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**Summary Notes**

**Harney County Wildfire Collaborative**

**Thursday, May 23, 2019 / 9:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.**

*Harney ESD, 25 Fairview Heights Loop, Burns, OR 97720*

[harneywildfire.org](https://linkprotect.cudasvc.com/url?a=http%3a%2f%2fharneywildfire.org&c=E,1,juhn64XQCsPKyfifEY5VJMFjyJprC-Xe78WfIvjtShFur5DdI_kGGO-X55b8vci5TixJHxNeY5peIwsFdEnCRvDfp-NSR5vzlDTfzGtfrIPk&typo=1)

**Attendees:** Jeff Rose, Marla Polenz, Ben Cate, Bryant Kuechle, Bill Dragt, Toby White, Casey O’Connor, Travis Hatley, Bill Wilber, Dan Nichols, Bruce Taylor, Chad Boyd, Angela Sitz, Autumn Larkins, Rhonda Karges, Mike Fox, Jacob Gear, Ron Whiting, Chad Rott, Gary Miller, Rod Hoagland, Chad Karges, Calla Hagle, George Heinz, Richard Roy, Dustin Johnson, Chad Boyd, Chris Venell, Stephanie Venell, Tom Sharp, Rachel Beaubien, *By Phone*: Jeremy Austin

**Meeting Objectives:** *Provide an opportunity for partner updates and action reports since the last meeting; fire report; updates/discussion on PEIS’s; Early Detection Cameras; Communications Subcommittee; Restoration Collaborative Native Seeding; Pueblo Mountains DRAFT EA; Stinkingwaters Pilot Project*

**Action Items:**

* Send out the link to DEQ nephelometer data
* Provide link to TED Talks about ‘why wildfires have gotten worse – and what we can do about it’
* Send out draft Stinkingwater Subcommittee notes (April 29th) – add handout created at this meeting to the notes.

*RevRe*

**Welcome, Introductions, Agenda and Updates** – *Bryant Kuechle*

* General updates and action reports from members since last meeting
	+ Have we considered the Secretarial order 3372? – some grandiose things are included in that order that we may want to track.
	+ Benefits of land use actions/planning – PODS, PLC’s – getting credit for NEPA projects that would help with the control of wildfire.
	+ Rhonda: Cited the Secretarial Order in the Record of Decision for Pueblo Mtn. Project – It’s on page 10 of the decision record.
		- Not prepared to talk about this in depth today, but something to track & pay attention to in the future.
	+ SageCon fire package going through the legislature now… Likely to fund but will have to wait until legislature session concludes.
* [Governor’s Wildfire Response Council](https://www.oregon.gov/gov/policy/Pages/wildfirecouncil.aspx)

Jeff: high level council is being put together by the governor: it’s around why fires are getting big & how we can do better at preventing large scale fires. Mainly a West side thing at this point (Forests). Looking at different ways of funding, etc… 2 main fire protection agencies on West side (ODF & USFS) – some larger RFPA’s in southern area (but the BLM not largely involved in fire suppression in western Oregon) 13 members on the council. This group has had a couple meetings already. Still in early stages & just something to follow for now.

* [Oregon Smoke Management Plan](https://secure.sos.state.or.us/oard/displayDivisionRules.action?selectedDivision=2849)

Rule changes were put into effect to allow exemptions to the 1-hour intrusion standards for air quality in Oregon on a community by community basis. This would allow communities to opt-out of the standard with the caveat that they must develop a community response plan on how to notify the public about a possible intrusion, etc… Burns/Hines community is on the 2nd tier of priority communities to develop a community response plan. Bend/central Oregon is a 1st tier priority community and is currently working on developing a response plan. Something to track and potentially use the template provided in Central Oregon to develop a smoke response plan locally.

Harney County Restoration Collaborative is tracking this closely.

Q: What is the interest level of this group in engaging with HCRC?

A: I see there being a benefit to engaging this group so that the community response plan includes the south (non forest) lands – if its just HCRC it will likely be forest centric.

For now, we can just provide updates to this group on the progress of HCRC to see if everything is acceptable to this group as HCRC gets closer to moving forward with developing a smoke management plan.

* [Joint Fire Science Program Funding Opportunity](https://www.firescience.gov/JFSP_funding_announcements.cfm)

Researchers from OSU put in a proposal – if funded they’ll likely reach out to this group to look at grouse habitat, working across multiple ownerships, fuels breaks, etc. They’re looking at all of Sage grouse habitat in SE Oregon. Angela will provide updates to the group, especially if funded – possibly send the application to the group.

Q: Is the end product a guide to where fuel breaks would happen?

A: Yes, that is the hope.

