

AGENDA
Grant Soil and Water Conservation District
February 6th, 2025

ADMINISTRATION

1. 2:00 Board Work Session – Public Meetings Law Training (this fulfills ORS 192.700)
2. 4:30 PM – Call Regular Meeting to Order
3. Approval of Minutes – December Meeting
4. Introduction of visitors
5. Public Input (5-minute limit)

AGENCY / PARTNER REPORTS – (5-minute limit or request agenda item)

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| 5. NRCS – Hannah Smith | 14. ODA – Brent Smith |
| 6. OSU Ext. – Micah Schmidt | 15. John Day Basin Partnership – Hannah Latzo |
| 7. BOR – Vacant | 16. ODF – Brandon Ferguson |
| 8. FSA – Kailey Heiple | 17. Malheur NF – Chase Bloom |
| 9. ODFW Wildlife – Ryan Torland | 18. Malheur NF – Ann Niesen |
| 10. ODFW Fisheries – Stephan Charette | 19. NFJDWC – Kristen Walz |
| 11. ODFW Fish Habitat – Chris Holsclaw | 20. SFJDWC – Amy Stiner |
| 12. Monument SWCD – Erik Rook | 21. OWEB – Amy Charette |
| 13. CTWSRO – Stefan Kelly | 22. ODEQ – Trea Nance |

DISTRICT PROGRAMS – (Highlights and significant items reported in writing)

23. Grant Weed Control
24. District Programs

DISTRICT BUSINESS – (Items requiring Board action or of immediate interest)

25. Oath of Office, appointment of Board Officers and re-appointment of Associate Directors
26. Resolution to hold Annual Meeting on April 3rd.
27. Other
28. Other

FINANCIAL BUSINESS

29. Financial Reports/Financial Summary (Directors Notebooks)
30. Approve Bills – December / January

5:30 PM – ADJOURN

PROGRAM STATUS REPORT TO DIRECTORS

SUMMARY

December 2nd – Tyler attended the Monument SWCD meeting to discuss Firewise Communities and to present on an OWEB Small Grant to conduct conifer thinning on the Top Ranch. Tyler was approached by the Top Ranch Manager about this funding opportunity. After consulting with Eric Rook, Monument SWCD District Manager, it was agreed Grant SWCD would work with the landowner and sponsor the application even though it was outside our District boundaries.

December 9th – Tyler attended the South Fork John Day Watershed Council Meeting to present on Firewise and the newly formed Izee Firewise Community.

December 10th – Kyle and Pat met with Stephanie Sy, an attorney who specializes in immigration laws and is a relative to Zhaofeng Lin (“Jack” one of the District’s part time GIS staff). Jack’s current Visa is expiring and it was suggested we sponsor him for a H1B visa which would allow the District to continue to employ him. After a few more meetings and research, Kyle decided we couldn’t comply with all the requirements at this time. Jack is currently back in China and will return in early February; Kyle and Jack will continue to discuss how the District can support his efforts to remain in the states.

December 11th – Kyle met with Melissa Napoli, Wasco County Wildfire Coordinator. Wasco County received a Community Wildfire Defense Grant award; the District is providing GIS support for the efforts similar to our Rapid Landscape Assessment.

December 18th – Tyler attended the Grant Harney Fire Prevention Co-op Meeting. The group discussed Fire Prevention outreach opportunities in 2025; they decided the use of signs to be installed at each Firewise Community would be an effective method.

December 20th – Cole and Neil attended an OWEB Virtual Site Visit of the BARK culvert replacement project. This project seeks to replace multiple culverts on USFS land; the SFJDWC has written the grant. All went well and Cole was notified the project was rank no. 1 for OWEB Technical Assistance funding.

January 6th – Kyle and Tereasa met with Streamline, the company which hosts our website regarding what’s needed to make it comply with ADA standards. Streamline has created a tool which allows us to test the site’s published content to ensure compliance; however, it doesn’t test any documents we upload such as meeting minutes, Request for Proposals, Invitation to Bids, etc... They provided a couple of training videos; Tereasa is becoming our resident expert on addressing this issue.

January 15th – Kyle met with OWRD staff to discuss the ability to move the AEM Survey to another part of the County. OWRD declined to allow us the flexibility under our current agreement, but pointed out we could submit another application this March.

January 23rd – Kyle met with Brent Smith, ODA and Stefan Kelly, CTWSRO to discuss opportunities to create a riparian fence program that could complement CREP and the ODFW Habitat Program. Stefan has access to funds through the Pacific Coast Salmon Recovery Program which might be useful. He will put a place holder in his budget which can be flushed out with more details later this summer. If successful, this program might be available to landowners in 2026.

