

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

harneywildfire.org

Thursday, March 19, 2020 / 9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

DRAFT Meeting Notes - Virtual Zoom Meeting

Attendees: Bryant Kuechle, Ben Cate, Jeff Mackay, Bill Dragt, Rick Roy, Angela Sitz, Dustin Johnson, Chad Boyd, Rory O'Connor, Rachel Beaubien, Tom Sharp, Brianna Goering, Bruce Taylor, Casey O'Connor, Carter Crouch, Jacob Gear, Jeff Rose, Jeremy Austin, Kevin Doner, Marla Polenz, Marta Prat, Peter Harkema, Tim Bateman, Chad Karges

Action Items:

- Submit WCS pre-proposal grant application – *Brianna Goering/Marta Prat/Ben Cate*
- Send out Chris Dunn's presentation to group – *Ben Cate*
- Send link to request for comments RE: CX for pinyon juniper treatment – *Ben Cate*
- Plan for potential May field trip – *Bryant / BLM staff / NRCS / HDP?*

Updates

Oregon Smoke Management Plan integration with HCRC – *Ben Cate*

- Described where the smoke management discussion is @ with the HCRC. Taking it up with the county courts & city councils to gauge interest.

Native seed production – *Chad Boyd*

- Hired a coordinator to help get this effort off the ground – next meeting schedule for March 25, 2020. Will learn more about the status of this effort. Roger Sheley has been busy working together with several folks applying for grants to get funding for increasing capacity to get the cooperative manpower to start to establish the cooperative.

HDP Collaboratives Monitoring Position – *Brianna Goehring*

- Will be hiring 5 people (2 crews) to do various monitoring around the county including Pueblo's potentially Stinkingwaters, etc...

Communications Update – *Marla Polenz*

- HCWC Film – Interviewed Angela, were planning on interviewing Rod Hoagland, Will look to get footage of good sagebrush country
- RFP – have a slot on the 30th from 6-7pm. Will stay in touch with Marvin to see if it goes ahead. Will be asking for participation from the Collaborative – THIS EVENT HAS BEEN CANCELLED DUE TO COVID-19 RESPONSE.
- *Herald Articles* – Will start up again in May or June
- *Cattlemen's meeting* – will try for a meeting later this year.

Check-in with the agencies – Agency Staff

Angela Sitz – USFWS – working out of USFS office in Bend – USFWS is working on mandatory telework currently – Consultation for the CIS is conceded – would expect to see that out

Jeff Mackay – USFWS (MNWR) - Business as usual for them currently – Don't expect too much of a change unless they're ordered by DOI

Jeff Rose - BLM – Still open, field work is continuing, they're implementing some practices to minimize social interaction – have online resources to keep people from visiting the office as much as possible. Playing it by ear – day to day – but currently open & functioning. BLM has a request for comment – is open until April 9th - about a categorical exclusion (CX) for pinyon juniper (large landscape scale)

Chad Boyd – ARS - Doors are still open – lots of the same guidance as others – encouraged to telework, biggest challenge is bringing in new seasonal employees, etc.

Dustin Johnson - OSU – Any travel has been shut down right now – even to field sites & for searches for new positions – They're hiring a new fire extension person - has been put on hold currently.

Approval of November notes

Governor's Wildfire Council/Senate Wildfire Committee – Bruce Taylor

- Support letter
- Funding
There was a \$25 million package being proposed to be funded (until derailed by COVID-19)
- Schedule
Outlook was uncertain a few weeks ago – I think that it's more uncertain now – but I think we will see an increase in funding for wildfire risk mitigation – likely for fuel treatments initially, but then also to support collaborative initiatives & then there will be an expectation that people have done the planning for a strategic path forward.
OSU funded 6 new positions for wildfire extension.
Consideration for relaxing liability standards for Rx fire.
Chad had a question about lining up state & federal efforts –
- State & Federal agreement with USFS – Shared Stewardship Agreement to provide better coordination with state & federal resources

Q: (to Dustin): What is the vision for the Fire extension agent?

