



Grant Soil and Water Conservation District
Kenneth H. Delano Agricultural Service Center
721 S. Canyon Blvd. - John Day, OR 97845 - Phone (541) 575-0135

MINUTES OF GRANT SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT'S
May 4, 2023 Meeting

Attendance

Directors Attending:

Roger Ediger – Director

Pat Voigt- Chairman

Staff Attending:

Kyle Sullivan – District Manager

Visitors:

Aaron Roth – Natural Resources Conservation Service

Joshua Giles – Deputy Forest Supervisor, Malheur Forest

Debbie Arntz – Farm Service Agency

Phil St. Clair – Director

Joanne Keerins – Director

Pat Holliday – Program Assistant

Amy Franklin – Public Affairs Specialist, Malheur Forest

Maria Snodgrass – OR Dept. Agriculture - telephone

John Rowell – Grant County Commissioner

ADMINISTRATION

1. Call Meeting to Order – Pat Voigt called the meeting to order at 4:00 pm.

2. Approval of Minutes – **Phil moved to approve the April 6, 2023 meeting minutes. Joanne gave the second with the motion passing unanimously.**

Introduction of Visitors – Pat introduced Amy Franklin, Public Affairs Specialist, Malheur National Forest and Joshua Giles, Deputy Forest Supervisor, Malheur Forest. Joshua reported the recently submitted Title II applications will be reviewed and ranked June 28th.

3. Public Input – There was no public input.

REPORTS

4. NRCS – Aaron reported the employment offers made to the successful applicants for the Soil Conservationist and Forester positions were declined. The Soil Conservationist position will be readvertised next week. The staff is working through the South Fork RCPP contracts. Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) applicant rankings will be completed in June. The Joint Chiefs program received 40 applications to accomplish juniper removal and conifer thinning on private land. Aaron handed out the Oregon Drought monitor map and May snowpack report as of May 1, 2023. The 2nd Annual Grant County Resource Fair was held April 18th with over 20 partners and 6 vendors participating. The event had more landowners in attendance than last year. Debbie Arntz stated she found the virtual fencing presentation interesting. Kyle said they have received several suggestions on ways to improve next year's event.

5. FSA – Debbie reported that as of April 1st Grant County qualified for the 2023 Livestock Forage Program based on the Drought Monitor showing a portion of Grant County at D3, Extreme Drought. Signups for the 2023 Grassland Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) will be taken until May 26th. The staff has been busy with the Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP), for producers who lost an abnormal number of calves due to extreme weather conditions. The program will pay \$540 a calf. Producers in Harney County and in Bear Valley had heavy calf losses due to extreme winter weather. The Grant/Harney Farm Service Agency office held a meeting in Seneca to provide information on the program with thirteen producers attending. The Emergency Livestock Assistance Program (ELAP) is available to assist producers with expenses for snow removal and for 60 – 90% of additional feed that was purchased due to weather conditions.

6. South Fork John Day Watershed Council – Joanne reported the staff is waiting for a change in the weather to start summer project work. The Youth Corp program will be working on projects associated with the BLM Good Neighbor program.

7. ODA – Maria reported the Ag Water Quality Support Grant closed May 3rd. ODA received 22 applications requesting just over \$2.2 million dollars. ODA will next review and rank the applications. Funds for the Support Grant was established in the 2021 legislation, which identified that ODA would receive \$650,000 each biennium to award grants to SWCDs/WCs that proposed to support Ag Water Quality work in small watersheds. There is a proposal to reduce these funds in the 2023 legislation but that is yet to be determined. Maria stated she is working through the 2023-25 OR Dept. Agriculture SWCD Scope of Work applications. A Northwest Water Quality Specialist to be located in La Grande was recently hired. The Upper Mainstem and South Fork John Day River Local Advisory Committee will conduct a Light Review of the Ag Water Quality Management Area Plan in the coming weeks.

8. Malheur Forest - Josh stated the Forest is planning on bringing on 18 new positions. Thinning that will be accomplished through the Joint Chiefs project will begin this year. The range staff is in the process of completing 2023 Annual Operating meetings with permittees. Josh stated he expects to see a draft of the Murderers Creek Wild Horse Environmental Assessment soon. The Malheur is working with the Bureau of Land Management to arrive at the appropriate numbers of horses. Discussion followed on the wild horse issue. Josh stated he will make sure the District gets a copy of the draft. Josh stated trainings are being held for controlled burns that will be accomplished this year. The forest will utilize opportunities for controlled burns as weather permits. Plans have been made to utilize improved communication plans with landowners and permittees.

DISTRICT PROGRAMS

9. Grant Weed Control – Matt was unable to attend. Kyle reported the new Title II grant, to accomplish noxious weed control on the Malheur Forest and private lands, was signed. The District received one bid for helicopter services to provide aerial herbicide application, through the recently awarded Grant County Evacuation Corridor and Fuels Management Project, for the next five years. Matt and crew have been working on road right-of- way treatments in Grant and Wheeler counties. Matt and Nate attended a NRCS seeding training in Redmond.
10. District Programs – Kyle stated the Program Status Report was included in the Board packet. Kyle reported the OR State Fire Marshall grant, for \$500,000, was successful. The District partnered with Grant County on the grant. The grant has two components; the first will support a District employee to transition to the Grant County Firewise Coordinator. Currently the county has seven, soon to be eight, organized Firewise communities. The second component will be to engage with the seven cities within Grant County to fund juniper removal and annual grass control. The grant will provide funding for three years. Kyle reported the District has assisted Grant County with GIS services for several years, without a formal agreement. Recently Kyle presented a one-year agreement, which can be renewed, to the County Court for the District to provide GIS services for the County. Several County Departments have expressed the need for the county to have reliable, consistent GIS services. Kyle presented a map showing current and planned projects, involving the District and partners, that will increase the fire resiliency of many areas within Grant County. Kyle said the map will be continually updated as needed.

DISTRICT BUSINESS

11. ODA Ag Water Quality Plan Lite Review - Maria stated the Upper Mainstem and South Fork John Day River Ag Water Quality Local Advisory Committee will hold a Light Review June 6th at 4:00 pm at the John Day Fire Hall. The Light Review will consist of assessing what projects have been implemented in the last two years and compiling that information into a report that will be sent to the OR Board of Agriculture.
12. National Flood Insurance – ESA Integration Plan – Kyle stated he recently received information regarding the National Floodplain Insurance Program, issued by FEMA, and the associated impacts on listed fish species. His initial research brought up several potential problematic issues; avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation of impacts to natural floodplain functions with mitigation provided at specific ratios, limiting development in a 170-foot riparian buffer zone and tracking all permitted development and mitigation activities and reporting them to FEMA. The deadline to provide comments is May 5th. Kyle will get together with Shannon Springer, Grant County Planning Director, to put together comments.
13. Other – Kyle stated he was notified ODOT accepted the District's last offer. The District will be advertising the CREP position soon, as Neil will be moving to fill the engineer technician position full-time this fall.
14. Other – Kyle and the Directors all wished Phil a very Happy Birthday!

FINANCIAL BUSINESS

15. Financial Report/Financial Summary – Financial reports for the month of April 2023 were reviewed.
16. Approve Bills – Joanne moved to approve the bills and financial reports for the month of April 2023. Phil gave the second with the motion passing unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:35 pm.


Board Chair

6-1-23
Date


District Manager

6-1-2023
Date