



Hood River
WATERSHED GROUP

Hood River Watershed Group

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

NOVEMBER 23RD, 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	Holly Coccoli	Heidi Hartman	Andrew Spaeth
Darcy Saiget	Heather Hendrixson	Brian Bair	Ann Gray	Gary Asbridge
Lauretta Burman	Diane Burman	Steve Pribyl	Hans Berge	Jonathan Terhaar
Nate Ulrich	Brian Nakamura	Kristin Connelly	Patrick Hayden	Ryan Flaherty

** This meeting was conducted virtually via Zoom.

Welcome and Introductions

At 6:01pm, Chuck Gehling welcomed everyone to the November meeting and stated the mission of the Watershed Group. There were 33 people in attendance. Alix introduced Cindy Thieman and Brian Bair, the presenters.

Monthly Informational Presentation

Brian Bair, the Watershed Restoration Projects Lead for the Enterprise Program of the U.S. Forest Service, and Cindy Thieman, the Hood River Watershed Group Coordinator, presented on *Fish Habitat Restoration on the West Fork Hood River*.

This past summer's fish habitat project on the West Fork Hood River near Red Hill Creek improved a quarter-mile of the river and reconnected roughly 1,600 feet of historic side channels to improve spawning and rearing habitat for threatened spring Chinook salmon, summer steelhead, and coho. Funding for this project was provided by the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs, Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, and the U.S. Forest Service/Enterprise Program.

Brian Bair provided background on the project area, including the history of logging. Logging would begin in the riparian areas and extend up to ridgelines. Logs were then transported downstream by way of splash damming. This was an efficient way to move logs, but it was very destructive to aquatic habitat and wildlife. Brian also explained how starting in the 1960s, large equipment was used to straighten streams and clear log jams. The early fish biologists began focusing on restoration, but the original techniques of log jam notching was counter-productive and led to stream degradation.

In the late 80's, Dave Rosgen was one of the first to bring science into river restoration, and how natural processes should influence restoration design. Brian explained how restoration has evolved since then, and how today, designers focus on the entire floodplain for a valley-wide approach to restoration.

Brian then explained the design process for the West Fork Red Hill project, beginning with the HEC RAS modelling that allows design engineers to model current and proposed conditions to ensure that proposed design features will meet project objectives. This project reconnected 1,600 feet of relic side channels by constructing six main stem tree-boulder structures and excavating side channel entrances. Large wood was added to side channels and associated floodplains (~220 pieces total). In addition to the large wood structures and floodplain placements, site specific areas where berms were blocking entrances to historic side channels were excavated. Riffle sections immediately downstream of the side channel entrances were aggraded with large wood boulder structures to reconnect historic side channels and off-channel habitat. About 300 feet of main channel length was added due to design features, and ultimately the project more than

doubled the amount of aquatic habitat through the project reach. Cindy and Brian walked the group through several of these design features, including how they would benefit salmon and steelhead.

Cindy noted the pre- and post-project effectiveness monitoring that has been/will be done for this project. Over the last year, basin partners have been collaborating on monitoring efforts to streamline and improve monitoring data collected in the watershed. Specific monitoring includes Wolman pebble counts, photopoints, and habitat surveys. These efforts allow partners to assess the impact of projects and improve upon restoration projects going forward.

Questions:

Nate Ulrich asked for a comparison between the Neal Creek and West Fork projects. Cindy noted that Neal Creek is all on private property with extensive infrastructure within the 100-year floodplain elevation, which limited the extent of the design elements. On the West Fork, these constraints did not exist. Both sites had high intrinsic potential so both were high priority restoration reaches within the watershed, but their side boards were very different. Brian added that a similar project was implemented on the Zig Zag Ranger District and that has similar infrastructure restraints, pointing out that not all Forest Service land is an open slate.

Jonathan Terhaar asked Brian about his confidence level regarding whether wild winter steelhead have a chance in the Hood River Watershed, especially considering the escapement trends being well below the 15,000 spawners deemed as required by the fisheries managers and given hatchery steelhead will no longer be spawning in a few years. Brian noted that the Wind River levels are more towards 60% of the pit-tagged adults not getting to the Wind River, which is “dismal”. It’s not an optimistic view.

