

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

Members Present: Roger Smith, Dani Watson, Ashton Greer, Ryan Hartman, Matt Walter, Ann and Karl Wenner

Member Absent: Bill Harworth, Mark Buettner,

Quorum: Yes

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

January minutes: Ashton motioned to approve and Roger seconded. Minutes approved.

Grants pursued: Over 3.6 million in grant and contract funding has been applied to during this quarter. Most opportunities are coming from the USFWS partners program. Dani asked about a Lost River fencing/revegetation partners proposal being denied and Jeff explained they had prioritized Juniper removal over Lost River fencing.

Grants Secured: Jeff showed graphs depicting funding acquired for the current and previous three quarters, total and operational funding for the current and previous three quarters, and total and operational funding available per year through 2027. There is approximately 5,374,423 in total funding secured and 1,150,978 in operation funding available. 183,000 in new funding has been acquired since the last board meeting. Operational funding includes personnel, travel, and admin categories. These numbers include USFWS BIL Big Swing funding that is still pending, but Jeff was under the impression it was approved before the last board meeting. He kept that funding listed as acquired in the previous quarter to make the number consistent when presented to the board. Ryan motioned to approve financials and Ashton seconded. Board approved financials.

Dani asked how we evaluate if the USFWS contracts help fulfill the mission of the organization. Board and staff discussed being largely dependent on one program to fund the organization. Even though FWS is the primary funder, KWP's work is still diverse among our four program categories of 1) riparian, fishery, and wetland restoration, 2) upland watershed and forest health, 3) outreach and technical assistance, 4) irrigation efficiency and modernization.

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

Project Manager Update: Leigh Ann has been busy planting trees. 1,625 acres were planted with 445,504 seedlings on 19 different landowners' properties. Planting will continue in 2025. Mostly Ponderosa Pine were planted, with some Douglas Fir and White Fir on sites where they previously existed. Bootleg completed planting 160 acres around Fivemile Creek on non-industrial private land from 2 landowners using OWEB funding. 1200 acres around bull trout critical habitat streams on Green Diamond property are currently being planted with USFWS funding.

Site prep on the Bothwell property along the Williamson River was delayed due to wet ground and planting will occur in 2025.

Bootleg stream sediment capture work will branch out to tributaries and bull trout streams.

Leigh Ann presented to the Oregon Department of Forestry regarding errors in their new stream database. Leigh Ann has had OWEB grants to monitor stream classifications regarding occupation of fish

and bull trout critical habitat. Ground truthing work data was disregarded in favor of a model and bull trout critical habitat streams were listed as non-fish streams under the new database. This database will dictate land use decisions so its accuracy is paramount for protecting streams.

Leigh Ann led USFWS on a tour of Harmony Preserve to explain the value of upland projects and how they relate to stream health.

Leigh Ann will be presenting to the Oregon Chapter of Society of American Foresters on fire recovery work.

She and Jeff will be assisting in two field learning days at Lakeside Farms for Henley middle school leading macroinvertebrate sampling.

Project Coordinator update: USFWS Lost River fencing will have fifth and final landowner's work completed next week. Two additional landowners were signed up for additional funding, but USFWS partners projects were competitive and Lost River fencing was deemed a lower priority with a plan to fund this work the following year.

Whiskey Creek had 11 BDAs installed and have shown a quick response with water in side channels and reaching into the floodplain raising the water table and increasing channel sinuosity. Approximately 100 willow cuttings were installed in late March. Beaver activity was evident after BDA installation. Staff discussed how it took years to gain this landowner's trust and board discussed how this can lead to trust from neighboring landowners.

Klamath Wing Watcher Wetland project will receive 177,297 in USFWS Partners funding for River Design Group to develop conceptual designs to increase wetland productivity and enhance seasonally flooded ag land. The county purchased ag land for wetland restoration and recreational opportunities as part of a larger Lake Ewauna effort. A proposal for 1,081,966 has been submitted for implementation. Klamath County Economic Development Association, USFWS, and KWP presented the project to County Commissioners. Water rights necessary for the project were discussed. It will be a flow through wetland other than when it needs to be drained for maintenance.

Mark's ongoing planning efforts and projects include Lost River working group, The Nature Conservancy/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, Teddy Powers Meadow Off-Channel Livestock Water, Lost River Local Advisory Committee (LAC), and Buck Camp LTPBR and Planting

Grants and Projects Administrator update: Jeff applied for a fencing/off stream water small grant. Wocus transplanting will occur in late May. Willow cuttings were harvested at BLM Wood River Wetland and installed at Swanson's on Lost River. Pollinator Plants have been ordered from Clearwater nursery and Jeff will be conducting site visits in May or June to assess previous survival.

USFS RAC Weeds funding is dependent on the Secure Schools Reauthorization Act which funds these grants and it has not been voted on by Congress. Once that happens, the RAC charter and committee will need to be approved. No additional funding likely until 2025. Mark is overseeing remaining \$5,000 in the Lost River watershed.

Jeff shared his takeaways from the tour of Mid-Klamath and Scott River Watershed Councils' project and from the OCEAN Connect conference which includes attendees from watershed councils, SWCDs, land trusts, NRCS, OWEB, and other conservation organizations.

Jeff attended a fundraising seminar at the conference. We are currently very reliant on USFWS partners program funding. Board discussed possibilities for diversifying fundraising and limitations in Klamath County. Board discussed possibly increasing our outreach in the community. We discussed if we want to continue only targeting individuals with outreach that will directly lead to projects or increase general public awareness about our organization with a newsletter and more outreach targeted at non-landowners. Increase tribal outreach and collaboration was discussed.

Executive Director Report:

The previous discussions led into Bill leading a discussion on new personnel options and how to grow the organization. The board discussed the risks of growing too fast and too slow. Options for a new position include someone focused on upland work to assist Leigh Ann, a grant writer, a person to work closer with the tribes on first foods and traditional ecological knowledge, and other potential ways to combine duties into a position.

Big Swing (Sprague River area, Upper Klamath Basin Agricultural Collaborative lead applicant) from USFWS BIL funding is approved and meetings are ongoing. Keno Stretch Wetland work has the final public meeting scheduled for May 13. Planning work is ongoing. Lower Klamath Lake Wetland work has USFWS BIL funding approved involving planning the reconnection of the Refuge to the Klamath River. The biochar filtration project will have new filters to be installed at Walker Farms in 2 weeks.

Bill attended the Renaissance tour of the Lower Klamath Lake area led by the Klamath Drainage District. He attended the ESA summit hosted by Klamath Irrigation District, Scott River/Mid-Klamath Restoration Tour, and OWEB Annual OCEAN Connect Conference.

The NRCS subcontract is ongoing but we have been given limited direction. Bill discussed the staffing issues at the NRCS and the new direction of the SWCD under new leadership. He is hopeful the SWCD is headed in the right direction and this will increase capacity of both the SWCD and local NRCS office.