A: Dustin: the position will be housed @ EOARC in Burns. Part of the vision would include working with groups like HCWC – would be to help coordinate w/ agencies.

Bruce – that should help with the staffing capacity for this collaborative greatly.

Tom Sharp: Had a question about how the work of the wildfire council is being interpreted in light of the climate change executive action?

Bruce – I don't think that climate change has been a big consideration, it was more aimed at wildfire mitigation & hasn't been explicitly linked to climate change & things like carbon storage & reduction hasn't really been

Pueblo's Implementation – Subcommittee

Prescribed burn purpose/objective/intent

Chad Boyd – Quick review to get everyone up to speed –

Overall objective was to make a fuel break to protect a large geography of a fairly intact sagebrush habitat

- Goal was to transition to State B (referring to state & transition model)
 - o Two different objectives
 - North – dominated by state A currently – reduce from heavy fuels (remove brush to transition to grass dominated community) Mowing was implemented in winter.
 - South – annual grass dominated landscape – transition to perennial grass dominated – Treatment was a little more involved including:
 - Multi-phased treatment
 - o 1st remove overstory (prescribed fire) in order to expose soil so that the herbicide (imazapic) would be able to hit the ground – this was done in order to give us a window in order to seed native perennial grasses.

- o This was done in an adaptive management framework – the BLM ultimately has the decision-making power, but in this instance the BLM has chosen to participate in the collaborative which allows for more opportunity for others to weigh-in throughout the process.
- o Next step is to collect data to see whether the combo of fire & imazapic was successful enough to warrant moving forward with seeding perennial grasses in the upcoming fall

Jeff Rose – piece he's looking forward to is to see the data that will be collected this spring/summer – the piece I'd like to discuss is how to share information in real-time & adapt on-the-fly. We have a schedule of things & it's sometimes difficult to do this quickly & I don't want to cut folks out of that process – once data is collected.

Chad – My idea would be that the data goes out to the subcommittee to review & interpret & then report back to the group in a collaborative meeting setting

Jeremy – How did that decision process move forward with step 1 (the decision in assessing the prescribed fire outcome & decision to apply imazapic)?

Looked at it & asked: when can we apply the next treatment? Looked at the prescribed fire & thought that it wasn't likely to limit imazapic effectiveness – made sense to apply herbicide rather than wait a year.

Looking at the EA – a secondary goal of this was to assess the process & effectiveness & test whether this can get be replicated in other areas so documenting process is critical.

Question – So, if we've learned something from this (prescribed fire) – how are we going to document that? I think we need to figure out a way to capture lessons learned – This is valuable for other areas being able to replicate our work.

Chad Boyd – the thing that data doesn't do is to make decisions – it helps people make more informed decisions.

Dustin – Data collection – timing is important in the decision-making process, Question: Will collecting data in June/July give enough lead time to inform decision-making?

Answer: Yes, I think so, since seeding wouldn't happen until later in fall. Would need quick turnaround on data entry/analysis.

Jeff – Q: Would a schedule of treatment plans be helpful to folks?

A: Yes

Chad B – floated the idea of formulating a report that includes the lessons learned from prescribed fire.

Jeremy – noted the difference between the 1000 acre prescribed burn & the burn plots & the data collection discrepancies between those two different areas.. The burn application was quite different in the plots vs. the overall prescribed fire area.

Dustin – There are additional plots that are more representative of the entire burn area. I think that the data collection should provide us with 'how effective was the treatment in removing annual grass'. It might also give us a chance to learn about the effectiveness of the treatments if the burn consumed most/all of the fuel in the 'burn plots' & what it actually looked like for the entire area. See the difference in effectiveness of imazapic under different conditions.

Bryant – Question on timing of data collection: Would we have info by the May Meeting?

Dustin: Not data collection – but we're planning for a site visit & we can take pictures, etc. & provide some kind of feedback to the group anecdotally (germination of cheatgrass should be evident by that trip).

Brianna' Monitoring Subcommittee Meeting Update:

Had March 3rd meeting.

