



Harney County Watershed Council

Meeting Minutes – June 16 , 2020
HCWC office 242 Hwy 20 S meeting by Zoom
Hines, Oregon

Membership & Attendance:
(those in attendance will be highlighted)

Landowner positions:

Alvord –
Donner und Blitzen – Fred Otley
Guano –
Harney/Malheur Lakes – Joe Witzel
Silvies – **Rachel Beaubien**
Silver Creek – **Angie Ketscher**
Drewsey – Tyler Harris
Landowner General – **Pat Sharp**
Burns Paiute Tribe – **Brandon Haslick**

Concerned Citizen positions:

Burns/Hines – **Brenda Smith**
At Large – **John Thelen**
General - **Mark Owens**
Sportsman – **Ben Cate**
Education – Dustin Johnson
Environmental – Alexa Martinez
County Court – **Kristen Shelman**
Harney SWCD – **Shannon Brubacker**
BLM – **Jamie McCormack**

Advisory Positions

ODF & W – Dave Banks
Malheur National Wildlife – **Jeff Mackay**
NRCS – Zola Ryan
EOARC – Chad Boyd
OWRD – JR Johnson
USFS -

Staff

Coordinator – Karen Moon,

Guests – (on the phone)

Mission of the Harney County Watershed Council

Local economic and ecological prosperity depends on watershed health and the availability and quality of ground and surface water.

Therefore, the Harney County Watershed Council provides a framework of outreach, coordination and cooperation between private landowners and all interested parties to promote watershed conditions that benefit people and the environment. The Council works to improve watershed health through education, action plans based on scientific assessments and enhancement projects.



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The meeting was called to order at 5:35pm. Introductions were made using the Zoom conference call service. Chairman Brenda Smith asked each member to share a short update on what is new in each person's area that they represent.

Each member gave a short update.

Continuing project updates/action items

Board Development -

Update to our Strategic plan – The group reviewed the spreadsheet for stakeholder interviews from Adrienne. Members signed up to conduct the interviews. Karen will update the list of questions and the spreadsheet and email out to the group. Interviews should be conducted and completed by the end of July, hopefully before our July council meeting. Those not present at this evening's meeting will be contacted with the remaining names for stakeholders to be interviewed.

Budget – Karen gave a presentation on the budget that was presented. After discussion, a motion was made by Angie Ketscher to accept the 2020/2021 budget as presented. Rachel Beaubien seconded and the motion passed.

Community Based Water Planning update:

Chairman Brenda Smith gave an update on the planned meeting for CBWP to be held next Tuesday. There was discussion on being careful with meeting in person and making sure to follow social distancing policies.

Karen shared a printed report from Project Manager Holly Mondo.

Approximately 25 people attended both of Collaborative Zoom meetings (held on May 27, 2020), which allowed for four strategies to be drafted. Collaborative members supported a proposal to combine strategy one-pagers with a similar overarching themes; this led to great progress in the workflow and helped maintain forward momentum during these unique times. The next meeting has been scheduled for June 24, 2020 from 3:00-8:00pm at the Harney County Community Center (a call-in option will be available).

□ The Irrigator Group started meeting in April 2020 and has since been working on compiling relevant information to eventually share with irrigators in the area that are not currently involved in the Collaborative. Currently, they are gathering information on the following (in no particular order): 1) installing more efficient irrigation systems on every groundwater point of appropriation, including pivots, wheel lines, hand-lines, and flood systems fed by groundwater; 2) installing standardized water metering systems on all ground irrigation points of appropriation; 3) investigating growing alternative crops; 4) permanently retiring some water rights and; 5) temporarily retiring some water



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rights. The Irrigator Group's intent is to offer this information in the form of brochures that irrigators can utilize when making decisions in reducing their agricultural groundwater use. The Irrigator Group's information is shared with the Coordinating Committee on a regular basis to ensure their efforts run parallel with the Collaborative's. They welcome any and all feedback from Collaborative members.

□ The Ecological Working Group is continuing to make progress on their Step 2 and 3 drafts. Drafters participated in an "accountability call" to get feedback on their current drafts as well as ask for resources. The next EWG meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, June 30 from 11:00am-1:30pm via Zoom.

□ The sixth meeting of the Harney Valley CREP technical team met in a Zoom meeting on June 8, 2020. The meeting was started with a review of state budget conditions. A conference call between, FSA Oregon, FSA Washington D.C., OWEB, and Mark Owens occurred to clarify changes brought about by the 2018 Farm Bill. The purpose of the call was to explain the Harney Basin CREP concept and learn about changes in the 2018 Farm Bill. A summary of the concept for a Harney Valley Groundwater CREP was sent to FSA for initial comments. A proposal was made to reduce the acreage goal to 15,000 and simplify the incentive structure. The critical elements for a successful program appear to be the irrigated rental rate and the payment for voluntary cancellation of a water right. There was a discussion of what level of payment it would take to engage irrigators. The effort to balance sufficient incentive level with non-federal funding availability was explored.

□ Minor update to the WaterSmart grant: The Nature Conservancy (TNC) has a grant agreement in-hand from the Bureau of Reclamation and are moving forward with developing an RFP. TNC is still waiting to hear from the Water Resources Commission whether additional funding for the feasibility study will be available and received. (As a reminder: way back in pre-COVID times, the OWRD Feasibility Grant Review Team recommended TNC's proposal for funding. However, the Commission needs to sign off on that recommendation, and with the economic hit from COVID, there is some uncertainty on whether we'll actually receive the funding. Anyway, all that to say: TNC is going to start pulling together an RFP for a third party to evaluate the legal and technical barriers & opportunities for a voluntary groundwater market, but they are in a holding pattern until we hear about the OWRD grant moneys. We need to know what our actual budget will be before writing the scope of work into the RFP).

New Business

There was no new business this evening.

Minutes: Minutes for the May meeting were reviewed. Jamie McCormack moved to accept the minutes as presented. Pat Sharp seconded and the motion passed.



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Financials for the Council were reviewed. Jamie McCormack moved to approve the financial report, Pat Sharp seconded and the motion passed.

Items for next agenda on July 21, 2020 include:

Meeting adjourned at 6:45pm

Karen Moon, Coordinator