

Fifteenmile Watershed Council

Fifteenmile Creek and Tributaries Eightmile, Fivemile & Ramsey Creek

Wasco County SWCD 2325 River Road Suite 3, The Dalles OR, 97058 Phone: 541-296-6178 x102 Fax: 541-296-7868

Minutes

Tuesday April 16th, 2019 at 6:00 pm

Barlow Ranger Station, Dufur OR

Attendees:

Phil Kaser, *Co-Chair*

Monte Wasson, *Member*

Shilah Olson, *District Manager*

Abbie Forrest, *Watershed Coordinator*

Erin Costello, *DEQ*

Jim Olson, *Member*

Kirk Cook, *ODA*

Scott Oviatt, *USDA NRCS*

Kathryn Arnedt, *USFS*

Dan Esposito, *NRCS*

Ellen Hammond, *ODA*

Theresa Debardelaben, *ODA*

Rashawn Tama, *USDA*

David Brewer, *Member*

Charles Remington

Smita Mehta, *DEQ*

Katie Pierson, *ODFW*

Martin Underhill, *Member*

Dennis Costello

Kevin Masterson, *DEQ*

Bill Hammel, *Member*

NRCS SNOTEL Snow Pack Report

Scott Oviatt, USDA NRCS attended the meeting to provide attendees with the latest snowpack report. Snowpack is the snow water equivalent, and for our area, has been behind the rest of the state all year. Statewide, the SNOTEL snowpack is 129% of normal. Most of the state has anywhere from 111% - 225% of normal snowpack, as of April 16th. Our area, the Hood, Sandy and Lower Deschutes basin is at 91% of normal. Scott shared maps of the test sites, the percent of normal for those locations and information regarding elevation. There was also a graph with the Basin Snowpack Index. This graph showed historic snowpack range, current snowpack, as well as normal snowpack. Scott pointed out the historic low, that was recorded in 2015 when the basin was in a "snow drought".

Scott explained that the rains here lower in elevation, have meant snowfall in the mountains. The snowfall in the last 48 hours has significantly helped with an uptick in snowpack that will also help with increased streamflow's, when the melt off begins. Scott also shared the latest statewide SNOTEL precipitation. As of April 16th, the state has an average of 101% of normal. Fall was very warm with relatively low streamflow's without any fall rains. Like the snowpack, the Hood, Sandy and Lower Deschutes basin also trails the rest of the state with a water year to date precipitation of 87% of normal. Scott shared maps with streamflow volume forecasts for the basin as well as an OWRD Real Time Hydrographics Data chart showing Fifteenmile Creek at Pine Creek from October 2017 to April 2019. Historically the mean daily flow at these times were below 100 cfs, where as this year the mean daily flow is between 100 and 450 cfs.

Along with information on this year's snowpack and precipitation, Scott shared the good news that there is a good chance the High Prairie SNOTEL site will be installed this year. The High Prairie site will be more representative of the Fifteenmile basin and provide better information going forward for predicted streamflow and snowpack. The goal will be to have real-time flow data on Fifteenmile Creek in relation to the High Prairie site. The goals of the new site would include working with OWRD to incorporate stream flow data into a statistical forecast. NRCS is trying to stay ahead of drought with predictions that are more representative at the local level. Most droughts have been declared long after the drought has been happening which in turn, doesn't allow much planning, especially through USDA programs. Scott also reviewed the climate outlook for temperature and precipitation.

Pesticide Stewardship Partnership (PSP) 2018 Monitoring Results

Kirk Cook, ODA and Kevin Masterson DEQ partnered this meeting to present the 2018 PSP monitoring results. Kirk led the presentation providing a quick overview of the program with background information on the steps to the partnership as well as a map of other pesticide partnerships across the state. Kevin discussed the monitoring locations, pesticides that were analyzed and the 2018 results. Fifteenmile had 4 detections, only one of those exceeding the benchmark for the entire 2018 sampling season. Nonregulatory benchmarks for aquatic life in water quality are set by the EPA office of pesticides. Kirk shared a handout that showed the location, samples, and results with the council.

For the 2018 monitoring season there were 15 water sampling events in Wasco County: weekly from late March through Mid-April, weekly from late May through the end of July, and two sampling events in September. There are approximately 130 insecticides, herbicides, and fungicides and breakdown products that are analyzed. The rest of the presentation shared graphs stating the total

number of pesticide detections in the Wasco basin from the start of the program through 2018. The overall trend has been very positive with a consistently decreasing number of detections. Kevin reviewed detection frequencies of pesticide analytes, insecticides, and maximum concentration of detections.

