

Jefferson County Agricultural Drought Resiliency Group

DRC Guest Speaker, Update on Workgroups, etc.

Monday, November 27, 2023; 8:30-10:30am

www.jeffswcd.org/managing-for-drought

Vision: *Jefferson County agriculture will thrive by adapting successfully to drought, and will support its people, animals, economy, environment, and culture.*

Group Mission: *to help agriculture create a sustainable, livable future for Jefferson County by adapting successfully to drought with support from Deschutes Basin stakeholders. We promote innovative solutions to proactively improve watershed health and increase the effective management of water.*

Role of Group: *track and guide progress towards Vision and Mission*

I. Participants

Ally Steinmetz (MDWC)

Brad Klann (JCSWCD Board & producer)

Elaine Cornick (Culver land steward)

Ellen Hammond (JCSWCD)

Gen Hubert (DRC)

Gordon Jones (OSU Extension)

Jeremy Austin (COL)

Josh Bailey (NUID)

Lisa Seales (DRC)

Mark Wunsch (Jeff Co Commission & producer)

Rob Galyen (JCSWCD Board & producer)

Staci Merkt (JCSWCD)

Tom Osborne (BPA)

Travis Ralls (Back40 Productions)

Trevor Derstine (producer)

Jeremy Austin from Central Oregon Landwatch (COL) is new to our process. He described COL's goals and interest in Jefferson County agriculture.

Attendance was low due to having to change the meeting time a week before the meeting and the wrong day of the week on the agenda.

II. Potential changes to Vision and Mission wording

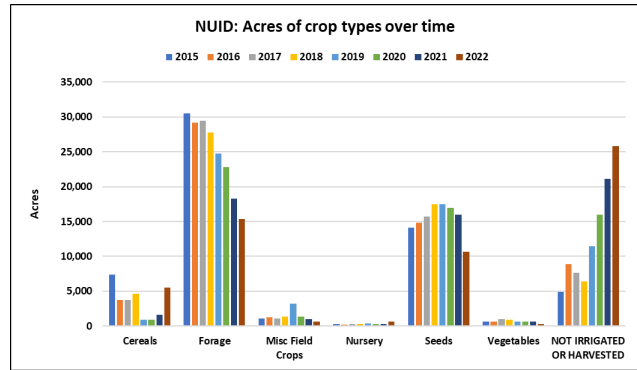
The Group discussed the following suggested changes:

1. 'Drought' to 'Water Scarcity' to better describe the situation in Jefferson County.
 - a. Comments: 'scarcity' sounds short-term, while 'drought' suggests longer-term'. 'Drought is actually an intermittent process'. 'Drought is driving the water scarcity'. 'The Group was formed to address drought'.
 - b. Decision: Stick with the original and revisit in the future if needed.
2. 'Stakeholder' to a different word because *The term's historical meaning derived from the process of colonizers "staking a claim" to land that had been home to indigenous populations for thousands of years. Because of this history, the term "stakeholder" is a continuing reminder of a horrific past, particularly for tribal members.*
 - a. Comments: 'could use "partners" instead'. "'Partners" is not specific enough'. 'We mean people with a stake in Deschutes Basin water'. It was also the first time anybody in the meeting had heard this concern.

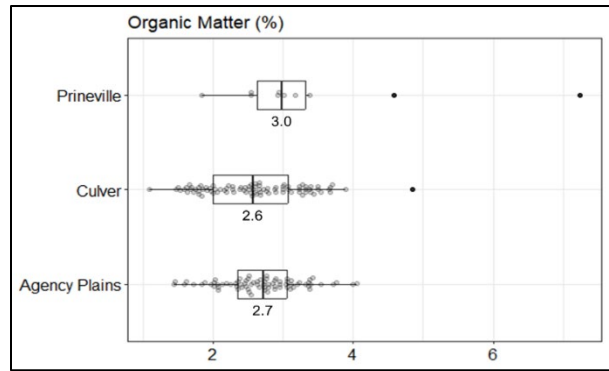
- b. Decision: Stick with the original as the word says what we intend. Can revisit in future as needed.

