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 **HARNEY COUNTY
WILDFIRE COLLABORATIVE**
A Collaborative Conservation Partnership

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**Thursday, May 21, 2020 / 9:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.
ZOOM Meeting**

Attendees: Bryant Keuchle, Ron Whiting, Andrew Olsen, Dustin Johnson, Chad Boyd, Tom Sharp, Jeremy Austin, Bill Dragt, Jennifer Taynton, Bruce Taylor, Marla Polenz, Shane Theall, Emily Jane Davis, Kevin Doner, Casey O'Connor, Brianna Goehring, Carter Crouch, Travis Hatley, Don Rotell, Tim Bateman, Julie Unfried, Peter Harkema, Rory O'Connor, Jacob Gear, Marta Prat, Angela Sitz, Rod Hoagland, Chad Karges, Roger Sheley, Rachel Beaubien, Chris Dunn, Rick Roy

Action Items

- Schedule Stinkingwater subcommittee meeting to discuss POD's planning & potential next steps for Stinkingwater Project – Narrowing down a focus area. (*Angela Sitz / Ben Cate*)
- Reach out to BPT regarding Stinkingwater Mtn. area, POD's planning discussion, Values, etc... - BLM (*Rick Roy / Bill Dragt*)
- List of things to share along with the Meeting Notes: (*Ben Cate*)
 - Request from Julie Unfried regarding Letter of Support for grant application to support LIT coordinator position in Harney County (Letter & 1-pager)
 - Native Seed Coop. Business Model Diagram from Jennifer Taynton
 - Social / Economic monitoring slides from Emily Jane Davis
 - Photos of Pueblos Mtn. Pilot Project April field tour from Chad Boyd
 - Stinkingwater Subcommittee slides from Bill
 - Modified Pueblos monitoring approach from Brianna

SageCon LIT Position (Request for Letter of Support) – *Julie Unfried, SageCon*

Overview of request – Looking for a Letter of Support from this group to go along with a grant application that seeks funding for a SageCon Local Implementation Team coordinator position that would be based in Burns/Hines & would be responsible for coordinating SageCon efforts in Lake & Harney Counties.

Grant Deadline is end of July, so need an answer about whether HCWC is willing to provide a letter of support prior to that date – Target June 18th meeting for a decision.

Native Seed Coop update – *Jennifer Taynton, HDP*

Jennifer provided a brief description of history & startup of native seed project. (Share the visual that Jennifer provided on screen with the Notes) 3 threats to this area:

- 1) economic hardships because of drought, fire, etc
- 2) Invasive annual grasses
- 3) groundwater is diminishing

This year will be a pilot test with one grower and bluebunch wheatgrass.

Hoping this effort would be self-sustaining in approx. 5 years.

Funding – currently seeking appropriation funding through legislation, searching for additional agency funding (USFWS, USFS, BLM), potential grant options, etc...

Bruce: Q about quality control – who would do this?

A: Seed sources will be tracked through collection, growout, storage, etc... For the QA part of this we would have someone tracking the production of seed all along the process from collection to storage – the idea is this would be an internal position within the Coop

Bryant: will there be a progress update by June 18th?

Jennifer T: by July for sure, maybe by June.

Bryant: will have this as a June agenda item to check in.

Social & Economic Monitoring – *Emily Jane Davis, Oregon State*

Bryant: when we took on Stinkingwater as a focus area, it was clear that there was a need for soci-economic info in that area

The Presentation gave recap of her work and her engagement with her HCWC; what social science is or isn't "Define and Measure social, and economic metrics" relevant to HC.

HDP has engaged Emily Jane on *how to use social science in the collaborative process*, generally.

How to bridge gap between science and collaboration.

Comments:

Brianna: Seems like there is some overlap or similarities between the ecological monitoring & social monitoring – It seems like this is going to be more of a guide & less prescriptive of what we should monitor.

Bruce: a comment around the question: What would be helpful in terms of a guide?

Observation from past experience—how to get the social science you need at a reasonable cost and scale—determining what is reasonable. In terms of hcwc/stinkingwaters: what are the barriers or motivators for private landowners to be involved in cross-boundary work—could be because of risk vs reward and costs. Do we have a good sense of how landowners feel about risk & what will motivate them to be involved?

Emily Jane: can offer guidance on how to look at some of these questions.

Jeremy Comment: Regarding the 'Key considerations' slide about how we plan for data collection & for communication to the group. Very interested in this. How do we document Lessons Learned? Where are the decision-making points? & how do we get the information to the group in a timely manner to help make decisions?

Casey – This ties nicely into the POD's discussion: it really gets back to the values we place on the land – how do we get social / economic values worked into the idea of POD's?

Emily Jane – Harney County is fairly unique in a lot of aspects & is a place that warrants new research in a lot of cases.

Casey O'Connor: Regarding POD's & social / economic values - it's more the value differences between forests vs. rangelands – it's easier to quantify forest values than rangeland values (especially in terms of \$'s) – or more work has already been done on that.