Will update again in July

* Approval of March notes – No feedback to notes - Approved

**Suppression Report** *– BLM and RFPA’s*

* New BLM Fire Management Officer

Kim Valentine – New FMO for Burns Interagency Fire Zone.

Jacob Gear – 4 incidents in Forest since we’ve last met. A few other prescribed fires that we didn’t have to take action on.

One couple hundred acres prescribed burn that got away from landowner in the Fields area that we did take action on.

Bunch of prescribed fires in the forest, on the refuge, etc…

Q: Can send out the link to DEQ nephelometer data?

A: Yes.

Q: Are you fully staffed for fire crews?
 A: Still have a few vacancies – Engine Captains, Frenchglen field manager, etc. But mostly staffed at this point.

* Burns Interagency Fire Zone (BIFZ)

Described the BIFZ on how the FMO manages USFS, BLM, USFWS fire resources. (BLM district manager, Refuge manager, & Forest Supervisor meet to discuss how it’s working & develop agreements) It was a bottom up effort in the 90’s to make us better at fighting wildfires. The goal is not to worry about agencies, but to fight fire as effectively as we can.

**BLM Programmatic EIS’s Update** *– BLM*

Jeff / Angela: Been reviewing the draft & FWS have been providing lots of comments

Q: When are the deadlines for the public comment period?

A: Comments due in by May 31 – public comments go out around June 7th.

Q: Will they be asking for an extension?

 A: Likely, but it will be a long/slow process

Timeline was supposed to be May 17 for draft, Jun 10 for public meetings, Decision in September, & signed in October

**Early Detection Camera Update** – *BLM*

Jacob: Funded for 2019 is Riddle mountain, Jack mtn. repeater site, & Beatty’s butte.

Comments – one on blue mtn. seems to be stuck on infrared

Q: Have we got access to move the camera yet?
A: No, not yet.

**Communication Update** – *Subcommittee / Marla Polenz*

* 2019 Communications Plan

Marla provided PowerPoint on the plan – can provide the PowerPoint to the group via the website.

Comment on outreach at the Harney County Fair – booths at the fair?
We’re talking about a different route than a booth this year (which we have done in past years) – moving forward with sponsorship & advertising rather than a booth.

OTECC is developing a new community page – this may be a place to plug into.

Comment: we may be a little too focused currently. Feel like there are lots of people all over that would be interested. Bend Bulletin, Capital Journal in Salem, etc… Consider sending occasional things out to the larger world.

Reply: I think your right, but some shortfalls are the limited communications budget & that we’re trying to start by building support locally & then building from there.

Comment: We did identify different places to share the info. locally – I think that spreading the word to the larger world is further down the line. Start locally first.

The RFPA Summit was held in May at the Gathering Center at the Tribe – Every one of the RFPA’s mentioned the collaborative. Someone asked about the collaborative & we provided a 20-minute conversation at the RFPA Summit. So, although we didn’t formally present, the information about HCWC was shared at the Summit.

* Put it on your calendar – April 30th & May 1st 2020. (End of April sometime for next year’s RFPA Summit)

Chad Boyd: 3 quick ideas – presentation at Oregon Cattlemen’s & ONDA’s annual meetings. & maybe a good one that we might be ready for now is OPB (Oregon Field Guide)

Comment: Most of this has been process to date – and that’s not exciting for news outlets, so I don’t think we’re ready yet for an Oregon Field guide type of outreach. You need a hook (that would be the Pueblos Projects – assuming it is implemented how we want & ready to share).

Q: Would it be beneficial to have someone from our group present to the governor’s fire council?

A: Chad K: I can talk to Peter & Brett about getting on the agenda

Comment: We need to understand that Marla (HDP) doesn’t have much money for communications/outreach to operate on for this collaborative – so if we want to see more of this plan implemented we need to think about finding funding for her to spend time completing the work that is outlined in the plan.

First Wednesday of the month there is a remote town hall meeting with Rep. Findley and Clif Bentz that discuss the legislature session.

Comment: We need to think that about how plugging this group and make sure we don’t have any missed opportunities – BLM recently highlighted a lot of the work done via the wildfire collaborative and forgot to include HCWC.

Bryant: Thinking about outreach – our field trip is coming up in July – might be an opportunity for Oregon Field Guide, etc.? Another might be if Pueblo Mtn. Project gets implemented – we could have someone there to document and spread that news.

* Joint air quality and fire reports with restoration collaborative
* Fire Wise event
	+ Ben Cate was present at the event, talking with several people about HCWC, but overall turnout was minimal & more of an event for children. Might want to re-think a fun activity if we participate again next year.

