working in that specific area.

Casey noted that the process with CCR started at the same time the group was just getting started. CCR was just brought forward to work on as the group was only just beginning to look at Rocky. They had discussed whether or not to collaborate on CCR, they looked at several factors. In addition to restrictive funding, was CCR a good collaborative choice? Did the group have the ability to be collaborative? Discussion ensued.

Dan said that after the last meeting he was under the impression that CCR had delayed the Rocky project. He said he had been disappointed that the Forest Service hadn't told them another project had knocked Rocky off the tracks. Kameron said he apologizes for it and that he recognizes that lines of communication hadn't been what they should. Casey said regardless, Rocky has always been lower on the list and is still there. Discussion ensued about the lack of clarity in the process.

Brenna stated for the record that there are conflicts going on over CCR on the outside and that BARK is commenting on the scoping. Jeremy asked the group not to comment on CCR in order to avoid causing issues about later collaborative projects. It isn't their group project. Bill then asked the group to clarify that they did not want to submit comments on CCR as a group. They all agreed.

Bill said the next meeting will hear a report from the TWO Committee and review the original RB Scoping Letter, Recommendations, and Proposed actions. Casey said he'll do his best to at least get it out the week before.

Adjourned 3:45 PM
Tammy Tripp