III. Data

1. Ag Census Follow-up: Crook and Deschutes were both about 10-12% below the state average for reporting in 2017 and 2022; *Jefferson County was 20-25% below both years.*
2. NUID Crop Reports:
 - o Suggestion to clarify title of 'not irrigated or harvested'



3. Organic Matter: proprietary data from COSI, aggregated by location. Fields sampled in March for the last 3 crop years. 197 total fields, 77 Agency, 92 Culver, 10 Prineville. Sampling is biased towards fields in a seed crop rotation over primarily forage systems, but not sure how much difference that would make in interpretation. Each point on the graph is an individual field, numbers are median values.



IV. Guest Speakers: Deschutes Resources Conservancy (DRC) activities that support JeffCo Ag

1. Outreach (Lisa Seales)

- “Raise the Deschutes” seminars. The recordings are on DRC’s website and can be shared.
 - o Next seminar is Dec 14th with Jason Gritzner specifically related to drought, comparing and contrasting Deschutes and Crooked.
 - o **Wants to hear from Drought Group on seminar topic ideas such as myths that need to be busted, understanding the groundwater-driven system that is the Deschutes, etc.**
- Also worked with North Unit on a couple field trips: toured Wickiup Reservoir and Fox Hollow Farm. Great hands-on opportunity, popular, was not recorded.

2. Collaboration (Lisa Seales)

The DRC is central to the Deschutes Basin Water Collaborative, which is working to support species, account for other water uses, and have enough water for NUID to irrigate.

3. Trout Creek irrigation water (Gen Hubert)

25-30% of spawning steelhead in the Deschutes Basin use Trout Creek. DRC is working with one landowner in Ashwood to do a forbearance system where they pay them to turn water off at a certain time of year to keep more water in Degner Canyon for fish holding in there. They also have an OWEB Stakeholder Outreach grant to work with landowners on water rights transfers or getting them to stop watering sooner. Trying to come up with something that works for both landowners and steelhead. Hoping for a successful voluntary approach. The idea is to target landowners above Degner but also hopes of working with downstream landowners like R2. The SWCD has the most experience working with landowners out there, but DRC is starting to dip their toes into the issue.

4. Water Banking (Lisa Seales)

Their leasing program and water mitigation program fall under umbrella of water banking program. Squishy governance structure for how water is used in the basin. Hope is to avoid pitfalls that people get nervous about when talking about leasing/banking. Has had WaterSMART grant to build this governance structure. Identifying needs and wants of different stakeholders to build a program that everybody will want.

- Hoping to have meeting in early 2024 to talk about the bank itself and programs that could fall under the Deschutes Water Bank. Still in development.
- Thinking about how to move water in a way that prevents speculation. One of these ideas was selling water to NUID users during irrigation season (so that NUID could then give water back to upper basin in non-irrigation season).

V. Planning

All workgroups have met at least once since the last quarterly Drought meeting. Ellen is needing information to finish out the first version of the Drought Plan.

The workgroups may identify mini-workgroups to dive into specified Tools, like Agrivoltaics did.

Concern about allocating our resources (money, staff, etc) to get the biggest bang for the investment. Need to prioritize our Tools amongst all the Workgroups so we can carefully allocate resources for the biggest bang. For instance, should we focus on inspiring people to support pumping from LBC instead of other less useful Tools? How about cloudseeding vs effective weed control: which will provide a bigger return on the investment of resources to implement the Tool?

A. Workgroups

1. Water Availability (Chair = Josh Bailey)
 - a. Additional tools
 - i. Change HCP
 - ii. Drill wells along canals
 1. Gen provided some information at the meeting and then sent Ellen information after the meeting that she forwarded to both the Availability and Croplands Workgroups.
 2. It is getting harder to drill wells, especially with the new rulemaking process

<https://www.oregon.gov/owrd/programs/GWWL/GW/Pages/Groundwater-Rulemaking.aspx>). Gen suggested waiting to address this Tool after the rules are written.

