HARNEY COUNTY WILDFIRE COLLABORATIVE
A Collaborative Conservation Partnership

harneywildfire.org

Thursday, Sept 26, 2019 / 9:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Harney ESD Meeting Room, 25 Fairview Heights Loop Rd, Burns, OR 97720

Conference Call Line 1 669 900 6833 *Meeting ID:* 311 293 505

Attendees: Angela Sitz, Brianna Goehring, Bryant Kuechle, Carol and Alfred Dunten, Casey O'Connor, Chad Boyd, Dan Nichols, Dustin Johnson, Jacob Gear, Jeff Mackay, Jeff Rose, Jeremy Austin, Jeremy Maestas, Julia Unfried, Kevin Conroy, Marta Prat(call-in), Rachel Beaubien, Richard Roy, Rod Hoagland, Ron Whiting, Stephanie Venell, Tom Segal, Travis Hatley, Zola Ryan

Meeting Objectives: Partner updates and action reports since the last meeting; fire report; updates/discussion on PEIS's; Early Detection Cameras; Communications Subcommittee; Native Seed Production; Pueblo Mountains Implementation; Sage Grouse Initiative Annual Grasses and Juniper Research, Stinkingwater Pilot Project, 2019 recap, 2020 planning

Action Items

- Letter to Governor's Wildfire Council that describes our ask/ideas/consensus for support related to OWEB funding committed toward wildfire mitigation
  - Jeff R., Bruce, Angela, Ron, Dustin, and Brianna. Have draft letter to share with group in January. JEFF and BRUCE taking the lead.
- BRYANT to draft agenda for January meeting and share with group prior.
- ANGELA to schedule next sub-committee meeting (for Stinkingwater?)
  - Need draft proposal for NRCS funding by Feb. subcommittee meeting.
- JEFF R and BRYANT to coordinate with Zola for a spring field trip that could relate to Stinkingwater.
- Jeff R.:
  - There is a spring quarterly meeting. JEFF will talk to Tom about the Cattlemen's spring quarterly meeting.
- BEN to share meeting notes prior to January meeting.
- ANGELA and RACHEL are working on obtaining seed for Pueblo Mt.

MEETING NOTES (Brianna Goehring)

Governors Wildfire Council: Bryant shared word doc excerpts—read out highlighted pieces. Recap of key pieces from the Mitigation committee chair's Nov. interim report to Governor's Wildfire Response Council (November 6, 2019) that related to funding committed toward wildfire mitigation via OWEB.

Takeaway: How does this group play a role?

Comments

- We have an opportunity to help council and to tap into funding opportunities related to increasing capacity and engage with Bruce. We're here to help; have ideas.
- Definite opportunity that shouldn't be passed up. Perhaps contact Bruce and Brent to figure out a why.

- If we could have a group to run funding through (a group like this or NRCS)…
- We're already doing this, so yes we should.
- Monitoring needs are currently being coordinated (among Chad Boyd, Angela, and others already involved with coordinating needs)
- *Action item—Subcommittee to draft a letter outlining our ask/ideas/consensus for monitoring.
- This doc is essentially the ask.
- Bryant: Is the first step then for this group to get behind this as support? (A consensus statement that one drafts on behalf of the group?) Perhaps we should circle back with Bruce to figure this out better before Feb. 2020.
- Jeff, Bruce, Angela, Ron, Dustin, and Brianna are on committee to get this fleshed out more. Jeff and Bruce are the leads.
- Ask Brett and Bruce how we can support, leverage, etc.

Native Seed Cooperative update:

- Next Coop meeting is in January. An interview was done, unknown if an offer has been made.
- Q: Should we have someone specific from this group stay engaged with Seed Coop Process.
- A: Angela is already involved with it. There likely will be a direct connection with this group to the native seed coop but things are still early. Stand by for a January update.

Monitoring Coordinator update:

- Position will likely be filled soon. Extensive monitoring needs, including a framework for collaborative monitoring, are well-recognized, and it would be ideal to develop a position that is broad (i.e., serve the other collaboratives).
- HDP wants to start small with this.

Sept. notes: No feedback on Sept notes. Continue to share notes with group before upcoming meetings; this is appreciated.

Suppression update:

- Pile-burning; winding down for winter; sent a crew to CO for fire. Planning for spring RX burning.
- Silver Creek: small private fire that burned into the neighbor's; otherwise all quiet.
- BLM update: 42 large fires region wide. 8 had teams assigned to them which is way below average for what we do. The others were managed by Type 4 (local) units. 9 IC teams in PNW; because of rules, politics, etc., one team is getting dropped. It was a light year; only one fire in which multiple teams were assigned.

