

Klamath Watershed Partnership minutes for January 25th, 2024 board meeting

Members Present: Ashton Greer, Mark Buettner, Bill Harworth, Ryan Hartman, Ann and Karl Wenner

Member Absent: Roger Smith, Matt Walter

Dani Watson attended as a guest and possible future board member

Quorum: Yes

Staff present: Bill Lehman, Mark Johnson, Jeff Kerber, Leigh Ann Vradenburg

November minutes: Mark B motioned to approve and Bill seconded. Minutes approved.

Grants pursued: Six funding opportunities were pursued during the quarter. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding for the Big Swing is still in process, but \$452,000 is expected. An additional \$50,000 for the USFWS Partners Program Browsey Acres project is in process and expected. Approved funding includes an additional \$50,000 for the USFWS Partners Program Teddy Powers project, a \$10,000 subcontract from Sustainable Northwest for continued outreach work, a five-year subcontract with Wallowa resources to provide capacity support for NRCS programs for \$43,000 per year, and the approval of the OWEB small grant program team Klamath-21. This program provides \$100,000 for projects capped at \$15,000 to be shared by KWP, the Klamath Soil and Water Conservation District, and The Klamath Tribes.

Grants Secured: The total for new grants secured between November 2023 and January 2024 is \$767,000. This includes \$50,000 that is pending, but expected to be approved for the Teddy Powers project and the \$452,000 expected to be funded from the Big Swing total. Not included are the Sustainable Northwest sub-contract or OWEB small grant biennium funding that were approved shortly before the board meeting. Total operational funding in mid-January was about \$1,391,729, or approximately 25% of total funding. Total funding as of mid-January, including the additions listed above, is approximately \$5,452,654.

Ashton motioned to accept budget and Bill W. seconded. Board voted to approve.

Policies and Procedures Review: Changes discussed during meeting included verbiage to include optional background checks and mandatory DMV checks upon hire. Bill requested to raise retirement match from 3% to 4%. Work from home verbiage was discussed with the expectation to work primarily in the office, but be able to work at home secondarily. Ann moved to approve changes and Ryan seconded. Board approved updates.

Project Manager Update: Leigh Ann discussed her recent work under the Wallowa Resources/NRCS subcontract. She completed forestry assessments for the Lost River CIS. The need for Juniper removal outweighs funding so she is hopeful a successful year can lead to more funding in future years.

Chiloquin Wildfire Initiative is underway and Leslie Cook was hired as a ¾ time contract employee. She will coordinate with Chiloquin Fire and Rescue to run this program as a part of Leigh Ann's USFS Community Wildfire Defense Fund Grant.

Reforestation: 1400 acres across multiple properties in the 242 fire footprint (USFWS funding) in April. 1200 acres around bull trout critical habitat streams in the Bootleg footprint on Green Diamond

property (USFWS funding) in May. 160 acres around Fivemile Creek on non-industrial private land (OWEB or ODF funding) in May.

Leigh Ann was given the ODF Eastern OR operator of the Year award. She presented at a multi-agency landscape resiliency summit in Hood River and also to the Klamath County Commissioners.

She has about \$1,000,000 in requests for USFWS partners program requests for the upcoming year including more work at Harmony Preserve, Lost River juniper removal, Fivemile fencing and site prep, stockwater wells, fencing, and well accessories on the Upper Williamson.

Project Coordinator update: Klamath Wing Watcher Wetland USFWS partners program proposal to develop wetlands and an adjacent agricultural field is ongoing. This could lead to a partnership with the city and South Suburban Sanitation District with similar wetland potential.

Lost River fencing in progress to install livestock exclusion fencing for five landowners in the Poe and Langell Valleys. Riparian plantings are included where feasible. Four of five nearing completion.

His on-going planning efforts and projects include the Lost River Working Group, TNC/Klamath Tribes Long Creek Restoration scoping, lower lake working group, Patty's Garden Pollinator project, Ish Tish Creek Fish Passage and Restoration, Paradise and Badger Creek Restoration, and Teddy Powers Meadow Off-Channel Livestock Water. He is also participating in the USFWS partners biologist hiring panel.

Grants and Projects Administrator update: Jeff is taking over management of the OWEB small grant team Klamath-21. This program funds projects capped at \$15,000 and Jeff will coordinate the application process with team members.

Plants will be ordered soon from Clearwater Nursery in Redmond for the Pollinator project. Wocus transplanting will occur in May, so rebar will be ordered soon.

USFS RAC Weed spraying program is spent out, except for a small amount in the Lost River watershed. A significant portion of funding meant for 2023 and 2024 treatment seasons was used in 2022 due to that grant agreement being overspent. The new reauthorization of the secure rural schools act is stuck in committee in Congress so funding is not likely for 2024.

Executive Director Report: Big Swing proposal led by the Upper Klamath Basin Agriculture Collective approval has been delayed. This proposal and the Agency-Barnes project could cut into 2024 BIL funding availability.

Keno Stretch Wetland project has Resource Environmental Solutions compiling a historical report for USFWS.

Bio-char phase 2 project will have new filters installed and monitored at Walker Farms in Spring 2024.

Many local organizations and agencies are in hiring mode with the flush of funding coming to the basin for restoration and conservation work. Bill led a discussion about KWP hiring and growing versus being conservative and waiting to see how we will fit into the larger picture once other organizations have hired.