Jacob Gear: we are hoping to get funding to do a survey about wildfire in Harney County – might be a way to engage with Emily Jane to help design some of the questions for this survey to ensure we get the most out of it by asking the right questions – this would be a county product.

Bryant: Could Sept. 17th be our next Milestone?

Pueblo's Implementation – *Subcommittee*

Chad: recap of the Pueblo project—there is a good chunk of fairly intact sagebrush. This section of road on the south end of the intact area was picked for a fuelbreak. SE portion: sage brush and invasive annual grasses (iag). NW portion: increased

perennial bunchgrasses (pbg) and sage brush. So different needs in creating a fuelbreak. SE: need to address fine fuel continuity and reduce the shrubs. Replace with pbg. In NW portion, just reduce the shrub in the fuel break.

Annual grass control / herbicide treatment & effectiveness

April site tour (photos) – will share the slides with the group

Area was burned last fall – to create a window of time where we could treat w/ herbicide to reduce annual grasses. With the intent of seeding in the fall 2020.

We didn't get the % burn that we were hoping for – but given the conditions, the burn worked quite well – & it seemed like it did its job in reducing the abundance of annual grasses & veg so that the herbicide would hit the soil.

Jeremy Q: What portion of the prescribed burn was accidentally mowed?

Chad A: I'd say about half maybe, but I wouldn't say it was accidental. It was listed in the EA, just wasn't what we (monitoring crew, HCWC) were expecting.

Angela: If I remember right though, there wasn't much sagebrush there to begin with

Casey: Also the sagebrush that was there was either dead or dying – it wasn't a healthy stand of sagebrush

Angela: that's right, perhaps an arogamoth outbreak

Angela: Q: Is there a follow up of Plateau in the Mowed area planned?

Chad: A: I don't think that it is necessarily warranted. In the areas with annual grass problems it seemed effective, & in the higher elevations where there was a lot of sagebrush cover there are perennial grasses present.

Dustin – the monitoring we do this summer will help inform us about this – what is present during the growing season.

Don – the feathering treatment that we did was done with a lighter weight roller – we'll consider going back & do follow up treatments – didn't quite get what we were hoping to with the roller.

Jeremy: Q: Monitoring plan: Visual resource contrast worksheet? Has that been done – or does it still need to be completed?

Brianna: A: I don't think that we've done that yet – it's not scheduled until a little later in the monitoring plan.

Chad: There are a lot of things going on here in terms of values – including visual resources, etc. but it seemed like it is going to be effective for what it was meant to do based on quick visual assessment.

Casey – Definitely much better in terms of a fuel break & somewhere that we can fight a fire from.

The schedule in the Blob for VRM – Survey Pre-treatment & then follow up every 5 years – but I would think that we would need to @ least wait until a seeding to see the full impacts to VRM. It is going to look a lot different after just 1 growing season than it does immediately after implementation (mowing, etc.)

Chad - The Road Access was very well done. It served its purpose. Likely could get a low-boy down there now.

NW Section – Sagebrush mowing only (perennials present)

June monitoring plan

Brianna described the modified monitoring plan to capture the treatments that went on the ground as opposed to what was initially planned – had to adjust / add plots due to losing control plots that were mowed & also adjust plots to capture the differences in fire intensity of established plots vs. general prescribed fire areas.

Bruce Q: Regarding the loss of the control near the road – How significant was the loss of control near the road? Did the pre-treatment data show any difference between the area right near the road vs. out further away from the road?

Dustin A: No, wasn't really a difference near the road vs. further out – It shouldn't be a big issue with the modification we've made.

- April site tour (photos)

- o Annual grass control
- o Herbicide effectiveness

Brianna: plan to be in open communication with the collaborative with the data as the data are collected.

Stinkingwaters Pilot Project - Subcommittee
Accomplished and current work

Bill Dragt: We've applied for additional funding through the BLM to do fuel break pilot project in the Stinkingwater area – PEIS for fuel break, would help cover culture costs, etc.

Also Applied for funding for medusahead treatment & Juniper removal on the South Slope pasture (through BLM)

Angela: Q: in the application did you suggest areas to treat or are you going to leave that up to the collaborative?

A: As part of the EIS they had identified roads (Came off the FIAT)

Angela: Ok, if that's the case, it might be good to talk treatment types with the collaborative then.

Rick Roy: I think there is like 75 miles of roads identified in the Stinkingwater – treatments would vary & could include juniper treatment, road improvement, as well as the other things we're already doing around annual grass treatment.

Burns District BLM Riparian Program an award from the Western Trout Init. Was the project that we presented about a few meetings back. Rebuilt the creek using excavators, logs, etc... & did some juniper treatments in the uplands along Alder Creek in partnership with private landowner.

WCS Funding (pre-proposal submitted April 22) status

We will find out whether we are invited to submit full proposal mid-June – no news to report at this time.
 Match funding would come from BLM, NRCS, landowners, etc...

Based on input gathered from the collaborative – we developed a timeline to treat some of the pastures on BLM with Winter grazing, herbicide treatment, seeding, etc. – something to consider is the need to rest pastures post-treatment & how that might affect permittees operation.

