**CWMA Meeting Minutes**

**September 10, 2025**

**USDA Service Center**

Present: Jamie Cronin and Jim Campbell, Harney County (HC); Randy Wiest, Oregon Department of State Lands (DSL); Aaron Johnston of the High Desert Partnership (HDP); Sam Cisney of Bureau of Land Management (BLM); Jessi Brunson of U.S. Forest Service (USFS); Karen Moon of Harney County Watershed Council (HCWC); Tyler Goss of County Weed Management Agency (CWMA); Jason Kesling and Barbara Pearson of Harney Soil & Water Conservation District (HSWCD).

Present, remote: Bonnie Rasmussen of Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA)

Jason Kesling began the meeting at 1:30 pm.

Action Items:

1. Meeting Minutes: Approval of the June 2025 minutes were delayed until today because a tour was held instead of a meeting in July and there weren’t enough members present for a quorum in August. Minutes were taken for August even though there weren’t enough members present to qualify for a meeting. Jim moved and Sam seconded approval of both meeting minutes. None were opposed, and the motion passed.
2. Financials: Jason indicated there had been an error in the report for SOWR with salary and this has been corrected. The 2024 Forest Service funding has been added to the report. Reimbursements will be recorded in future reports. Jason said that he bills quarterly. SOWR II remains to be moved to admin since that contract is over, pending approval. Jesse moved and Jim seconded approval of the financial report and moving the SOWR II funds to Admin. The motion passed.

Project Progress and Updates:

Tyler said that the ODFW Access and Habitat (A&H) grant is in progress. Is it currently going through the legislature. Regarding Salt Cedar, Jim and Tyler went to the plant site and sprayed all they could, some of the affected area was still underwater. Jim said that the infestation wasn’t quite as bad as anticipated. Four to six thousand acres were treated in six hours. The herbicide and process used for treatment this summer as well as plans for 2026 treatment were discussed. Tyler will complete the report today. ODFW still has A&H funding to treat the area in the south that is still underwater.

Bonnie Rasmussen joined the meeting at 1:39 pm

Tyler provided other updates, including Title 2: 1100 acres will be treated in Riley. He discussed annual grass treatments for the year. People have come into the office with weeds to be identified and what treatment would be best.

Jessi said that funds will be coming in soon for Title II. The Oregon Water Enhancement Board (OWEB) gave money for fires, which went to the watershed council. Noxious weeds are being identified in private land for this and grants will be written accordingly. Karen Moon said the Watershed Council will advise CWMA to ensure there won’t be double treatment. Jason asked if after the information is put together if there will be a bid package together to cover treatments.

BLM update: Sam discussed aerial spraying. A contractor is doing treatments in Solomon, Sage Hen, Falls Creek, and Telephone fire sites. Plug planting, juniper treatments are also included.

Aaron said the HDP is helping with juniper treatment. Sam said she is having problems tracking down answers on funding. The BLM is also working on Russian olive treatments, one on land owned by Chance Peila. Jim said his property has been treated. Tyler requested Sam send a map with polygon treatment areas.

Rejuvra update: Tyler and Drew took the herbicide representatives out to test sites. The Rejuvra company will pay for additional treatment, and proposed that one reason the chemical didn’t work was because the thatch layer was too thick and dry. There was further discussion about the test site, treatment details, what worked and what didn’t work. Harney County and other locations were compared. Jim felt moisture was a factor. Treatment is planned following the first rain in spring, late April-May. Tyler said an herbicide drone will reapply herbicide at the Lamb Ranch toward the end of this month.

Another herbicide attempt will be in applying at a different rate and combining Rejuvra with Plateau at the Miller test site. There was further discussion regarding timing and application methods.

Update on Forest Service: Jessi asked Tyler if he had worked on the dozer line surveys. Tyler said he had not. She said she will assign this to an intern. USFS will have boots on the ground with other dozer lines. During the surveys Bull Thistle and Hound’s Tongue were identified.

Sam asked Jessi about Bull Thistle. Jim thought it will go away on its own if the ground is undisturbed. Elk and cattle will eat it. There was discussion on various thistles and treatment methods.

Jessi brought some weeds for an identification exercise. One was Ventenata and the other a native grass that looks similar. She also brought handouts that provided further description. Weed treatments were discussed as well as where it can be found in Harney County (the 41 Road, Mill Creek, everywhere). Jim said the weed really likes drainage areas. It is now found in areas once believed to not be prone to invasives. Jessi said it can be found throughout the Ochoco. Tyler said it may have spread due to the recent flooding.

Another plant was shown, Potentilla Recta (Sulfur Cinquefoil). Jessi said she wasn’t sure how often it is found. It has a pale yellow flower. There is also a native plant that looks similar. A field trip for next spring was discussed to see the plant during the blooming phase.