- b. Priorities = LBC Pumping and making UB IDs more efficient through piping. NUID and DRC are leads
 - c. Not recommended tools = Change HCP, increase NUID water right, make NUID not the junior WR holder
 - d. Meetings
 - i. No more unless there is a reason. We may reconvene to discuss groundwater pumping after the rules are written.
 - ii. Group provides support via
 - 1. Support LBC pumping plant (letters of support).
 - 2. Need funding for NUID Watershed Plan
 - 3. Need to support COID and AID conservation efforts
 - 4. Support DBBC projects and agenda
 - e. Additional Comments
 - i. Mark brought up moratorium on water rights even for new housing. Will be lots of discussion in Feb/March with the legislature and governor.
 - ii. Gordon suggested making a mini-video that addresses canal piping.
 - iii. Water banking: 5 years of non-use is a hurdle. Leasing counts as a beneficial use but marketing your water to North Unit not considered beneficial use. Hoping to remove this regulatory hurdle.
2. Croplands (Chair = Gordon Jones)
- a. Priorities = IWM, cover cropping, reduced tillage, weed control, diversify cropping
 - b. Data Needs: didn't get that far
 - c. Meetings: trying to schedule next meeting for early December.
3. Ranchlands (Chair = Ally Steinmetz)
- a. Priorities
 - i. Bundling juniper control with reseeding, weed control, and periodic burning
 - ii. Targeted grazing to increase forage
 - iii. Improving riparian vegetation
 - iv. Reconnecting streams to floodplains, capturing seeps for livestock water
 - b. Data Needs
 - i. Locations of recent and planned juniper cutting projects and which 'bundling' practices were included
 - ii. Map of streamside conditions (working with ODA on potential metrics)
 - iii. Indicators of rangeland/soil health (working with NRCS on ideas)
 - c. Meetings
 - i. In a few months after Ally et al. have created a map of the juniper projects.
4. Agrivoltaics (Current Chair = Ellen Hammond)

- a. Priorities: research! Flyer to go out to Pacific Power customers letting them know of funding opportunities for solar for irrigation pumps AND soliciting volunteers for research on agrivoltaics
- b. Research Needs: lots
- c. Meetings: sporadically attended.
- d. Comment: DRC participated in the water section on this agrivoltaics leasing guidebook: <https://farmlandinfo.org/publications/solar-leasing-a-guide-for-agricultural-landowners-in-the-pacific-northwest/>

5. General Public Outreach (Current Chair = Ellen Hammond)

- a. Priorities
 - i. Video: we couldn't get sound in the conference room to review the video and most people had watched it anyway already. Gordon had some great ideas for shorter videos and will discuss with Outreach Group.
 - ii. Logo: 2 concepts were provided to the Group. Preference was for something similar to the SWCD logo. However, Travis suggested we solicit ideas from multiple graphic designers. Ellen will get more info on how to proceed.



- b. Meetings
 - i. Next meeting is December 6, 10am-noon, COAREC

B. Funding update

Still using ODA funds. In future will be able to piggyback some with the Pesticide Stewardship Partnership activities and funding. There is also a recent grant opportunity that Ellen and Staci are pursuing .

C. Drought Plan (due December 31)

The first half of the Plan is essentially done. Now Ellen has to fill in the following gaps identified by OWEB in their November review of the draft Plan. After she has done so, she will run the draft by the Workgroup Chairs and then all Group participants for review. Mark W offered to have the County Commission provide their signatures of support; Ellen will check with OWEB if that would be helpful since we may end up with a time crunch for finalization.

1. Feasible strategies to meet the goal and next steps to implement them
2. Unrealistic actions and describe why they are not recommended
3. Performance measures to track success of implementation
4. Highlights from the Matrix
5. Implementation Plans from the Workgroups

Matrix: The Group agreed that the purpose of the Matrix was to help the Group think about the Tools, capture key points, and provide a larger scale view of the Tools. As such, it is an internal document and its contents could be easily misconstrued by someone not familiar with the conversations. Ellen will share the structure and 'Current Focus Tools' with the public in the Plan and presentations and can share the actual Matrix with interested people as appropriate.

Trevor suggested adding two columns to the Matrix: 'Timeframe' and 'What Depends on What'. These will get fleshed out by the Workgroups.

IV. Next Group Meeting (February)

- a. February 12-29, M-Th, noon-2pm at Airport
- b. Doodle for date
- c. Guest speaker = ODFW: what do the rivers need to support species, e.g. higher flows, beaver dams, ?? Suggestion to ask Jerry George.