The summary of findings for Fifteenmile Creek were all positive. There were no insecticides detected. Four herbicides were detected at a downstream location at very low levels relative to the benchmark. There were also no detections of any pesticides at Dufur Park and several significant reduction successes. Moving forward Dufur Park monitoring will be discontinued. ODA will provide a report to wrap up the success of the PSP program in Wasco County, and activity and move toward maintenance monitoring. Phil asked how long the breakdown product from Roundup lasts? Keven said he was not sure of the half life of Roundup in surface water.

Fifteenmile Sediment Studies & Recommended Next Steps

Erin Costello, DEQ has reviewed the studies the DEQ, ODA, USFS and others have done in the Fifteenmile basin over the years and summarized the results in a report which also includes recommended next steps for monitoring sediment in the basin. Erin provided information on the project background. Fifteenmile Creek Watershed is on the State of Oregon 303(d) list of water quality-limited waterbodies for sediment impairments. Many restoration projects and best management practices have been implemented in the watershed to address sediment impairments. The goal of having these studies analyzed was to answer two questions: Have improvements in sediment conditions been detected? And how should future monitoring and data analysis proceed in order to detect change. Erin's presentation summarizes these findings.

Erin presented a monitoring timeline which shows the discrepancy in sampling methods in relation to the year the samples were collected. She also shared diagrams with details showing the difference in the sampling methods. The three methods that were used were Pebble Counts, Relative Bed Stability and Macroinvertebrate sampling. She explained that not all habitat samples were collected with these three methods. More specific sites that were once good are not good representations of the stream to compare to now. Erin shared maps of where each sampling method took place throughout the watershed. She also explained the data analysis through DEQ's approach and the results for each method.

The answers to the original study questions were as follows: 1) Have watershed wide improvements in sediment conditions in response to agricultural BMP implementation been detected? No, but anecdotal evidence suggests conditions have improved. 2) How should future monitoring and data analysis proceed in order to detect sediment condition change? There are several options. The council discussed these options and heard updates from the Monitoring Meeting that was conducted prior to the watershed council meeting. Ellen said moving forward, DEQ's recommendation is to use the 2015-2016 data as our baseline. We will move forward with correct methods of data collection, and over time we will be able to detect a reduction in sediment. A new 303(d) list will be coming out this summer and the monitoring group will work to try and have Fifteenmile delisted. Ellen asked if the council has any interest in further sediment monitoring?

Jim moved the council discontinue interest in the sediment monitoring.

Ellen added, if the council is interested in getting Fifteenmile delisted for sediment, other agencies still need to see the monitoring taking place. Discussion ensued regarding continuing to monitor and if it would help the council later on. Members also discussed how Fifteenmile gets delisted. As well as what will these results eventually show? The council came to the consensus that the information from the sediment monitoring is still of interest and may be valuable. Jim's motion died for a lack of a second. The council agreed they see value in the monitoring if it will help the council/Fifteenmile get delisted and if it will have some sort of benefit to the council later on.

Review 2019-21 Work Plan, Updated By-laws & MOU

Abbie distributed copies of the updated By-laws, recently approved MOU with the SWCD as well as the upcoming biennium's watershed council workplan. Abbie walked council members through the changes that have been made to the By-laws to more accurately reflect how the councils do business. She also reviewed the updated MOU with the SWCD. Once the council reviewed the By-laws and MOU members were directed to review the workplan. Abbie took the time to highlight all projects that the Fifteenmile watershed council is directly involved in, as well as tasks that are requirements from OWEB to stay compliant.

Updates and Announcements

FAST and Instream Lease 2019

Phil announced Tatiana will be moving on and leaving the District. Shilah added that her last day will be April 25th. The previous FAST Coordinator Denise Stetson has been hired back and will have an official start date of May 1st. Abbie handed to council members a letter from Tatiana to Phil and the rest of the council, thanking them for being a wonderful group to work with and making FAST a successful program. Abbie also handed out an update from Tatiana explaining the funding for instream leasing is not finalized however the project was recommended for funding. Funding won't be official until late April. The second update was for

the FAST program. Tatiana has been working on contracting and will do the best she can to have all contracts complete before her departure date. Email alerts for FAST will start May 1st.

Fifteenmile MUS Pilot Project & DEQ 319 Grant

Abbie announced that her and Shilah went on a field trip with the Walla Walla Basin Watershed Council in Milton Freewater to tour Underground Storage projects that have been implemented over the past several years. It was a beneficial field trip and they both felt like they have good resources moving forward for Fifteenmile's pilot project.

Abbie stated she was working on funding for the pilot project through DEQ's 319 grant, but later found out Fifteenmile is not in this grant cycles focus area. Abbie will continue to work the Denise and apply for funding during the Fall grant cycle.

Next meeting is scheduled for September 10th at 6:00pm at the Barlow Ranger Station in Dufur.

Meeting adjourned at 7:35.

Minutes Prepared by Abbie Forrest.