Meeting participants reviewed the plants she brought attempting to discern noxious weeds or natives. Jessi said that she often has to get out of the pickup while she is driving in an area to identify Ventenata. She was thanked for leading the exercise

Tyler brought some pressed some plants he had obtained during the July tour (African Rue and Rush Skeleton) for meeting participants. Herbicide treatment of those plants were discussed.

NEW BUSINESS;

Contractor work: Tyler said there have been some conflicts of interest with some projects. He wanted to bring to group’s attention before it got out of hand. Both contractors who worked on recent projects are members of the CWMA and on the board. The CWMA has awarded projects to both contractors. Since they are on CWMA board, are they benefiting from favoritism? Whenever he is asked about a potential conflict of interest Tyler said he provides the names of both contractors (Jesse Barnes and Jim Campbell). Both are treated as any other contractor and submit bids. Tyler asked if the group has any questions or comments about this?

Jason suggested a declaration of a conflict of interest be submitted by the contractors and allow the board to decide. He said this would let public know of conflict, but he doesn’t know if it’s a requirement.

Randy asked if CWMA has open solicitation, and Tyler said yes—bid information is put on the HSWCD website and on Facebook. Bids are open to the public. Randy said if the CWMA has followed the required steps then to continue on. Sam asked about the CWMA’s appearance during the process. Tyler said the meeting minutes can be pulled if anyone has a concern. The issue is one other counties experience.

Bonnie spoke as a member of the state weed board and said she thought an official statement needs to be read into the record when a contractor abstains when a decision is made and this would be anytime it pertains to a job or grant that it be read into the minutes.

Tyler asked if there an official declaration, and Jason said yes. The agency doesn’t really vote on how grants are decided, but awarded contracts, Tyler said if the project is under $3500 he still asks two contractors. There was another comment that the CWMA isn’t an entity that votes on these projects; that would be up to the HSWCD.

There was additional discussion on transparency and solutions. Sam asked about the development of certain projects. Karen felt as long as projects are discussed with two contractors. She felt as long as it’s declared. Jason suggested the agency be more proactive in getting out to the public, “A declaration is pretty standard.”

It was suggested the bid process be put on agenda the same time when discussed with Tyler—what weed problems exist in the county? Jason and Tyler decide where funds are directed. Bonnie suggested the agency be open about the number of contractors and that they work reasonable cost.

Tyler said the agency has an outreach event for next meeting. He asked the group to provide more ideas of public outreach, something new. Get the CWMA back to where people are pitching in or find an event to fit in.

The CWMA held a scavenger hunt at the recent Harney County Fair. There were six or seven participants. The hunt will change somewhat next year. Most participants did a good job in identifying the weeds. Overall the fair booth went well this year. Many people came to engage. Yoyos and squeezy miniature basketballs branded with CWMA name and phone number were distributed. Jim said the booth was in the best spot with many passing by it. Tyler said Deschutes County wants to remodel and trails and he asked the group what weeds from Harney County should be displayed.

Tyler said he took the Weed ID booklet to Shepherd Graphics. The booklet is no longer in publication but he was given a PDF for reprint. Other counties and the need for their own booklets, funding and outreach were discussed.

Regarding SOWR III, the subcommittee met yesterday. There was a consensus to reorganize and put the overall goal into phases. One and two were completed, and to subdivide for the Forest Fringe. This project is from Highway 20 the county boundary, broken into four blocks. Phase II was $800K with 20% administrative cost and covers the Double O Road to Buchanan. Tyler said he will create a map and distribute to CWMA members. The BLM will give areas it can work in regarding juniper cutting, etc. It is now a biennial or annual program to apply for funds every year. Oregon putting a zin tax. Aaron said there is $7M in program. The tax will provide consistent revenue but in smaller amounts. He said, “We will ask quite a bit less this time but we’re looking down the road for continually funding.” Applications will be out in September. Aaron said there is another project area is in Frenchglen for mapping and fuels treatment. Yesterday’s meeting goal was to narrow down locations for continued work.

Jason asked the other agencies if they were conducting work in those areas to let HSWCD/CWMA know. Randy said the DSL will be working in Riley and north of Burns. Tyler—north of Highway 20 in county, Fire resilience of any sort. Aaron said the HDP has been partnering with the BLM regarding logging roads.

Jason said the NRCS created the Forest Fringe, and it was designed to help out the communities that have more landowners and sage grouse. The Joint Chiefs program was also discussed. An application to that project was not submitted due to the 2024 fires.

Next month: NRCS reporting, Rejuvra project.

There were no public comments.

Meeting adjourned at 3:15 pm.