January 23rd – Cole met with ODFW to discuss the Throop Snyder Diversion. ODFW met with King Williams and

they decided the next should be to get OWRD involved to determine the status of the water rights.

January 27th – Kyle and Matt met with Taylor George and Eli Loftis of the Okanogan Conservation District. They were made aware of the District's invasive annual grass control program and have been following our storymap and website for update. They have interest in starting a similar program in north central Washington and wanted to pick our brains.

January 29th – Tyler spoke about Firewise Communities on Coffee Time at KJDY to promote the program.

January 29th – Tyler and Tereasa attended an OSU training on Livestock Virtual Fencing; staff will continue to learn more about this technology and support landowners who may be interested in using it.

GRANT APPLICATIONS/PROPOSALS

2024

- NRCS
 1. Oregon's Blue Mountains Rangeland and Climate Health (\$25,000,000), **Not Funded**
- National Forest Foundation
 1. Southern Blues Partners Facilitation, Education and Outreach (\$45,737), **Not Funded**
- OWEB Small Grants
 1. Top Ranch Fuels Reduction (\$13,841), **Recommended**

2023

- OWEB
 1. Jones SF Long Creek Fence Project (\$165,837), **Funded**
 2. Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (\$146,674), **Funded**
- Title II
 1. Blue Bucket Allotment Improvements (\$571,730 – estimated), **Funded**
 2. Jones SF Long Creek Fence Project (\$151,812), **Funded**
- BLM Fuels Management and Community Fire Assistance Program
 1. Grant County Community Fire Assistance Program (\$100,000), **Funded**
- Oregon State Fire Marshals Office (OSFM) Community Wildfire Risk Reduction
 1. 2023 Grant County Community Wildfire Risk Reduction Program (\$498,070), **Funded**
- OWEB Small Grants
 1. GSG Ranch Juniper Control (\$10,042), **Funded**
 2. Ledgerwood Juniper Phase II (\$12,496), **Funded**

Community Wildfire Defense Grant Program

Fine Fuels Treatment:

Leading Edge Aviation completed spraying October 27th and has left the area. Staff will review the budget for this component and see how much more work is needed to complete.

District staff have reviewed the project as well as estimated costs for 2025 and have determined that approximately 13,782 more acres can be treated. This amount will bring up the total acres treated under this program to 77,956 acres; this will be the third and final year of treatments under the CWDG.

Emergency Evacuation Route Brushing:

The John Deere tractor and diamond brusher has been received by the Grant County Road Department. We are still waiting for the Bill of Sale to be issued from the supplier; once it has been issued, the District will purchase the equipment from the Road Department. The Road Department will use the equipment as partner in this effort; after the project has been completed, the District will transfer ownership of the equipment back to the Road Department who will continue to use it to brush county roads.

The District purchased the tractor and mower from the Road Department in January; staff will be meeting up with Alan Hickerson to discuss the workload and anticipated work to be performed.

Conifer Treatments:

Tyler and Roy have been meeting with landowners. They are starting to develop specifications for shaded fuel breaks. This type of treatment is slightly more aggressive than regular conifer thinning; we expect to be able to apply this specification across several hundred acres of treatment.

Tyler has been developing the Cooperating Agreement and general treatment specifications for the program. Our approach will be similar to the agreements used for the annual grass control program: we will execute an agreement with the landowners to access and inventory the property; then conduct a modification once the treatment areas have been selected and specifications chosen.

Our meetings with the Forest Service have resulted in the need to provide additional provisions regarding situations where logs could generate income for the project. Additionally, the USFS has unequivocally stated that no payments from this program can directly go to the landowner; therefore, all work under this effort will be bid out.

OWEB PROJECTS

Blue Mountains Vegetative Health Initiative:

Six conifer projects comprising 208 acres are completed, four other conifer / juniper projects comprising 185 acres are currently underway. 343 acres of slash treatment from juniper and forestry activities remains. All grant funds have been allocated to projects. Tyler has been keeping tabs on these projects; all landowners are making progress.

Jones South Fork Long Creek Fence:

The OWEB agreement has been signed and all necessary permits are in hand. The agreement with the USFS has been received and executed; project bidding will be initiated as staff workflows allow.

