**CWMA Meeting Minutes**

**March 5, 2025**

**USDA Service Center**

Present: Randy Wiest of Oregon Department of State Lands; Karen Moon of Harney County Watershed Council; Aaron Johnston of High Desert Partnership; Jim Campbell of Harney County; Jessi Brunson of the US Forest Service; Sam Cisney of Burns Bureau of Land Management; Andrew Donaldson of Natural Resources Conservation Service; Rob Frank of Harney County Court; Tyler Goss of Harney Cooperative Weed Management Area; Jason Kesling and Barbara Pearson of Harney Soil & Water Conservation District

Note: Last summer the area sustained wildfire. In January 2025, incoming President Trump’s administration did some major budget cuts and imposed tariffs on imports. There is also an upcoming decision if the government budget should be approved. All of these factors helped drive meeting discussion.

Jason Kesling called the meeting to order at 1:31 pm.

**Item #1: Previous Meeting Minutes**

Jim moved to approve the meeting minutes as presented; Karen seconded.  No one present and eligible to vote were opposed and the minutes were approved.

**Item #2: Financial Report**

Jason said he has been charging against Title 2 and Stinkingwater.  The grant to treat Lawen salt cedar has been added, but the agreement has not yet been finalized. He noted that 20-24% of standing for master budget never changed, and this is due to new grants coming in.  The report does not include the Fire Forest Service grant. He said RCPP may be fully spent this year (the USDA grant is not affected by freezes), and he also explained RCPP funding process and how it affects CWMA.  The CWMA is ahead of schedule and RCPP doesn’t pay for time off for Tyler.  Overall, the CWMA is in good standing.  There were no questions.  Jim moved to approve the financial report; Randy seconded.  No one present who was eligible to vote were opposed.

**Item #3: Project progress and Updates**

1. Tyler said that at the last meeting the board approved purchase of a new four-wheeler. After reviewing quotes Burns Ford was found to be the cheapest. A new 570 Trail Edition Polaris was purchased and he hopes the CWMA will take possession in the next two months. Use of the four-wheeler by certified partners would be permitted.
2. Jason said HCWMA should probably buy chemicals soon due to potential tariffs.

At 1:40 pm County Commissioner Rob Frank arrived. As this was the first meeting he has attended there was a time of introductions.

1. Tyler said the county weed board met last night and he gave a presentation of HCWMA outreach events. He said he received a positive response. He offered to give the presentation to the meeting participants. He plans to report to the weed board annually. Commissioner Frank suggested that Tyler contact County Judge Hart to be placed on the agenda for the next County Court meeting.
2. Burns BLM/US Forest Service map combination. Sam Cisney brought and shared maps.  The reason for the maps was summarized for Commissioner Frank: Funds have been provided for post fire treatment and to ensure there was no overlap in treatment locations or no places omitted, priorities are to be established. King and Snow Mountains are high priorities with the Forest Service.

There should be a foot survey to ascertain priority level (levels will be one through four). Sam said the maps were compilations of the BLM and Forest Service. Commissioner Frank asked if HCWMA collaborates through OARC (Oregon Agricultural Research Center). Jessi said she has spoken to a representative but not worked with him. Commissioner Frank said OARC maps can show more resolution to fire damage on Cow Creek and areas to apply preemergence. Jessi asked for a contact and Jason suggested to start with Chad Boyd. Jessi said there is a lot of data gaps with Forest Service and she is attempting to work through and is learning opportunities to get systems into place.

Sam said the BLM is working with range staff and advisors who will be on the ground.  The BLM sprayed blocks of land last year shown on the map that will be seeded this year. The BLM will generally target roadsides or disturbance areas, mainly for broadleaf and annual grass.

Discussion on seeding and herbicide application followed: Jessi said the Forest Service has had mixed success with seeding. There are stricter regulation in place with wilderness areas. Jason asked about aerial herbicide application. Jessi said currently the Forest Service cannot; it’s not on the table now. Some things will need to be pursued before allowing aerial application, such as site specific studies on impacts of Rejuvra.

Jason asked what Sam and Jessi want from the group. Jessi asked for participants to check the maps to see if needed information has been captured. Sam said the BLM can only use funds within the fire footprint; regulations are specific. She said she didn’t know how close to that is to be actually be happening. Jessi asked if the outside of the boundary can be captured, and Sam said she didn’t think so (technically). The BLM’s Vegetation Management portal tracks and treatment has to be within that footprint, but it makes sense to extend the area out and stretch it out as far as possible. If there is a road on the map it’s going to be treated.