**Harney County Restoration Collaborative Report** – *George Heinz*

We’re focusing on our common ground statement currently (Zones of agreement)

Started with Fire – prescribed fire common ground statement.

* Make sure that we put both prescribed & MANAGED fire – allowing for the management of natural ignitions – if that fire is meeting the goals and is inside of a unit that has been treated mechanically in the past 10 years.
* Era of megafires presentation concept came up again. We’ve done this in the past with limited participation, venue was an issue. We’ve done other public meetings about prescribed fire in the past (James Johnston – OSU researcher)
* The benefit to working with HCRC is to define a common language when talking about fire.
	+ Managed fire isn’t anything new to us – we do that but it’s not being described very well.
	+ Are we very different than HCRC when we talk about fire – I don’t think we really are.
* Comment: maybe some kind of compare & contrast document or visual graphic talking about how we think of fire differently in rangeland vs. forest fires would be helpful
* Comment: In the agreement between RFPA’s & Agencies it defines that we won’t use a managed natural start for ecological objectives unless agreed upon by all parties. Maybe pre-loading that with parameters that fit for the objectives (ecological) that you want to see, then you can allow the fire to sit & let it burn to achieve those objectives.
* I think if you wanted to investigate this with RFPA’s you would first want to identify specific areas that might benefit from fire.

**Native Seeding** *– BLM and High Desert Partnership*

* BLM Native Seed Warehouse, Boise

BLM is required to use the warehouse first, and then can go out to the public if the warehouse isn’t sufficient.

* Harney County Native Seed Cooperative

In a big fire year, it is very difficult to get seed for restoration.

For projects it is easier to get seed, but for large scale restoration it can be very difficult. Particularly when there are multiple large scale fires across the country.

The idea is to have a COOP of farmers that grow native seed and share equipment, seed cleaning & storage costs, information, etc… to take out some of the up front cost to get into native seed production and take some of the volatility out of the market.

Question: I’ve heard ideas about this before – is this likely to actually gain momentum and succeed? Why will this time be different?

A: I think that there is funding to get the ball rolling & ensure this gets off the ground, and it’s also being pushed from 2 angles – water savings (referring to the Community Based Water Planning effort) & demand for native seed.

Bill: It’s also a huge benefit to having storage here – can help buffer the eb & flow of the market. creating an alternative crop also provides water savings benefits if water is limited (regulated) to landowners.

I think the elephant in the room is also: the non-natives that we have planted (i.e. crested) are more tolerant to grazing faster. Natives may need to rested longer, reseeded, etc… prior to grazing.

Question: I see suggestions that native seed is preferred, is there science supporting that?

Answer: Bill: Some studies show that initially the non-natives (crested) are more successful but over time (longer term) they even out with the natives. It can initially seem that the natives were not successful, but it just takes them longer to become established and apparent.

Autumn: It seems like this could fit into ODFW’s mitigation policy

**DRAFT Pueblo Mountains Fuels Reduction EA** *– BLM*

* Status report

Update from Rhonda – hopeful that it goes forward without appeals, but there are a few unknowns – Western Watersheds has standing & provided comments, so they have the opportunity to appeal. Now we wait. If no appeals, we can begin implementing this fall. Hopefully burning can be completed this year.

Q: Before they burn – they need to set up monitoring plots – will that have to wait until after the ROD to start that?

A: No, they can start the monitoring work asap.

**Stinkingwater Pilot Project** – *Subcommittee*

Autumn Larkins reviewed the outcome of the last Stinkingwater subcommittee meeting & provided recommendations to the collaborative group. A handout that was developed outlining the timelines for the various types of treatments that are being proposed.

**Discussion around Invasive Annual Grass Treatment Timeline:**

* I think you need to add an option to re-spray (to the right column) if you have residual invasive annual grasses.
* It will need to be adaptive (if/then statements)
* We will also need to have buy-in from multiple landowners.
* The biggest takeaway is that it is a multi-year commitment in even the best-case scenario.
* I think we can use fire in areas where it is a monoculture of IAG (to increase the effectiveness of herbicide – soil contact), but not in areas where there are residual perennial grasses.
* I wonder if there could be some ‘horsetrading’ that could go on here – where you work with multiple permittees, to trade grazing areas in allotments / private lands, etc… to get certain areas treated and then take turns rotating treatments until a larger ‘whole’ area is treated?
* This also aligns very well with the NRCS medusahead treatment program – happening in the same areas (roughly) in the same time as we are suggesting

**Discussion around Juniper Treatment Timeline**

*Cut & Pile*

* There is a real problem with hundreds of acres of previous juniper treatments that were cut & left & are now a fuel/fire risk. We might should consider cleaning up those existing old messes.