OWEB Small Grant Program

The following Small Grant projects are funded:

- GSG Ranches Juniper Removal (**Done**)
- Ledgerwood Juniper Phase II (**Underway**)

The following Small Grant has been submitted but final approval has not been received:

- Top Ranch Fuels Reduction (**Recommended**)

CONSERVATION RESERVE ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM (CREP)

Tereasa met with landowners about CREP and conducted two site visits; she will be meeting with a third in the next few weeks. She met with the CREP technical team and has started to compile a CREP Technician Training Guide.

ODFW John Day Fish Habitat Program

The District has received the 2024-2025 agreement. ODFW has two proposed fences to be constructed this year: one on NF Wind Creek (tributary to SFJDR) and the Middle Fork John Day River on Lavelle Holme's place. Chris has surveyed the project on NF Wind Creek and has provided Tyler the GPS information.

The NF Wind Creek project was bid out; Timber Basin Contractors has the contract. The work is anticipated to start the week of November 25th; the project needs to be completed by February 10th.

Construction ended the third week of January; the contract has been paid and this project is complete.

ODFW is not anticipating to have any new fence construction in 2025.

ODA – Ag. Water Quality Program

Kyle met with Brent Smith, ODA and discussed whether their funds could be used to support the County in their obligations as a Designated Management Authority (DMA) with regards to the DEQ TMDL. ODA has agreed; Kyle will formalize the arrangement with an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) to be presented to the Court this winter.

Upper John Day Aquifer Storage and Recovery Feasibility Study

The Final Report has been received by the District and Justin Ritgers (BOR Geophysicist) is integrating well log information into the analysis. The District has been granted an extension by OWRD to complete the project by June 30th; no other extensions will be offered.

The District contacted project partners to explore the possibility of moving the study to other areas; partner

support was lukewarm; District staff will complete the project as proposed in the Upper John Day Valley by the end of June.

Title II

Lower John Day Valley Rapid Vegetation Assessment:

The District was granted an extension on this project; all elements will be completed by the end of 2025. To date, 137,419 acres of private lands containing approximately 64,182 acres of juniper/juniper-pine mixture, 38,668 acres of shrub steppe and 22,978 acres of forest have been remotely assessed. District staff have field validated 51,667 acres; more landowners will be contacted this spring.

Jones South Fork Long Creek Fence:

See updates under OWEB Projects.

Bluebucket Allotment Spring Developments:

The Bluebucket Allotment Project involves the reconstruction of four spring developments which have experienced a degree of failure overtime. This project will be fully funded by Title II; the agreement for this project has recently been executed.

Cole and Neil have completed the 60% design; they will meet with the Forest Service to go over the design and get comments.

OSFM (Fire Marshal's Office) Community Wildfire Risk Reduction Program

The District has entered into an agreement with Grant County to provide Firewise Program services during Irene's transition of the program. Funding through this agreement will support Tyler's time in assuming Irene's role, production of education materials and treatment of fuels around Prairie City, John Day, Canyon City, Mt. Vernon, Dayville, Long Creek and Monument.

After meeting with the cities in March, Tyler has begun collecting contact information and conducting site visits for the OSFM Treatment. So far, he has collected phone numbers for 139 landowners, contacted over 50 landowners, conducted 30 site visits, and is currently working on contacting the remaining landowners. These visits consist of meeting with the landowner to discuss the grant in greater detail, explaining the potential treatment area, and getting feedback from the landowner while looking at the property. The next steps are to continue outreach for interest, conduct site visits, obtain cooperative agreements, and begin the bid process. So far, we have 17 signed agreements and are waiting for five more to be returned.

Mt Vernon was bid out and Timber Basin Contractors LLC was the successful bidder. Clint has started work and rapidly completed cutting and piling 23 acres of juniper on one landowner to prepare for annual grass spraying under the CWDG program this fall. The remaining 52 acres will be cut and piled over the next few months; all piles will be burned before the end of 2025.

Six Rivers Fencing LLC is the contractor on the Dayville site; work began mid-November.

The work around Long Creek consisted exclusively of fine fuels control with aerial herbicide. Tyler coordinated this

effort with Matt and all work was completed September, 2024.

The District bid out the remaining four projects (Monument, Prairie City, John Day and Canyon City) in January. Timber Basin Contractors (Clint Walczyk) was awarded the Monument bid, Boulder Ridge Construction (Garry Allen) secured the John Day bid and III Peaks Contracting (Todd Donohue) was awarded the Prairie City and Canyon City bids. Work on the John Day project is expected to begin January 31st; the others are expected to begin this winter. Work has to be completed by the end of 2025.