Access to areas were discussed (roads that go through private land) as well as the topography of the land. Forest Service can seed aerially but only native seed can be used.

Jason asked if both agencies want HSWCD/CWMA to coordinate. Jim said one of his staff (Jamie) knows the landowners. Tyler said most of the landowners represented on the map already work with us. Sam said she welcomes any assistance in contacting landowners.

Sam indicated some BLM roads may be aerially treated via helicopter. A helicopter can cover 300 feet width total, though it will take a couple of passes. Jim asked her how many trees were left in the area. Sam answered some data had been pulled; some trees had been treated prior to the fires. Jessi said she will work to incorporate some of the areas discussed into the priority. Jim asked her for the layer and Jessi said she would load on S1 mobile. Jim asked if there was a way to put the data on the account for better access to treatment areas. Government shutdown was discussed.

Transportation within treatment areas were discussed (walking vs. driving). Jessi said the Forest Service botany program staff was decreased due to the recent government budget cuts. There is a chance that probationary staff may be called back to work. If not, she may reach out to the HSWCD. Funding and budgets were discussed. Jim said that the county crew would do small roads. He and Tyler could do the larger, windy roads together. Tyler said the HSWCD has extra staff and hiking could be done.

Tyler surveys and treats Myrtle Park, Myrtle Creek and FL Springs annually. The parking lot at FL Springs has medusahead. The rest will need to be hiked. Sam said it would be good to get surveys in areas regarding medusahead. Jessi will see about drone use approval for Tyler to survey.

Jessi said Ventenata has been sighted in the Onion Flat area.

The need for training to recognize post-fire invasives was discussed. ODA’s Bonnie Rasmussen may have one in June, but Jason suggested a crash course prior. Jessi asked if she should do one in person or just send photographs. Jason said either; Tyler suggested she send a list of invasives and something could be put together. Jessi also suggested when people are unsure of a plant to collect one and send it to her.

Seeding and spraying in dozer lines discussed with HSWCD/CWMA to do, as well as the two agencies (Forest Service and BLM) being able to technically communicate.  The map will be updated for the April CWMA meeting with priorities established.

1. Grants: Tyler said the CWMA applied for two grants. One is for salt cedar treatment in Lawen, which includes 10,000 acres of survey work. The treatment method is currently unknown because the amount and density of salt cedar is currently unknown.

The other grant pulls into two project areas together (access and habitat grants), Lawen and the refuge. Tyler displayed a map and said he hopes to survey and treat the area in August. Jim said the intent is to prevent invasives going through the irrigation system.

The purple loosestrife grant is still active. Half of the treatment has been applied this year. Title II funding will be used to keep it from going up the Malheur River.

Jason said that Tyler is also working on the BLM rangeland agreement for seeding and fencing following the Porcupine fire.

**Item #4: New Business**

1. Tyler via PowerPoint listed the CWMA’s past outreach activities, most are continuing:
   1. Recertification Class (February)
   2. Career Day
   3. Teacher education
   4. Free spray day
   5. Puncturevine pull (this one will be discontinued)
   6. Fair booth (September)
2. New outreach planned:
   1. Rancher tank calibration
   2. Back in the classrooms
   3. Citywide weed wipeout
   4. Weed ID tour
   5. Drone/aerial tour (August-October)
3. Was the group interested in any other events?
   1. Tyler suggested an outing July-August for a tour in an area of rush skeleton weed. Jason suggested during the August 6th meeting. Tyler suggested including African rue.
   2. Sam suggested partnering with other agencies to see what invasives their counties are dealing with to perhaps prepare our area. Karen asked about how Pepperweed handled the high flood water as the snow melted. Jim said he was unsure if Pepperweed could compete with hemlock and other invasives. Jason agreed about asking representatives from other counties to come and discuss what they are facing.

**Item #5: Next month**

Sam said she wanted to discuss BLM treatments with Jason and Tyler under the existing agreement. For new agreements, she doesn’t know when notices will be posted; her agency is waiting for presidential priorities.

The meeting adjourned at 2:58 pm. The maps remained in place for a time for attendees to review.