Shared Science & monitoring program

Why: Address the issues of megafires.

3 kinds of questions that we can ask

1. What are different treatment effects?

This one's pretty straightforward – how effective was winter grazing, herbicide treatments, etc.,

2. How can we use the data resources we have to increase knowledge?

What if Casey O'Connor had the ability to model what fuel loads were going to look like in upcoming field season.

3. How do we manage & use our data resources?

Comment from Tim Bateman (Open Range Consulting) - would be happy to help out with coordinating/analyzing/coming up with ideas for monitoring. Had some great success predicting fine fuel loading on a research area in (Nevada) & they're starting to do work for Burns BLM to predict fuel loading that can be updated on a 16-day timeframe.

Introduction to POD's – Chris Dunn, OSU

Provide slides to group.

Informative to Forest Environments primarily right now.

Q: Chad Boyd: Can you run scenarios to evaluate how fuel treatments might affect fire activity in a specific area.

A: Yes, we have the ability to do that in forest ecosystems

Q: Jeff Rose: looks like a way to prioritize your landscape & look at areas in terms of ranking them – i.e. what's the highest difficulty? where is the place that needs to be worked on first? Is this a tool that can answer those questions?

A: Yes, you can summarize the risk

Q: Casey O'Connor – wildfire risk assessment tool is already sort of being used – seems like the other portions of this might need retooled to be applicable to our area in rangelands.

A: Has already been implemented in other areas – but we haven't had a lot of opportunities to test it here yet.

Q: Bruce: Are you in a position to work with HCWC going forward? & How would that relate to the new Wildfire employee from OSU extension?

A: Chris: Yes, it's unclear how my role, personally, will be engaged (currently has an application in for a statewide position that would give him more oversight of this type of work). But I think that the idea is for someone in a similar position to provide guidance to an OSU extension specialist in that area.

Conversation about the tools (Chris Dunn's Models to get @ PODS) ability to be used in rangelands.

- Casey: One thing – I don't think it's quite applicable in this area – Probably needs re-tooled for its application in the Great Basin – It's pretty heavily geared toward timber
- Chris Dunn: that's true for the QRA, but I think that it could still be helpful for the potential control lines & suppression difficulty index.

Q: Bill: In Stinkingwaters we talk about juniper encroachment problems where it hasn't burned & annual grasses where it has burned. Would you be able to use this tool without using the QRA portion of this?

A: Chris: Yes, you would be able to

Stinkingwaters Pilot Project - Subcommittee

● Accomplished and current work

Took 2 different field trips to Stinkingwater area:

1. Stinkingwater mtn. tour – looked at medusahead infestation, several herbicide treatments, juniper encroachment areas, & older juniper treatments
2. Tour of Buck Mtn. & Riverside Allotments – 2019 – received Seed & Open range per ODFW

- Purpose Statement – reviewed 2-pager

- Taca management strategy for Buck Mountain and Riverside Allotments

Discussed Call w/ Brianna & Marta the WCS Grant to help fund some of this work

- Permittee, NRCS, CWMA coordination

- Funding

- o NRCS and Wildlife Conservation Society's (WCS) Climate Adaptation Fund grant

- Brianna & WildLanscapes working to put in a proposal due April 8th to WCS to support Stinkingwater project work.

Wildlife Conservation Society grant – is to get this proposal put together to help implement some of these things – what are the needs for Stinkingwater area?

- Buck Mtn focus – Could be a method to scale up -

Q: Talking about the grant application – the next time we'll be getting together is in May (21st) – would that timeframe be amenable to providing input to the grant application?

A: We would know if we're invited to a 2nd (full proposal) by May & the full proposal is due in July so we could talk about it again in the May meeting.

When lining out this proposal – with Marta & David – they like to hear the big picture. How WCS funding will go to be part of a larger / bigger picture effort. The story is important.

- Field tour in May – (potentially)

If we're going to do a tour with NRCS, we're going to have to coordinate with private landowners & that process is going to be slow. We know that.

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