Tyler has been managing the project and reports that we are on track to fulfill all District obligations by contract end in March, 2026.

Firewise Program

Tyler submitted the renewal applications for all Firewise Communities; the Izee Community was approved bringing the number of Firewise Communities in Grant County to nine total.

Fish Passage/Habitat Projects

General Task Order: Cole has begun the process to renew our General Task Order with BOR; the current agreement expires in 2026, but. The funding mechanism supports the initial phase of projects such as landowner contacts, site surveys, design alternatives, etc... and has been critical to District Engineering projects.

Belshaw Creek Project:

District staff have received more comments from NOAA Fisheries regarding shear-stress due to velocity changes over the proposed diversion structure; they are requiring this information be modeled. We have never received comments of this nature before and addressing them will require the collection of additional survey information.

Cole and Neil conducted the re-survey and have reduced the data for inclusion into the CAD surface; Cole is reviewing the modeling data and preparing the ODFW Passage Permit submittal package.

Henslee Fox Creek Habitat Project:

Cole has proposed a series of partially spanning BDAs which will encourage material to move from the banks to the streambed in order to raise it and improve better stream/water table connectivity. Cole has met with the Tribes and they have some interest in supporting the project; Cole will lay out more details for them to review to make their final decision. Cole met with ODFW and they are supportive of the project. The project designs are currently at the 60% design stage; however, the project itself is in the permit review phase (15% design stage).

Cole will be meeting with Stephan Charette at the end of January to review the designs and incorporate any comments; the 60% design packet will be submitted to the Tribes and BPA for review.

Holmes Diversion Adaptive Management Project:

Cole has met with the Tribes and BOR to discuss diversion work and additional habitat features on the former Dunston Ranch. The Tribes are taking on the project lead; the District has BOR funding to support a conceptual design through this year. All habitat work is proposed to occur downstream of the Holmes Diversion. Cole and Neil have completed the 15% conceptual design and are awaiting comments.

Cole recently heard back from BPA and the Tribes. Based on feedback from BPA, habitat features will now be located upstream as well as downstream of the diversion. Additionally, these features will be designed by a contractor; moving forward, the District will focus solely on the diversion design.

Walton Granite Creek Culvert:

This culvert was identified through Jeff Neal's Ritter Fish Habitat Assessment completed this spring. It's located on private land and connects the property to Hwy 395. Granite Creek is a fish bearing tributary of the Middle Fork John Day River. Cole and Neil have completed the 15% design; it is under review by BPA for comment.

BPA concurrence was received on January 2nd, 2025; the project is moving to the 30% design stage.

Deep Creek Culvert:

This culvert is located outside of Galena along the Middle Fork County Road. District staff visited the site last August with staff from the North Fork John Day Watershed Council. Cole has visited with Mark Croghan and Roadmaster Alan Hickerson; both are supportive of this effort. Cole and Neil have visited the site to collect survey data; they have submitted the 15% design to BPA for comment.

BPA concurrence was received on January 2nd, 2025; the project is moving to the 30% design stage.

IZ Ranch Culverts:

The District was approached by Richard Nelson to address two undersized culverts on Spoon and Flag Creeks respectively. The culverts will be replaced; funding is being provided by ODF directly to the landowner. Grant SWCD will provide design and construction oversight services for the landowner.

Cole is finalizing the landowner agreements; surveys will begin this spring.

Forest Service BARK Culverts:

This project addresses four culverts on USFS property located in Buck, Dan's Sugar and Tex Creeks which have been included in the BARK project. The SFJDWC is securing OWEB funding to support District operations in providing a design packet of plans, specifications, estimates and bidding documents.

Malheur National Forest Projects

Black Butte Fire Fence Reconstruction: Timber Basin Contractors got the bid for both fences. Unfortunately, his bid amount exceeded the funding we had budgeted; only one of the two fences will proceed. We will have him under contract for the second and that project will proceed once the Forest Service finds additional funding.

Staff plan on submitting a Title II proposal this February to cover the balance.

Grant County GIS Services

This agreement has expired; there was no billable activity in 2023/2024

NRCS Technical Services

This effort is being funded with support from Inflation Reduction Act Funds; the status of these funds is uncertain. Fortunately, we were advanced funding which has been used to support the Southern Blues Partners Coordinator position (Roy) as well as other activities and we have a balance remaining; however, we were counting on the pot being refilled sometime by now. We are keeping a close eye on the remainder and working with Blue Mountain Forest Partners and NRCS to prioritize money and workload to maintain a level of service.

END OF REPORT
