

Minutes of the meeting for the South Fork John Day River Watershed Council

The South Fork John Day River Watershed Council met on the 14th day of December 2020.

The meeting was called to order at 1:08 pm, by Joanne Keerins, at the Izee Schoolhouse.

In attendance for regular session:

Amy Stiner, SFJDWC	Hannah Latzo, SFJDWC	Joanne Keerins, Chair	Phil St. Clair, Vice Chair	Aaron Roth, NRCS	Jacob Young, Ochoco National Forest
Mike Keerins	Jeff Moss, BLM	Jeff Maben, Director	Justin Rodger, BLM	Russ Powell, ODFW + Director	Pam Powell, ODFW
Amy Charette, CTWS + Director	Kathleen Cathy, Ron Wyden's office	Brian Reeves, Ochoco National Forest	Micah Wilson, Alternate Director	M.T. Anderson, Director	

Quorum was present because there are currently 8 directors on the board and 7 were represented at this meeting.

I. Agency Reports

- a. **Justin Rodgers & Jeff Moss, Prineville BLM:** They are eager to start partnering on restoration projects. Working through EA to develop and get out for comment, later this winter/early spring. We will plan Implementation this year on many of the OWEB projects. Continue to plan for livestock grazing management, meeting with permittees DGA and PWSWA, planning pasture rotations. Finish SF Fire fence re-construction, 7 miles left, hope to finish this fiscal year. Would like to explore other avenues for implementation on fencing, possibly partner with SFJDWC to perform contracting. No updates on wild horses from the BLM at this time. Sunflower culvert design is just waiting for the ok and will go out for procurement and bidding process. Still trying to get out and look at the cougar gulch culvert, hope to begin work on it in the next couple of years. M.T. asked about an email from Forest Service that they have to suspend trapping activities due to BLM not being able to take any more horses in Burns. Justin responded that the Burns facility has had gathers going on this winter, and their facility is full, no room for horses. Directors asked about the Ochoco National Forest moving their feral horses to the Malheur? Jacob Young responded that yes, they did move 3 more horses last Monday. Agreement is to continue to return as snow allows to do so. Directors asked if these really Murderers Creek horses, and how they were sure they were the of the same genetics? Jacob stated that they collected biopsy samples and sent to lab for genetic testing. How long to get results? Mike Spicer is lead on that and should be able to give more on timelines. Do they have data to ascertain which horses are which, baseline genetic data from Murderers Creek. Justin: they do have previous genetic samples from the Murderers Creek herd. Where were ONF horses placed on Malheur. Dropped at Antelope springs/Blue Ridge. How long have fences been burned out? Since SF fire. Over 50 miles of fence impacted, 7-8 miles left out of 50. Trying to finish last segments. Hiccups with funding and contracting.
- b. **Aaron Roth, NRCS:** COVID office update. Based on county numbers = reduced staff in office, no landowners in office. Starting tomorrow They will go back to phase 2. Call and set up appt. and can come in building. Will be reviewed weekly based on county statistics. New soil con and conservation tech will start on Jan. 4th. Con tech will be Tereasa Perkins. Normally in February they have the local work group meeting. With COVID they will probably move that to Zoom. Have pre-recorded session with overview of yearly report. 3 different listening sessions based on land uses. The next application deadline for RCPP = April 16th 2021. Hannah Mears will be main Point of Contact for our RCPP. M.T. asked how backed up on they were on cultural surveys? Aaron: they still have projects from 2019 that haven't been surveyed. We did include funding in the South Fork's RCPP to privately contract the culturals.
- c. **Amy Charette, CTWS:** Tribes shut down until Dec. 28th. Wrapped up planting on Mack creek, any plantings start planning for those soon. Phil thanked for the extra plants they gave us.
- d. **Jacob Young, and Brian Reeves, Ochoco National Forest:** Bell Whether project, should be coming out soon. Sunflower EA went out for comment, period ends Dec. 24th. Brian: contracted Bell Weather project out, ONF designed it with goals and objectives, had the paperwork contracted and data collection was all done for them. This will be a Timber based project.

- e. **Russ Powell, ODFW:** completed Orange, Dans, and Mack ck fences, and will be starting the Fox ck fence tomorrow, they are still assisting with the planning and implementation with the Tex ck and Murderers Creek in-stream work.
- f. **Kathleen Cathy, Sen. Wyden's office:** Congress working on wrapping up budget. Trying to get extension of SRS. Working on the COVID relief bill. Advocating for rural communities.

II. Action Items

- a. Staff Check Request: Phil moved to approve, Micah 2nd, motion passed
- b. November Meeting Minutes: Phil moved to approve, M.T. 2nd, motion passed
- c. November Staff Time: M.T. moved approve, Micah 2nd, motion passed
- d. RCPP Agreement: Micah moved to approve, Phil 2nd, motion passed

III. Staff Report

- a. Grant Applications
 - i. Fall OWEB application results: The Rosebud and Lewis Creek projects were recommended for funding; we have to wait to see where the funding line falls to know if they will be funded or not.
 - ii. Awarded funding from the Oregon Wildlife Heritage Foundation for a water development to match the Lewis Creek project
 - iii. Council Capacity OWEB is open, and needs to be completed by March 11th
- b. Partnerships/education/outreach/trainings
 - i. John Day Basin Coordination Group: The group met to discuss the status of many different projects that have multiple partners. Partners include ODFW, Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs, Bureau of Reclamation, SWCDs, and Watershed Councils
 - ii. GIS training: Hannah was able to attend GIS training online with Juniper GIS

IV. Discussion

- a. Predator Control: submitted a letter to the Grant County Court encouraging the County to retain predator control services
- b. Mussel surveys: The Xerces Society surveyed the South Fork John Day, as well as our project reaches on Murderers Creek.
- c. Sunflower Allotment Environmental Assessment: Micah encouraged the Council to submit a letter of comment in favor of the plans for the allotment. They have been working on the plans for 4+ years. Phil asked what the reasoning for fencing the upper end of Wind Ck? It is still considered critical habitat, and the permittees are having hard time meeting standards on the North Fork of Wind ck, the permittees requested that it be fenced to be able to continue grazing. The fenced area may still be used for Fall for gather and used periodically. Phil asked about the proposed road closures. Permittees will still be able to use roads administratively. Some roads in there proposed for closing, currently closed, that aren't driven, so just officially closing. Phil asked if there was any proposed Annual grass treatment? Unfortunately, no, modify grazing to not stress bunchgrasses. Not specifically trying to combat annual grasses. The ONF does have a noxious weed environmental impact statement proposal, are treating spot medusa head patches when found. Grant SWCD Weed Control looking at new herbicide, rejeuvra, not cleared for use on federal lands yet. Directors encouraged ONF to take action against annual grasses. Directors instructed Amy to compose a letter in support of the Sunflower Allotment EA, also to include encouraging the ONF to reconsider their Wildhorse management and annual grass abatement. Phil moved to submit a letter of comment in favor approve, Micah 2nd, motion passed.
- d. Directors would like to see annual newsletter.

V. Coming Up

- a. OWEB Meeting: 12/16-12/17/2020
- b. SFJDWC Winter Break: 12/25/2020-01/01/2021
- c. 1/11/2021: SFJDWC Director & Officer Elections (M.T. Anderson, Richard Nelson, and Vacant)
- d. 1/11/2021: SFJDWC Annual Self-Assessment
- e. 1/11/2020: Employee Reviews

I. Adjourn, Next meeting date: Monday January 11th, 2020.