

Jefferson County Agricultural Drought Resiliency Group UPDATE in lieu of meeting

October 27, 2024

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*

Due to 3 SWCD staff changes, Ellen Hammond has supported other SWCD programs and has not spent enough time on Drought items to call a meeting. Our next meeting WILL BE January/February 2025.

Workgroups

1. Water Availability

a. Current Focus Tools

1. Pipe Upper Basin Irrigation Districts

- COID has received \$25M Federal Funding to help piping their PB Canal.
- AID, LPID, OID are all actively working on conservation projects this winter that will benefit NUID.

2. Pump from Lake Billy Chinook

- Appraisal study has been completed and work on the Feasibility Analysis is being conducted.

3. Pipe NUID

- NUID has awarded Segment 2 of our Lateral 43 Pipeline project to Taylor Northwest, and work is currently being completed. This project will install approximately 6 miles of HDPE pipe, ranging in size from 63" to 6". Work on this segment will be completed late March 2025.

4. Water bank for seasonal transfers

- DRC and partners continue to work toward development of a basin-wide water bank. At present, DRC and its consultants are asking irrigation districts about their ability to participate in a water banking program in 2025. Any potential transactions will be processed this winter and effective in the 2025 irrigation season. Unfortunately, DRC and NUID did not receive NRCS funding for cover cropping linked to fallowed land enrolled in a water bank. However, partners continue to explore options to fund a cover cropping program and intend to move forward with all water bank plans otherwise. Several potential policy changes are being proposed for the 2025 legislative session that have the potential to impact water banking, and partners are engaging in that process to promote the use of water banking as a tool in the Deschutes Basin.

5. Cloudseeding

NUID has received \$75K to conduct cloud seeding operations. Additional work is being conducted to secure match (\$75K) funding for the project.

b. Progress

As more conservation projects are being completed this winter, more conserved water will be generated to help NUID meet future HCP requirements. We continue to advocate for Federal funding for these projects and will exhaust every resource available to us.

2. Croplands

a. Current Focus Tools

1. Diversify crops
2. Increase irrigation efficiency
3. Soil health
4. Annual Weeds

b. Progress

1. OSU has hired new manager of COAREC: Dr. Steve Culman. Ellen met with him, introduced him to the Drought Plan, explained the water situation, and requested assistance with research and outreach. Dr. Culman will be an excellent partner for moving forward.
2. OSU hopes to have their new Irrigation Specialist at COAREC by December 1.
3. Michael Curri is working with multiple farmers to test software for remote sensors. He expects to submit a proposal for funding more precision agriculture in Jefferson County.
4. SWCD submitted a proposal for piping mainline to support a conversion from flood to sprinkler; we are also in the process of writing a proposal to enlarge a pond to capture the rest of the Lateral 64 spill.
5. NRCS and the SWCD are planning a Soil Health Workshop this winter; tentative date is January 15, 2025.
6. Weed Program Coordinator (Ryan Brunner) will be busy this winter at annual meetings and will hold two in-the-field 'meetings' this winter/early spring in Agency Plains and Culver areas. Stay tuned!
7. Non-progress: DRC had submitted an application for USDA RCPP funds with SWCD, NRCS, NUID, and OSU Extension as partners for several million dollars to help NUID irrigators with cover cropping and irrigation upgrades. The proposal was just turned down for reasons remaining to be seen, but DRC is working on alternative ideas.

3. Ranchlands

a. Current Focus Tools

1. Bundling juniper control with reseeding, weed control, and periodic burning
2. Targeted grazing to improve rangeland health
3. Vegetated streamsides
4. Reconnecting streams to floodplains

5. Annual weeds

b. Progress

Progress has been slow this summer as we have all been busy. However...

1. Ally Steinmetz (MDWC) submitted a grant to improve conditions on Upper Willow Creek, including supporting beavers and reconnecting streams to floodplains.
2. EPA paid for a neighbor meeting in Ashwood on October 24 to discuss weeds and less toxic methods of weed control, in addition to range management principles. Almost 20 landowners attended, along with a dozen technical providers. Attendees were enthusiastic and requested annual meetings, especially on-site where weed specialists could show landowners how to identify and control weeds. Interest was also expressed in learning about virtual fencing and other technological advances, grazing, and juniper control. The SWCD will be submitting a proposal to ODA's Weed Program that includes outreach and potential cost-share for Rejuvra.
3. SWCD is hiring a Conservation Planner who will spend half their time on CREP Planning. CREP (Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program) focuses on fencing livestock out of streams where appropriate to improve streamside vegetation and bank stability.
4. Ally and Ellen will get cracking on how to prioritize watersheds outside of Trout Creek and remote sensing monitoring tools.

4. **Green Energy**

- a. No progress reported to Ellen.

5. **Outreach**

a. General Public

1. 5 1-minute proposed videos
 - **Funding this fall**
2. COCC requested a presentation as part of a lecture series this winter. On February 11, Ellen, Rob Galyen and Brad Klann (landowners), Jacob Kimiecik (DRC), and Josh Bailey (NUID) will discuss JeffCo water issues with the audience.
3. Ellen has reviewed the draft Deschutes Basin Water Collaborative's draft Plan to ensure that it includes the tools identified by the Drought Group
4. After Rep Cliff Bentz' House Subcommittee hearing in Redmond in October, Ellen provided comments to Subcommittee members and other Representatives from Oregon, Utah, and Washington to explain Jefferson County's drought situation and request more funding for on-the-ground entities like SWCDs and for landowners outside of the NRCS process.
5. Ellen contacted a media specialist hired by the Oregon Association of Conservation Districts about the Drought Group and Plan. The topic is being reviewed and Ellen will hear back from him on whether this topic has been chosen for some media blitz this coming year.

b. Landowners

1. SWCD received 3 requests for project assistance as a result of the newsletters.