Nate Ulrich asked how this reach was identified for restoration. Cindy explained the intrinsic potential of this reach and how this technique helps narrow in on high priority areas.

Darcy Saiget noted that this reach had interesting historic logging artifacts encountered during implementation. Cindy described a huge berm that existed within the project reach that was breached as part of implementation. During the breach of this berm, there was logging cable and a cut stump unearthed. The USFS archeological team determined that this berm was a remnant of a historic splash dam in this site.

Darcy Saiget noted that this project was phase 3, and that in concert with the previous two project phases, the restoration in the Upper West Fork is providing significant lift for salmon and steelhead.

** 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 October minutes. The group approved the minutes.

New Business

OWEB Focused Investment Partnership Grant Application

The grant application is due January 13th and Cindy will give a presentation of the scope of the application in December. It will be a six-year slice of the projects included in the Strategic Action Plan. The partnership will meet within the next month to determine the exact scope. To receive double consensus by the application due date, Cindy is asking for first consensus in time.

The group provided first consensus to submit an OWEB Focused Investment Partnership grant application.

Letter of Support for EFID WaterSMART Grant for the Oanna-Yasui sub-lateral pipeline project

Steve Pappas explained that this is one of the sublaterals off the Central Pipeline and the piping of it would eliminate eight overflows. The project would pipe approximately 11,000 feet, which is still only about half of the total length. Heather asked what this grant pays for. Steve and Cindy explained that it would cover some of the design and construction. The total project cost will be around \$3-4 million dollars, some of which EFID would pay for. Chuck asked where this line is located. Steve explained that it comes down near the Yasui Line. Heather noted that the SWCD could also contribute a letter of support and asked how much would be requested in the grant. Steve thought it would be around \$2 million. Brian noted that EFID was the first district to receive a WaterSMART grant when it was first started.

The group provided first consensus to write a letter of support for the EFID WaterSMART Grant for the Oanna Line.

Old 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 was due November 3rd. Megan noted that the funding request was increased to accommodate increased sediment management concerns.

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

Update on 501c3 development

Cindy updated the group on the progress of 501c3 discussions. She explained that a small group met this morning – Cindy, Alix, Chuck, and Sam – to discuss timeline, get organized, and plan for upcoming meetings to discuss bylaws and how a 501c3 would function. The bylaws committee will include Megan Saunders and Brian Nakamura. At the December HRWG meeting, these upcoming meetings and the resulting draft documents will be presented for feedback.

Chuck restated that if anyone wants to be involved in these smaller group efforts, please let Cindy or Chuck know.

Reports

Watershed Coordinator updates – Cindy noted that the final report for the OWEB West Fork grant was submitted. Cindy also updated the group on recent discussions on aquatic restoration at the mouth of the Hood River. The Port board submitted a letter of support to the Corps, which puts the project in line for the Corps to include it in their budget, likely in 2024. CTWS 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 planting and mulching that took place at the Neal Creek Phase 1 project and the CIG pollinator pipeline project. Other activities included the submission of the MFID 2021 water temperature data, a field tour with BPA, assisting with the EFID salvage, a tour of the West Fork project with the owner of Pfriem, a site visit for the Tony Creek fish passage barrier, and continued work on the 30% Neal Creek Phase 2 design.

Announcements

Heather noted that the SWCD was awarded the pesticide education grant from OWEB. Trainings will start in the spring. Heather went to Steve Castagnoli’s retirement party last week – he was one of the original instigators of the pesticide calibration work.

Steve provided an update on the EFID fish salvage.

Summary of Consensus Items and Establishment of Next Meeting

Items that Received First Consensus:

Approval to submit an OWEB Focused Investment Partnership grant application.

Approval to write a letter of support for the EFID WaterSMART Grant for the Oanna Line.

Items that Received Second Consensus:

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

The next meeting will be on December 28th from 6-8pm.

Adjournment

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

Reported by Alix Danielsen.