

White River Watershed Council Meeting

February 11, 2015

3:00 – 4:30 PM

Sportsman's Pub and Grub

56826 Wamic Market Rd., Wamic, OR

MINUTES

Attendees:

Kameron Sam, <i>USFS</i>	Steve Anderson	Sylvia McCorkle
Pat Davis, <i>Chair, Rock Creek Ditch Co.</i>	Herb Snodgrass	Josh Molton <i>council member, ODFW White River Wildlife</i>
Bob Larsell, <i>council member, Lost & Boulder District Improvement Co.</i>	Mickey Snodgrass	Kenneth Martin, <i>council member, ODFW White River Wildlife</i>
Chris Rossel, <i>USFS</i>	Merton Lawson	Josh Thompson, <i>SWCD</i>
Jim Bussard	Lois Kennedy	Anna Buckley, <i>SWCD Watershed Coordinator</i>
Randy Marshall	Sam Woodside	

Call to Order and Introductions

Pat called the meeting to order and led introductions. He asked for any additions to the agenda and for council members to review and approve the last meeting minutes. Bob moved to approve, Steve seconded and the motion passed.

White River Regional Conservation Partnership Program Grant, *Josh Thompson, SWCD*

Josh talked to the council about the recent award of the RCPP for White River Irrigation Efficiency and Streamflow restoration. The program will utilize traditional NRCS programs such as EQIP but for projects identified by an NRCS partner, in this case, the SWCD. The projects cumulatively will eliminate seven fish passage barriers, save 6,000 ac-feet of water annually, and convert 10 cfs to permanent in-stream flows with another 7.28 cfs anticipated through irrigation efficiency upgrades. 21.9 miles of stream will be restored, of which 15 miles are over allocated and seasonally dewatered.

The application was for \$2.4 million, the SWCD received \$2 million, so he had to eliminate some of the projects including the on-farm efficiency projects and an easement. He provided an over view of each of the projects that will be funded. The projects are:

1. Highline Diversion and ditch elimination
2. Lindell Dam Removal and irrigation efficiency upgrade,
3. Rock Creek Main Canal Piping,
4. Threemile Joint Diversion and Fish Screen
5. Thompson Diversion and Ditch Elimination
6. Threemile Fish Passage Barrier Removal and
7. Forest Creek Ditch Piping.

Attendees asked questions about the project specifics and timelines. Josh explained that the projects need to be completed in 5 years (by end of FY2021), but is he planning on completing them in 3 years (by end of FY 2019)

For more information on the RCPP, you can contact Josh Thompson at 541-296-6178 x116.

Updates and Announcements

Forest Collaborative kick-off meeting at Dufur High School 2/25 at 2 PM

Pat Davis provided some background and context. He reminded folks that at the October council meeting, Kameron and staff introduced the Rocky Burn project that the USFS was interested in getting community involvement on. The council had expressed interest in being involved and then the interest grew to county wide. Commissioner Kramer is now leading the county-wide effort. Pat Davis, as an irrigator, plans to attend the kick-off meeting on the 25th.

Kameron Sam, the USFS Barlow District Ranger, expressed how important he thinks collaboration is. He said it's the best way to get the "public" back into public land management. He explained that many National Forests have asked their local government and county to bring together a diverse group of stakeholders to weigh in on desired future conditions for Forest Service lands. He used the Rocky Burn area, as an example of a project that a forest collaborative could weigh in on. He's interested in focusing the stakeholders who benefit from the forest and forest products (hunters, fishers, recreationists, loggers, irrigators, etc.). He explained that the collaborative needs to be convened by an outside entity, not the USFS. Commissioner Kramer and Wy'East RC &D Director Robert Wallace are leading the effort. The kick-off meeting will be at Dufur High School at 2 PM on 2/25. Anyone who is interested is invited. The meeting will provide examples of other forest collaboratives around the region, including Malheur National Forest. Oregon Solutions and OSU extension will be involved, as well. The first project will be to weigh in on how to manage the 8,000 acres that is the Rocky Burn. After Rocky Burn, the idea is to scale up to a whole watershed, such as Tygh Creek or White River. There are many tools at our disposal. The treatment at Rocky Burn will likely involve some thinning to reduce the risk of catastrophic fire/total stand replacement. In a catastrophic fire, all of the trees are killed, the soil dries up, increases runoff and erosion. In the long term, the collaborative will work county wide and move to other watersheds including Fifteenmile and Mill creek. This process aims to be different than the status quo, which is why the USFS will tell the public what they are doing and the public can comment on it.

Jim Bussard asked whether they could get a jump start on some more of the immediate concerns with the Rocky Burn prior to the Forest Collaborative process. Jim also asked about plans for piping Badger ditch through the Wilderness. Kameron said he will ask the collaborative to provide input on Badger ditch. Kameron also said that they will be working on NEPA next year for Rocky Burn and then will implement the project in FY 2017 but will need the collaborative to weigh in on what the desired future conditions are for water quality, sedimentation rates, vegetation, habitat, culverts, watershed health, etc.

Wasco County Watershed Councils action plan

Pat Davis introduced the county-wide action plan effort as the next logical step after the watershed assessment was completed. He explained that OWEB has been making some changes to their requirements for watershed councils, so this action plan is being developed through the coordinating board consisting of co-chair representation from each council. It will be used to prioritize project funding requests to OWEB and other funding sources. John Runyon, a consultant, was hired with grant funds to pull together the document. Anna passed out The Goals, Strategies, and Actions draft spreadsheet for attendees to review and provide comment. Pat explained that White River doesn't contain salmon, it is home to an isolated population of red band trout

and provides about a third of the flow in the lower Deschutes. He said it is good public policy to protect the habitat for this fish species.

Jim Bussard and Steve Anderson talked about Badger Prairie and the need to pipe Badger Pipe for safety reasons and water savings. They requested this project to be added to the Goals, Strategies, Actions spreadsheet.

Herb Snodgrass talked about Juniper Flat ditch and the significant water losses. He requested that it be added to the priorities and wondered why all of the focus has been on the northern part of the watershed. Pat responded that the Rock Creek piping has taken 12 years to get where they are now. Pat said he would be willing to attend a Juniper Flat irrigation district meeting to share what he has learned. Pat shared the tour he was on last week with Senator Merkley's office for the Regional Conservation Partnership Program. He said the volume of water they could save is equal to the Colorado River. He also talked about the Rock Creek Irrigation District's plan to generate a small amount of hydroelectric power and encouraged Juniper Flat to see if it would be feasible to get a turbine on Juniper Flats ditch due to the potential.

Josh mentioned that the SWCD had done some preliminary cost estimates on what it would take to pipe Juniper Flats from Clear Lake to the USFS boundary and determined it would be \$16 million and the landowner would need to come up with 25%. Josh said he plans to work with Juniper Flats next—likely in the next 5 years. He mentioned that the Farmer's Conservation Alliance from Hood River has money from Bonneville Environmental Foundation to explore options with Wasco County PUD for power generation. Pat talked about instream leasing options and said that Oregon is paying about \$5,000 per 1 cfs but Nevada is paying a lot more.

Next Meeting Date and Agenda

A date was not been selected for the next meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 4:15