BLM PEIS's:

- Draft PEISs are circulating.
- FWS gave comments a few weeks ago on restoration PEIS. Waiting to receive Biological Assessment; should be straight forward the way the project is written.
- Bryant: Remove from agenda for now until there are new updates.

Early Detection Cameras

- No new updates from last meeting. Is moving forward slowly with installation. Sometime next year will start working on Riddle.
- Bryant: Remove from agenda for now until there are new updates.

Communications update

- Jeff will talk to Tom about Cattleman's Association; There is a spring quarterly Cattleman's meeting.
- Q: FWS funding—remember raw footage of wildfire from last meeting? Marla would like to use that footage to make media to share in various presentations and public, showcase Pueblo, potential funders (Governor's Wildfire Council). ~$4500 to create video which will take up most of the communications funding. Is the group okay with this? Would include getting additional footage of prime sagebrush country.
- A: Make sure to represent more than just Pueblo Mountain project.
- Sagecon
    - Jeff Rose: Mike Fox, Jeff and Ben presented about the Collaborative in SageCon. Questions we received included how did we do it? Did a field trip by French Glen wildfire.
    - Lots of representation from Harney County at this event. Heard positive reactions to the Collaborative's presentation.
- Cattlewomen's—canceled.
- Cattlemen's is next week. The Collaborative is not on the agenda. There is a spring quarterly meeting. Jeff R. will talk to Tom about this next meeting.
    - Q: We could get Tom to say something? Tom is incoming president of Cattlemen's.
    - A: We're not currently on the agenda. Perhaps during the Public Lands Committee. Nothing official from us at this meeting.
- Bryant: Any other events anyone knows of that should be on sub-committee's radar?
    - Wildlife Society is coming up but is too late. Did we already present at this?

Pueblos Project Implementation

Results:

- 15 to 30% burned area within what was tried. They're disappointed. But this is like a primer. We'll still go in with herbicide and the other planned treatments. Did burn intensively around the research plants. Measurements will happen in spring with plant growth and that will inform the seeding treatment. Will have to wait and see from monitoring if the low burned area affects expected outcomes.
- Pipe/well implementation cost is $260,000 which is 3x expected. Will have to find other ways of funding. But should work to install troughs in the correct places—placement won't be a problem.
- Q: Removing only 15 to 30% of burn, but still moving in with other treatments?
- A: The modeling for the burns was inaccurate; it would be cost prohibitive to move back in and burn again.
- Q: Will this change our expected outcomes with the burned area being so low?
- A: We don't know; have to see.
- But we are still getting set up for other treatments; it is still moving forward.

- Bryant: When is our next window? When do we have updates on what is next?
  - A: We need to get the spring monitoring done to know what is next for the Stinkingwater. That will inform the seeding treatment.
  - Bryant: Should we do a group field trip?
  - A: We possibly may be two years out from getting to see effects of the cheatgrass treatment.
  - A: We may want to wait to see outcomes after seedings. It would probably be more useful to do a field visit in 2021. It takes time for these things to play out.
- Bryant: Do we need to discuss Pueblo in Jan. or March? Sounds like not.
- Next steps—Angela will work with Rachel to obtain seed.

SGI annual grass and juniper research

Presentation by Jeremy Maestas about the Rangeland Analysis Platform (RAP) web app.

- Intent is to give some ideas for taking on sagebrush restoration problems, sharing strategic thought process. We focus work strategically to put energy where we can get the most good done for the long-term.
- SGI model is being applied to other projects across the country (Working Lands for Wildlife)
- Focus of work in OR began on juniper. Even 3 to 4% juniper cover has a negative influence on sage grouse (both leks and nests).
- It's been a 10-year investment to get the monitoring results that show an increase in sage grouse populations in the focused treatment areas. It can take a decade to see results—we know that we see ~6-year cycles with cheatgrass.
- Comment: We're just now gaining the technology to model and predict grasslands in the way that is already being done in forested ecosystems (see veg productivity coupled w/ land cover slides).
- Q: How do you start the conversation for a project in an area (i.e., with the private landowners such as in Stinkingwater)?
- A: Be proactive about outreach to producers on an individual basis—more than just group/community meetings; having a personal relationship built on trust (e.g., Zola) is huge. Having a clear plan is key too—"the plan to win" and the "local champion"is huge.

<u>Stinkingwater Pilot Project (Angela)</u>

- 2-pg purpose statement handed out. Give feedback to anyone in the sub-committee.
- Jeremy M: Concept of the battle plan—could we start on the edge of the "green" and move toward the yellow?

