



Hood River
WATERSHED GROUP

Hood River Watershed Group

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

OCTOBER 26TH, 2021 MEETING MINUTES

Watershed Group Members Present

Chuck Gehling	Cindy Thieman	Alix Danielsen	Rick Larson	Megan Saunders
Richard Iverson	Sam Doak	Ryan Gerstenberger	Kate Conley	Steve Pappas
Jim Wells	Dan Ball	Jason Keller	Holly Coccoli	Heidi Hartman
Andrew Spaeth	Darcy Saiget	Heather Hendrixson	Lindy Collamer	Hans Berge
Sue Kelso-Haines	Whitney Reynier	Thomas Osborne	Lauretta Burman	Amy Donohue
Paul McKean	Steve Pribyl	Chuti Fiedler	Kevin Liburdy	David Michalek
Nate Ulrich	Brian Smart	Brian Nakamura		

** This meeting was conducted virtually via Zoom.

Welcome and Introductions

At 6:02pm, Chuck Gehling welcomed everyone to the October meeting and stated the mission of the Watershed Group. There were 33 people in attendance. Cindy introduced Alix Danielsen and Bill Norris, the presenters.

Monthly Informational Presentation

Alix Danielsen, the Hood River Watershed Group Restoration Project Manager, and Bill Norris, the Project Engineer with Parr Excellence, presented on the *Neal Creek Phase 1 Habitat Restoration Project*.

Neal Creek is an important clearwater (non-glacial) tributary to the lower Hood River, which provides habitat for threatened winter steelhead, threatened coho salmon, cutthroat trout, and resident rainbow trout. Over the past 100 years, numerous human activities have altered the Neal Creek Watershed through logging practices, relocating stream channels, and placing roads and buildings in its floodplain. This has resulted in stream channels with fewer pools, less spawning gravel and instream wood, and reduced side channel habitat. Fortunately, there are opportunities to restore sections of Neal Creek to provide better fish habitat and aid in the recovery of steelhead and coho.

The Hood River Watershed Group, in partnership with the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs and private landowners, has been developing a series of restoration projects along Neal Creek that aim to restore the ecological processes of the Neal Creek Watershed and ensure the health and viability of ESA-listed salmonid populations with the improvement of spawning, rearing, and overwintering habitat. The first phase of this work was completed in August of 2021 and restored approximately 1/2 mile and two acres of habitat by constructing six log jams, creating 14 pools, and adding over 100 logs back into Neal Creek.

The project was funded by the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs, Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, and Pacific Power Blue Sky Habitat Funds/The Freshwater Trust. The project was designed by Parr Excellence. Alix and Bill provided background information, project details, an overview of implementation, and an update on future work planned for Neal Creek. The full presentation recording can be found on the website.

Questions:

Lindy Collamer asked if any Pacific lamprey were found during the fish salvage at either site. No lamprey adults or ammocoetes were found during the fish salvages.

** This presentation was recorded and can be found on the Hood River Watershed Group website under the 'News' tab.

Review and Approval of Last Meeting Minutes

Chuck asked if there were any corrections to the September minutes. The group approved the minutes.

Announcements

Alix announced several volunteer planting and mulching opportunities at Whiskey Creek, RM 1, and the FID pollinator pipeline project.

New Business

Letter of Support for FID Oregon Water Resources Department Farmers Canal Grant

Megan shared details of the grant, which would be a feasibility study around issues with the Farmers Canal piping project, so that FID could reach a 100% design and pipe the canal. The grant application is due November 3rd. Cindy is asking for first consensus to provide a letter of support for the grant.

The group provided first consensus to write a letter of support for the FID OWRD Farmers Canal Grant.

Old Business

Update on 501c3 development

Cindy noted that HRWG and SWCD staff and some SWCD board members and HRWG operations committee members have been having productive discussions with the help of Donna Silverberg, the facilitator. There has also been a recent meeting with the irrigation district managers. The Operations Committee met to discuss the process in detail and decided it would be worthwhile to create a committee to work on potential by-laws and brainstorm what the potential board of directors would look like. This process would be in concert with on-going structural and operational discussions with the SWCD. Sam Doak, who has done extensive by-laws research lately, noted that there is a wide variation in the by-laws that he has looked at, but realized that by-laws are really sideboards. With that in mind, it might make sense to understand how the group might function and then develop the by-laws from there.

Cindy asked if anyone would be interested in being on a committee to help with this process. Chuck, Brian, Sam, and Megan volunteered.

Update on East Fork Habitat Restoration Design Project

At the last meeting, Cindy and Alix asked for first consensus to submit a TA grant to design a restoration project(s) on the East Fork Hood River. It was determined that there needs to be additional project development and landowner outreach before proceeding with a grant application, so an application will not be submitted in this round.

Reports

Watershed Coordinator updates – Cindy noted that she is beginning the process of developing a FIP implementation grant for a January submittal. There is an upcoming pre-application call with OWEB, and Cindy will be setting up a meeting with partners to determine the detailed scope of the application. There was discussion at the Operations Committee meeting about having a December HRWG meeting and Cindy confirmed one would occur.

Cindy also updated the group on recent discussions on aquatic restoration at the mouth of the Hood River. The Port, HRWG, and the Tribes are supportive/interested in having the Corps conduct a feasibility study for this restoration work. Senator Merkley's office helped support this by including authorization in the 2020 Water Resource Development Act for a feasibility study of ecological restoration at the confluence of the Hood River and the Columbia River. The work would cost \$3 million, approximately \$1 million of which would be matching funds.

Restoration and Outreach Project Manager updates – Alix gave an update on post project monitoring on the West Fork projects, the East Fork Mills project, and Neal Creek, planning for planting at Neal Creek and the FID pollinator pipeline project, upcoming work parties, annual report development, and design development for Neal Creek Phase 2.

Announcements

Heather Hendrixson noted that the SWCD is working with a website contractor to set up online ordering for the native plant sale. It should be up and running soon.

Darcy Saiget thanked the Watershed Group, the Tribes, and EFM for the work, support, and monitoring for the West Fork Red Hill project. Darcy noted that the Coe Creek pipeline project was completed this summer. She also reported on this fall's bull trout monitoring results conducted by USFS and ODFW. The team found 42 bull trout redds (32 in Clear and 10 in Pinnacle). On average there have been around 29 redds in past years, so this number was promising. Finally, Darcy congratulated the group on the strategic action plan completion.

Ryan Gerstenberger noted that the Tribes are between the spring Chinook and winter steelhead work, so there isn't much to report.

Megan noted they are in the final stages of the Kingsley work, which should be wrapped up this fall. Megan thanked those who helped with the FID salvage.

Summary of Consensus Items and Establishment of Next Meeting

Items that Received First Consensus:

Approval to write a letter of support for the FID OWRD Farmers Canal Grant.

Items that Received Second Consensus:

None.

The next meeting will be on November 23rd from 6-8pm.

Adjournment

Chuck thanked the group for attending and adjourned the meeting at 7:39 pm.

Reported by Alix Danielsen.