Chad Boyd: We have some researchers here & in John Day that can give you a good idea of the response you can expect with different juniper treatment options – based on what is currently existing on the site & what action you plan to implement.

**Discussion around Prescribed Fire Treatment (Juniper or IAG) Timeline**

Q: How many private landowners were part of developing this framework?

A: Just Carol Dunten at this point

Comment: I think that this is going to be an important piece (takeaway from CCAA effort). There is a difference between developing things and handing it to landowners to implement and having them help develop the plan along the way.

Comment: Communication with everyone needs to happen.

The process of how we decided to get in touch with landowners was described. Maybe we’re at a point now where we need to reach out to more landowners in the area. (total list of roughly 40 different landowners)

Q: What would I do with my cows during the time that the allotments need to be rested?

Q: When we talk about a project here, are we only talking these types of treatments or are we also considering fuel breaks in conjunction?

A: I think we could do it all in conjunction.

Next Steps:

* Establish what to do with cows? (If we need to rest allotments)
* Develop FAQ’s.
* What to do with areas that are already sprayed
* Change ‘model’ (timlines) to year 1, 2, 3 (not 2019)
* ID BLM limitations and realistically identify what they can commit to (what flexibility do they have to ‘promise’ certain things?)
* ID what research lessons can we take from the winter grazing project that we could apply to this?
* Subcommittee meet again & help to define a map & develop a field tour.

**Wrap-up of Stinkingwater Pilot Project Discussion:**

Landowner comments / questions:

* Are we going to have flexibility with BLM when we treat an allotment (perhaps one allotment can tolerate heavy grazing, while another may not)
* If we’re planning on seeding this fall, we need to know ASAP (last month) to prep the site for a successful seeding.
* Will we need to re-spray areas that have already been sprayed & how will that affect timeline?
* Water development is a large factor for making a lot of this work: To distribute cattle on the landscape.

*Additional Comments:*

* Is there something that you can do on the shorter term to demonstrate success? (rather than these 3-4 year commitments prior to being able to measure any success)
* Anybody that presents this to a landowner should be a landowner: that gives them a lot of credibility.
* We have 2 willing landowners here today, that have came to several meetings, are willing to work, let’s get moving down the road to implementation. We’ll answer some questions, come up with more & hopefully gain momentum.
* We have low hanging fruit – landowners that came in and identified an issue, are willing to work, the BLM needs to do something about the spraying that is now dirt – I think we can get moving on this now. We don’t want paralysis by analysis. We need to move forward on doing something this fall (seeding).
* Need a Crane RFPA member attending the Stinkingwater subcommittee meetings.

NOTE: There was consensus around the draft document the was presented and moving forward with landowners on where to work, which timelines may/may not work.

**ADJOURN**

**Treatment Examples**

|  |
| --- |
| **Invasive Annual Grass Treatment; Imazapic – Steps** |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  | 2019 Graze (off Aug) |  |  |
|  |  | 2019 Spray (Sept) |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  | 2020 Graze |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Kill “all” IAG |  | Residual IAG |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  | 2020 Seed (Nov) |  | 2020 Graze post seed set |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  | 2021 Rest |  | 2021 Planned Grazing |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  | 2022 Rest (active growth period) |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Graze post seed set |  | Rest |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| 2023 Planned Grazing |  | Seeding established |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |

**Juniper Treatment; Cut & Pile – Steps**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | 2019 Cut & Pile (fall) |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  | 2020 Graze |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  | Evaluate Grass |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  | “No Grass” |  | Grass |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  | 2021 Graze heavy |  | 2021 Planned Grazing |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  | 2021 Burn Piles (fall/winter) |  | 2021 Burn Piles (fall/winter) |  |
|  |  |  | Seed Piles (winter) |  |
|  | 2021 Seed Site (winter) |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | 2022 Planned |  |
|  | 2022, 2023, ? Rest |  | Grazing |  |

**RX Fire Treatment (Juniper or Invasive annual grasses) – Steps**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | 2019 Rest |  |  |
|  | > Average Precip. |  | < Average Precip. |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  | 2020 Rest |  | 2020 Rest |  |
|  | 2020 Burn (fall) |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| IAG | no IAG |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| 2020 Seed (fall/winter) |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | 2021 Rest |  |
| 2021 Rest | 2021 Gaze (post seed set) |  | 2021 Burn (fall) |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | no IAG | IAG |
|  |  |  |  | 2021 Seed (fall/winter) |
| 2022 Graze (post seed set) | 2022 Planned Grazing |  | 2022 Graze (post seed set) | 2022 Rest |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| 2023 Planned Grazing |  |  | 2023 Planned Grazing | 2023 Graze (post seed set) |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  | 2024 Planned Grazing |