NRCS conservation implementation strategy (overview of process by Zola)

- Two documents handed out by Zola—narrative document (the plan), and then the ranking page
- Oregon NRCS uses strategic process to develop conservation implementation strategies (CIS)
- Process for choosing which CIS to fund: starts at county level work group which meets once a yr and provides input to local priorities. To add additional priorities now will be a challenge because

Zola is maxed out. Others can develop CISs, however…..the group can develop the CIS and bring it forward to the local work group as a priority for consideration. If the group was able to bring capacity to handle the work, such as an OWEB grant for technical assistance, Intermountain West Venture, Ducks Unlimited, that would really help out Zola/NRCS angle to move this forward.

- If local level approved, then pass the strategy to the state level. Earliest to receive EQIP funding would be 2021. Need to pass to state office for review and approval by April 10, 2020.
- Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) is another funding option besides EQIP. This would bypass competition with other local applications.
- Strategies: need to be well explained—the background, problems, objectives, methods, expected, costs, etc. NRCS wants to see that we can make actual measurable improvements, how do we prioritize projects within our area; have other sources of funds/matches. Screening questions process in Stinkingwater: highest priority is private lands, e.g., explanation of ranking criteria process. High priority is ranked and funded first, followed by medium priority.

Stinkingwaters NRCS Funding (Bryant's notes)

- Use date from Harney County to create a battle plan like Idaho did, context matters
- RCPP strategy (background and data 1 pager)
- How much on private land?
- What practices?
- How much will it cost?
- NRCS wants to invest and make progress
- Are there other investors (BLM; Wild Landscapes, $250k)
- Prioritization (done in Oct 2018)
- 3 NRCS funding sources – Current North RCPP expansion; SGI Landscape focal areas; CIS

- Local work group meeting will be sometime in February.
- Q: What potential do we have to grow and to bring capacity to the table?
- A: E.g., OWEB technical assistance grant with others to make a fulltime position.
- A: New Farm Bill allows for renewal of RCPPs (There's an RCPP within the Stinkingwater. Quality of planning is very important locally. Different pots of money. CIS+RCPP (+TA funds)+SGI. Putting together a CIS would get you 80% of the way to a RCPP.
- Need draft proposal/application by local work group meeting in Feb. Implementation Strategy by 4/10/20. Bring capacity with the proposal. Some preliminary outreach with landowners has already been done.
  - Address all threats
  - Make sure to connect and build on work and land ownership already done.
- Bryant: Could subcommittee put energy into application over next couple months with priorities aligned with what was already discussed and documented?

Wild Conservation Society's Climate Adaptation fund grant – Wild Landscapes-Marta

- Money can go to monitoring capacity.
- They will write grants.
- All done online.
- Guidelines for this will come out in February, proposal due April, final in July. Use NRCS application for this grant.
- Focuses on project implementations that benefit wildlife, etc. 1 to 2 years in length. The group's goals should align well with this grant's objectives as well as the timing for funding to be awarded in 2021. Should be very science-focused. Up to $250k. Application must be done through nonprofit (HDP).

Socio & Economic monitoring expertise role –Discussion tabled.

2020 Planning/2019 Recap

Survey (Bryant): Created area to center conversations around. Sharing of these results with group.

- Send draft agenda half way between meetings for feedback and requests.
- Keep current pace but look at funding up front when starting a new project. Subcommittee will continue to meet and work out the Stinkingwater project.
- Fold in CWMA participation. We should invite Kenny and Ty to a future meeting; they have experience coordinating large weeds proejcts.
- Stick with third Thursday every other month. Next meeting is January 16.
- Q: Do landowners feel like the Collab. is on the right path and the time involved is worth it?
- A: Have a common goal but can we keep moving forward, making changes and still be able to make bottom line?
- PR dinner to drum up participation, invite County Court?—Maybe after/if we get the NRCS funding project.
- Do we need to bring a rec person to the table?
- The Collab. should facilitate/advocate technology use.
- Discussion on laundry list of agenda items: Bryant will draft a schedule. Emily Jane Davis wrote a proposal on how she could participate in Stinkingwater on the socio-economic front.
- Jeremy M.: Impressed by the collab.'s stories he read on the website; continuing to share those stories online is so important.

Field trips: Jeff and Bryant will reach out to Zola to see if NRCS has a project that we could look at this spring that would correlate to Stinkingwater.

Angela will schedule next sub-committee meeting.

Any other desired agenda items for the future?: none.