There was a lot of work that went into making the timeline for implementation & think it could still serve a purpose as a planning document regardless of whether we are successful in receiving funding.

Implementing POD's – Casey O'Connor, BLM

Chad B: I think that the POD's are more of a conversation starter. It's a way to break up the landscape into a manageable unit, & those areas will have both ecological & societal values, & help you prioritize an area to focus your work.

Casey: Yes, it helps Prioritize your most important areas to protect. It's a planning tool – that looks at how to mitigate damage to sensitive values. A tool to transfer where our priorities are & how to protect them. I think this group could help tease out what those values are for this area.

I think that some of the 'rub' came when we were fighting the Buzzard fire was when a larger Type 2 team came in & took over. They may have managed in larger chunks of landscape than a local team. If we had pre-identified PCL's / PODS we would be ahead of the curve & could hand over to a type 2 team some guidance on the local values, etc. that exist in that area.

Casey – I think initially we would want to identify PCL (Potential Control Locations)

Fuel breaks don't work if they don't incorporate both public & private areas (a fuel break goes out to private land & ends won't serve it's purpose)

The big lift for this effort would be building our values inventory

One step @ a time – the 1st step is parsing out what the values are in this area.

Dustin Q: can you talk about the process for establishing PCL's? In the forest is it primarily based on roads?

A: Yes, still often roads in rangelands, but it could be other landmarks like rocky areas, streams, etc.

Bryant: Q Would this lend us to more of a restoration focus as opposed to prevention?

A: Casey: I don't see them being separate – juniper treatment, medusahead – both are restoration but would also contribute to fire management.

Jeremy – I'm still trying to figure out where we're going & the scale we're talking about with the POD's project?

Currently just talking about the Stinkingwater area. Roughly 325K acres. I think what we'd like to use POD's to do is to narrow us down to a specific area to work in & a direction & then look @ the landowners in that area & reach out to those folks to open a dialogue about what could be done in that area.

I think that POD's is your first cut – helps you find an area to focus on & then you would need to determine the values in that area – could be landowner values, BLM, recreation, tribal interests, etc.

Bill D: Could we use the threats model to help us establish value for the area?

Chad B: I think that's a great first step for ecological values – but there are also social values associated with that area

Rick: The other thing that we need to consider – because there are a lot of private lands – something that dictates where we are able to work is which landowners are going to be willing to work with us.

So, a path forward could be identifying the ecological values using the threats model & then identifying folks in a narrower area to identify the social values

Emily Jane Davis – There was an effort done in 2015 to document discussions with landowners about where their most important areas to protect were. (work done with the Crane RFP) – Could potentially overlay Emily Jane's map of important areas to protect inside the Crane RFP boundary & the threats map to get a start & then think about a method for incorporating human values. A starting point.

We also need to continue working with the folks that we've started working with – I think that we've committed to continue that work & can't move away from that to focus elsewhere.

From a landowner standpoint (Ron Whiting) – where we're starting to work with certain landowners – we should build on that & work outward from there to gain momentum & create trust – etc... FYI, the division for the Crane vs. Juntura RFP's is the Harney / Malheur county line.

Q: From Bill to Emily Jane: Did you interview the Burns Paiute Tribe in your work done in 2015?

A: No, I don't think so.

Bruce: Could we ask Burns Paiute Tribe for their values in the area?

Carter: We'd want to include the Tribe's Cultural Dept. for this.

Rick – The Burns Paiute Tribe is suggesting a formal designation of a Traditional Cultural Property (a process done through the Parks Service) for parts of the Stinkingwater area – they have a considerable interest in the area & it will be important for them to be involved.

Bill: Can We invite the Tribe to speak to HCWC about what's important to them in the Stinkingwater area? Have an idea of how that might go?

Carter: No, I can't say, but let's do that invitation.

Bryant: Would be great to have an update on this at June meeting.

Next Steps:

- o Pull it back to the Stinkingwater Subcommittee to meet & continue this discussion about POD's planning & how to best move forward.
- o Rick Roy / Bill Dragt will talk to their cultural folks & figure out what the next step will be for engagement with the BPT in the Stinkingwaters

Monitoring Program Update (regarding Stinkingwater area)

Shared Science / monitoring in Stinkingwater's – one of the ideas we were planning on doing this year was to investigate / develop a tool for fine fuels on rangelands – this wheel has already been invented in a few different places (Open Range Consulting & others) – so we're interested in looking at something more novel & specific to the Stinkingwater Mtn's.

Will tie in well with the social side of it – developing a fuels photo guide to try to help delineate the change from predominantly sage brush to annual grass

Dustin: concepts we've been talking about may have a role to play in the POD's discussion too. We just don't have a lot to share quite yet.

Bryant's wrap-up:

Stinkingwater subcommittee meeting needs to be scheduled.

Hoping to move up the July meeting to **June 18th** for a few reasons. (listed them off – avoid fire season, allow those not able to participate via Zoom to re-engage, etc.) Planning for that at this point but will be flexible based on COVID-19 guidance available at that time.

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