

Wasco County Watershed Councils Coordinating Board

Meeting Minutes

Conference Room, USDA Service Center, The Dalles

Wednesday February 1, 2017

3:00pm – 4:25pm

Attendees:

Abbie Forrest, *Coordinator*

Phil Kaser, *15mile Co-Chair*

Pat Davis, *WR Chair/CB Chair*

Meta Loftsgaarden, *OWEB*

Shilah Olson, *SWCD Manager*

Ken Bailey, *The Dalles Co-Chair*

Norm Lyda, *SWCD Director*

Bob Larsell, *White River WC*

Bryce Molesworth, *Mosier Co-Chair*

Bob Krein, *Bakeoven/BH Chair*

John Byers, *ODA*

Eric Nordquist, *Badger Imp. Dist.*

Welcome, Agenda Review and Minute Approval

Pat called the meeting to order and initiated a round of introductions.

Ken moved to approve the minutes as presented, Bob seconded and the motion carried.

Updates and Accomplishments – John Byers, ODA and Meta Loftsgaarden, OWEB

ODA Overview and Update – John Byers

John started off by thanking the Coordinating and SWCD board for inviting him to their meeting. He stated how impressed he was with the progress in the Work Plan. John said the Wasco SWCD and Watershed Councils are the poster children for the state with how we cooperate with one another and the great partnership, which is very unusual statewide.

Cannabis and all of the regulations that go along with it becoming legal have kept the folks at ODA very busy. John said with the new measurement standards, there have been over 1,500 requests to certify small scales. Pesticide use has been a growing concern for growers and consumers. There are not any federal labels for cannabis and hemp; which can not have any residual or pesticide detections. The council continued discussion around the many difficulties with growers and regulations, food safety and water quality.

John said that every natural resource agency in Oregon combined make up less than 2% of the state budget, and hopefully will not be affected by the cuts. He also brought up the Farm Bill and the conversations that are taking place. John said that every commodity is being brought to the table to make sure every voice is heard. John said there will be new Strategic Implementation Areas (SIAs) in Hood River, Umatilla, Clatsop, Tillamook and Jackson Counties.

Bob Krein noted that a significant number of acres are not being reenrolled in the CRP program and that this program has been critical to protecting water quality. How do we ensure that affected landowners continue managing with a conservation approach? He said we are at the beginning stages to come up with some innovative approaches. What options are there for ground that comes out of the program? Are there options for a rental payment, or payment for public service (whether they graze or farm it) to follow a conservation plan? Half the acres in Oregon CRP were taken out and it is time to start developing a solution.

Pat brought up the two SIAs that have been implemented in Wasco County: Threemile and Mill Creek. The SIA in Wasco County was a successful pilot project and should be added as a great accomplishment.

OWEB Overview and Update – Meta Loftsgaarden

Meta started with a huge shout out to Shilah. She said Shilah has been a person OWEB calls on for strategic advice and input.

Meta said OWEB co-invests in CREP with FSA. Wasco County has the largest CREP program in Oregon. She said Wasco County is an area OWEB relies on if there is a new program they want to try out. The SWCD and Watershed Councils' willingness to test out programs ensures that we can all grow together.

Meta said she looked over the grant status table that was distributed during the SWCD board meeting and noticed that 20 of the 28 grants are funded through OWEB. It is good that not all of the grants are through OWEB. She applauded the SWCD staff and councils for looking at other sources for funding, as it is good to have diversity. Meta also thanked the council for supporting the staff, and all that we do.

Meta's updates from OWEB started with discussing revenues and the \$1.7 million State budget deficit. She said that grant funding is protected and lottery revenues have increased more than the general funds; about a 10 million dollar increase in a 70 million dollar budget. OWEB may be able to fund more projects, so she encouraged the council and district to keep applying for money. She also explained the spending plan. She said the OWEB board gets a 70-80 million dollar budget every two years, and designates those funds into different programs and grant opportunities, including: Capacity grants, Focused Investment Partnerships (FIP), small grants, effectiveness monitoring, technical assistance, and restoration and implementation grants.

Strategic plans are important to OWEB. Shilah stated that she is part of the OWEB advisory group for their current strategic planning process, so the district and councils have a local tie to that process. Strategic plans are built around how investments are made on the ground.

Bob Larsell asked about the work being done above the Pelton Dam in conjunction with the Deschutes River Alliance and what role OWEB is playing. Meta said OWEB is investing in the pipelines and some of the canals and fish ladders.

Bob Krein asked what types of projects OWEB and ODA would like to see done. Meta said the OWEB board likes new and innovative things as well as the tried and true projects that we all know work and show success. She noted that weed control issues are widespread; almost every project has a weed component. The goal is to have a diversity of projects and encourage capacity of organizations. Meta talked about FAST, how it is a new approach and so far has been very efficient and successful. OWEB wants to start measuring change and see how it can be reported effectively for projects such as CREP, removing dams, and FAST. The coordinating board continued discussing CREP on a state and national level.

Meta said she would love to hear how the watershed councils and conservation district are working together including the new structure of the coordinating board. Ken said when the structure changed to the coordinating board, we hit a rough patch thinking folks from the outside were telling us how to do something. But now we have better communication and understanding of how we all work together, which has been a great result. The councils have been able to do that by still retaining identity. The councils and coordinating board went through a lot of work to save those individual cultures, and consciously tried to keep that in place and still build into a successful coordinating board. We have been able to realize common issues between the councils. The coordinating board allows bigger conversations that are brought up at the local council level. Ken also thanked ODA and OWEB for the capacity funding to pay for this staff.

Having NRCS in the same building to attend the meetings and collaborate efforts and money on projects has been very beneficial. It has allowed everyone to have a voice in setting county priorities, concentrate efforts and support to get important projects done. Shilah said the council was awarded funding through OWEB to fund the Bakeoven range assessment grant and NRCS is already working on building a CIS based on what we develop.

Shilah thanked Meta and John for coming and sharing what is happening in their agencies as well as letting the coordinating board and SWCD highlight some of our accomplishments.

The board continued discussing projects that are bringing resource concerns to light, including groundwater, and surface water, FAST and the train derailment. Shilah briefly ran through the list of projects the watershed councils are actively involved in along with sharing our success stories with other councils, districts and agencies across the state.

John said he is very appreciative of our group and the success of the SIA projects in Wasco County. He said ODA has been able to use us and the success of the SIAs as an example across the state.

Pat said in his watershed they are losing half of the water they could store in a main reservoir. White River and the RCPP has had huge projects get funding, leveraging over 2 million dollars. All agencies have been involved in the process with getting these projects completed. Although the White River watershed hasn't gotten the publicity like a "salmon creek" would, they have a very significant percentage of water that contributes to the Deschutes system.

The council continued discussion around projects and water saving methods.

Because there were so many updates and accomplishments to discuss with OWEB and ODA the meeting ran a half hour later than expected and had to be adjourned. John and Meta thanked the coordinating board and SWCD for inviting them to their meetings. The board thanked them in return.

Meeting adjourned at 4:25PM.

Minutes prepared by Abbie Forrest