

**Strategic Approach to Conservation – Local Work Group Meeting
Umatilla County**

**Tuesday January 28th, 2025
10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.**

Meeting Minutes

Presenter: Nathan James

Attending:

Aaron Roth, Laurianne Loftus, Levi Norton, Raeanne Bettencourt– NRCS

Andy Spratling – Landowner

Chris Schachtschneider – Range Consultant

Colin Hemphill - Landowner

Curtis Engbretson-Westland Irrigation District

Gabe McNassor, Lindsay Somers, Andrew Rosenberg – ODFW

Greg Silbernagel – Oregon Water Resources Dept

Hans Rudolf, Lindsay Olivera - ODF

Kyle Waggoner, Andrea Mann - UCSWCD

Nick Sirovatka – NRCS Soil Health

Theodore Orr – Umatilla County Veg Mgt

Tim Spratling – Landowner, SWCD board member

Tom Straughan- Landowner, SWCD board member

Wm. Kevin Hughes – Landowner

Online via Zoom:

Andre - Unknown

Brad Moore – Energy Trust of Oregon

Heath Hoeft - NRCS

John Punches – OSU Extension

West Lambert – Tiicham SWCD

Nathan opened the meeting with review of the past years funding (2018 Farm Bill) and conservation efforts, see Power Point presentation “2025 Local Work Group Meeting” pages 1-7. It was noted that High Tunnel contracts had significantly increased with Raeanne’s position as Small Farms specialist.

Discussion followed based on the land use slides in the presentation.

Forest Land:

Priority Concern: Degraded Plant Condition-Wildfire Hazard

Current focus is the Ukiah/Dale/Battle Mountain area. Next priority area is the I-84 WUI/Meacham, working in conjunction with ODF, CTUIR and ODOT. Another 2-3 years focus in this area and then possibly open county wide.

Kyle (UCSWCD) indicated they have a Strategic Implementation area where SWCD is able to come in after Dept of Ag programs to help with remaining smaller issues: annual grass treatment, virtual fences and stock water conversions. Andrew (ODFW) expressed concern over animal forage and bedding areas after thinning. Nathan indicated there were plenty of patches of untouched thickets available. ODFW also mentioned that they have some seed available for use in areas that have been thinned.

Kevin Hughes mentioned that they had seen a decrease of invasives (specifically Ventenata) after mulching areas that had been thinned. He wasn’t sure what was causing the changes, but it had been noticed by Theodore Orr as well.

Rangeland/Pastureland:**Priority Concern: Degraded Plant Condition, Inadequate Livestock water**

Nathan shared a map from Sage Con that showed most of the county covered with invasive species. It was acknowledged that there is most likely no way to fully eliminate them without some aerial application. Andrew with ODFW mentioned that they may have funds available to act as match funds required for RCPP. Kyle clarified that match funds aren't actually required; they just increase the probability of approval. Kyle shared that the 1st Wed of every month SWCD hosts an RCPP event.

Ted noted that there was a significant increase in invasive incursion in post flood areas.

Stock water has not had a lot of funding available but there is the possibility of including it with a contract that also addresses degraded plant conditions.

Cropland:**Priority Concern: Soil Quality**

A general consensus that more education resources were needed brought information from Nick regarding CEMA and the increased availability through EQIP. CEMA can allow a producer to research results on their own ground with crops of their choosing as well as encouraging producer to producer interaction. Nick said he was happy to help develop this but would need a request by the State Con.

West is also working on some educational opportunities.

Irrigated Cropland:**Priority Concern: Water quality and quantity – surface and ground**

Greg brought up the continuing issue of high nitrates in well water in the LUBGWAMA. Tom brought up a concern that these results are skewed as only smaller, shallower wells are being tested. The larger irrigation wells are not available for testing,

Inflation Reduction Act

As current funding is on hold and the future of this opportunity is unsure there was little discussion,

Are we missing something?

Raeanne mentioned the biggest hurdle she sees with the increased interest in High tunnels is water rights. Those that don't have official water rights will have a lower ranking score.

Kyle has been investigating tractor engine replacement with RCPP.