

Klamath Watershed Partnership Board Meeting Minutes - October 24, 2024

Members Present: Ashton Greer, Anne Wenner, Matt Walter, Karl Wenner

Member Absent: Ryan Hartman, Dani Watson, Roger Smith

Quorum: Yes

Staff present: Bill Lehman, Jeff Kerber, Leigh Ann Vradenburg, Sam Fletcher

August minutes: Anne Wenner motioned to approve, Ashton Greer seconded.

Bank Statements: Bill went over the balances of Washington Federal Bank accounts, as well as the Edward Jones account. The Washington Federal accounts hold funds for operating, and the Edward Jones account is an investment account, which currently makes a 4.99% return, and is available to draw upon if needed, but at this point, KWP does not anticipate needing to do so.

Grants pursued: \$2.5+ million in grant and contract funding has been pursued during this quarter. These funding opportunities are coming from USFWS/BIL, OWEB, BLM RAC, USFS RAC, and ODF.

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. Leigh Ann received approximately half of the \$344,500 funding request from USFS RAC for a fuel break project in the Clover Creek area.

Project Manager Update: For the Fivemile Creek project in the Bootleg Fire area, approximately 15 acres have been prepared for reforestation which will take place this Spring. This included cutting and piling trees to be burned this winter. Any trees that were close enough to fall on the fencing were felled. It was discussed that trees are dying in many locations due not only to fire, but drought, heat, and beetles as well.

ODF has developed a stream layer for mapping, and Leigh Ann had over 500 “streams” surveyed on 1,231 survey points across the basin. Two-thirds of these surveys documented a lack of streams in areas where they were supposed to be, according to the ODF map.

KWP will be receiving \$1.2 million for coordination, and contracting work for site preparation and reforestation in the Bootleg Fire area from USFWS/ODF. Over 415,000 seedlings from Green Diamond will be planted on over 1,300 acres, helping 33 landowners in Klamath County.

In the Copperfield Fire area over 3,822 acres, 8 homes were lost. KWP treated 4 properties in this area in 2019 and 2020, and these homes were defensible and did survive the fire. Leigh Ann is working with landowners and operators for salvage logging in the area, and also pursuing additional grant funding to cover tree removal and reforestation for more landowners.

Project Coordinator Update: Mark was not present, but project updates were still presented by Bill and Jeff. “Big Swing” funding from UKBAC is being used to restore approximately 2.5 miles of Ish Tish Creek and design fish passage on two reservoirs. Adkins Engineering is under contract for the fish passages.

Mark is also working on a restoration project on Jack Creek to restore Spotted Frog habitat. The funding for this comes from the USFWS Partners Program, with OWEB funding for monitoring. Anabranch Solutions will be installing roughly 15 BDA's, and piezometers will also be installed to monitor the groundwater response.

There have been ongoing meetings for the Wing Watcher Wetland and the Lake Ewauna Wellness Project. This effort has broken into two sub-groups, a restoration group, which Mark is a part of, and a recreation group, which Jeff participates in. There was a project tour held on September 16th, with approximately 50 people, including members from the Klamath Downtown Association, Klamath Tribes, Modoc Nation, and community members. Karl brought up the idea of installing a Steven Svedes bird sculpture as a part of this project.

Mark's other ongoing projects include fall plantings at Patty's Garden and Buck Camp, the Poe Valley Annual Landowners Meeting, Lost River Working Group, Lower Klamath Lake Working Group, and attending the USFWS Private Lands Partners Day Conference.

Grants and Projects Administrator Update: The fencing for the OWEB Whitcomb project was completed in August, and a permanent trough was also installed. The only work remaining is for the landowner to install gates and a hydrant.

For the Wocus transplanting, a third property completed the permitting process in October. Jeff had been hoping for transplanting this fall, but between scheduling with partners and the weather and water levels still being too risky, the plan is to block off time next May/June for the wocus transplanting for the three properties.

Jeff has also been working on the Pollinator Project, there were plantings completed along Simpson Canyon/Old Fort Road, the Wayne Ranch along the Sprague River, and Lonesome Duck on the Williamson. The Swanson/Crystal Springs property will be planted next week. Mulch will be placed in the Spring, and this will use the majority of the funding. If necessary, a small amount of work will be performed in Fall of 2025 to complete this project.

Other ongoing and potential projects for Jeff include the Lake Ewauna Planting, Native Plant Society Lawn to Pollinator Program Small Grant, a CWMA Native Seed Packet Small Grant, exploring a Native Plant Partnership, and looking at partnering with the Wing Watchers on an education grant from the ODFW Conservation and Recreation Fund.

Executive Director Report: Bill presented the financials; Ann motioned to approve the budget, and Karl seconded the motion. A spreadsheet with all KWP's active grants was also presented. It was discussed that currently the board has no tribal representative. The board also discussed having another individual with an environmental science background, such as a professor from OIT could also be beneficial. They also discussed the potential of more student involvement with KWP, and potentially a scholarship. Ashton brought up examples of similar scholarships.

The "Big Swing"/UKBAC meetings have been focused on developing incentives for landowners.

The Wallowa Resources NRCS Subcontract is still in progress.

The Biochar Filtration Project at Walker Farms has been going very well. The team has seen significant reductions in phosphorus levels after biochar treatment. The next step will be testing biochar bags in canals, ponds, or other treatment wetland options.

RES has completed the Tule Smoke Basis of Design. The Lower Klamath Lake Working Group is working towards reconnecting the Klamath River to the refuge via canals, USFWS BIL funding has been approved for this. There is a public meeting on November 4th.

Karl and Bill both brought up the concern of limitations with NRCS and capacity.