



Hood River Watershed Group

*"...to sustain & improve the
Hood River Watershed through
education, cooperation, & stewardship"*

APRIL 23, 2019 MEETING MINUTES

Watershed Group Members Present

Chuck Gehling	Jennifer Euwer	Karen Fairchild	Lee Fairchild	Jim Wells
Gabriele Schneider	Leonard Aubert	Antonio Baptista	Hilary Doulos	Doug Sharkey
Kyle Davis	Roger Nelson	Craig DeHart	Stanley DeHart	Caleb DeHart
Maura Moody	John Moody	Greg Short	Toria Johnston	John Buckely
Sam Doak	Heather Hendrixson	Mike Oates	Fran Finney	Buck Parker
Andrew Spaeth	Braden Erickson	Kate Conley	Rick Ragan	Katie Pearson
Alexander Ross	Blayne Eineichner	Kali Atkins	Jeremy Thompson	Holly Cocolli
Andrew Rosenberg	Cindy Thieman			

Welcome and Introductions

At 6:00pm, Chuck Gehling welcomed everyone to the April meeting. He thanked everyone for coming and invited everyone to introduce themselves. There were 37 people in attendance.

Review and Approval of Last Meeting Minutes

After reading the group's mission statement, Chuck asked if there were any corrections to the March minutes. No changes were noted and the group approved the minutes.

Monthly Informational Presentation

Chuck introduced Jeremy Thompson from Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife (ODFW), who presented *Elk Habitat Use in the Hood River Valley*. ODFW has been collecting data from seven collared elk for the past two years, and two additional elk over the past year. The project began in response to concerns raised by orchardists in the upper Hood River Valley who have been experiencing extensive damage to their orchards from elk herds. Elk collars were purchased with financial assistance from local orchardists and the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation. The objectives of the study were to understand the number and size of elk herds in the Valley, their pattern of seasonal migration, and types of habitat used. Using the data, ODFW conducted a home range analysis for each animal. Results from the past two years suggest the following preliminary conclusions: 1) Three fairly distinct herds live in the valley ("Northwest", "Central Valley", "Cooper Spur"); 2) Overall there is much less seasonal migration of Hood River Valley elk herds compared to elk in Wasco County and elsewhere in Oregon; 3) The total elk population is estimated between 300-400; 4) Public land is utilized less than 50% of the time. The last observation means that the elk herds are heavily dependent on private land; and the Central Valley herd is particularly linked to orchard land. ODFW thought that lack of seasonal migration could be due to the high quality forage available in the orchards. Recreation may also be a deterrent for elk to leave the Valley and enter public lands. More data is needed to verify these observations and help guide solutions for reducing impacts to private farmland.

Greg noted that there was better elk hunting on public land back in the 80s. He thought this could be due to increased recreation and reduced amounts of early seral habitat on public lands. Kyle asked if the elk used East Fork Hood River tributaries. The data show that it's mostly the main corridor of the East Fork Hood River. There is surprisingly little use of Middle Mountain. The State is reviewing how they use hunting to deal with ungulates that cause damage to private lands. Leonard asked if it was possible to look for/evaluate elk herds at night using infrared technology. Elk are generally under the forest canopy, which is too dense for IR to penetrate. Antonio asked about the differences between deer and elk. They have similar movement patterns. In general deer are more damaging to woody plants, but the population is struggling so this has not been noted as a problem for

landowners. Doug asked if wolves might influence elk movement patterns if they become more abundant. Not likely; the wolf packs are staying high, far away from densely populated areas. Leonard asked how long the study would last. ODFW will run the study as long as the collars last (i.e., continue to transmit data).

Old Business

Cindy briefly reviewed the status of the Neal Creek project. The conceptual design was completed in September, 2018. Based on landowner willingness and intrinsic potential, two of the proposed sub-reaches in the conceptual design will be targeted for the next phase. Cindy and Alix are planning to apply for technical assistance grants to bring these two project sites to full design and permitting, including possible wetland delineations. The Pacific Power Blue Sky Habitat Fund (application due May 31st) provides between \$30,000 – \$35,000 for project design, engineering, permitting, supplies and materials, implementation, monitoring and outreach. Projects must be in or near a Pacific Power service area, provide direct and immediate improvements to salmon and/or steelhead habitat, and provide at least a 1:1 match. This current open solicitation round of OWEB Technical Assistance grant applications are due April 29th. *The group provided second consensus approval to develop grant applications for the Neal Creek Instream Habitat Project Design.*

Cindy briefly reviewed the pending request to OWEB for development of a financial plan in conjunction with the FIP strategic action plan. OWEB has set aside money (up to \$15,000) for partnerships to hire contractors to help develop these financial plans. At the last strategic action plan meeting, the partnership reviewed this opportunity and decided it was worth pursuing, with the support of the HRWG. *The group provided second consensus approval to apply for OWEB funds available to develop a financial plan as part of the FIP Strategic Action Plan.*

New Business

Cindy provided details about an OWEB restoration grant application for an instream habitat enhancement project on the upper West Fork near Red Hill Creek. This project would be implemented in 2020 on land owned by Ecotrust Forest Management (EFM). The project would complement several instream habitat/large wood placement projects up and downstream of the site on Forest Service land. Project partners include HRWG, CTWS, USFS, and EFM. *The group provided first consensus approval to develop a grant application for the West Fork at Red Hill Large Wood Project due on April 29th.*

Reports and Announcements

Coordinator Report: Cindy reported that the West Fork Jones Creek large wood placement contract was awarded to Aquatic Contracting Inc. and the Eastside Lateral archaeology contract was awarded to Archaeological Investigations Northwest.

Project Manager Report: Alix was attending a training and was not present.

Summary of Consensus Items and Establishment of Next Meeting

Items that Received First Consensus:

- HRWG approval to develop a grant application for the West Fork at Red Hill Large Wood Project.

Items that Received Second Consensus:

- HRWG approval to develop grant applications for the Neal Creek Instream Habitat Project Design.
- HRWG approval to explore additional OWEB funds available to develop a financial plan as part of the FIP Strategic Action Plan.

The next Hood River Watershed Group meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 28th, 2019.

Adjournment

Chuck thanked the group for attending and adjourned the meeting at 8:15 pm.

Reported by: Cindy Thieman