



## March 8th, 2022 Meeting Minutes

The meeting occurred at New Meadows Community Center from 7:00pm to 9:00pm with a total of 28 attendees. Captured minutes are from group discussions and presentations. Recordings of presentations are available on the [Little Salmon River Watershed Collaborative YouTube Channel](#) or on the [website](#) in the Meeting Agendas & Minutes section.

### **Participants:**

#### *In Person*

Jared Everson  
Madison Gates  
Randy Fox  
Linnea Hall  
Phil Obendorf  
Aaron Humpherys  
Al Becker  
Sandy Dryden  
Darrell Clay  
Viki Purdy  
Keisha Miller  
Gary S Thompson  
Wes Keller  
Johanna Stangland

#### Rebecca Levandowski

#### *Virtual*

Julie Burkhardt  
Bob Skinner  
Lenard Long  
Lynn Oliver  
Dean Dryden  
Scott Storms  
Wendy Green  
Cal Low  
Lance Holloway  
Adrianna Cardoso  
Holly Becker  
Leigh Bailey  
Tim Farrell

### **2001 Little Salmon River Historical Photos**

Presentation from Julie Burkhardt, Adams County Soil and Water Conservation District

- Photo monitoring assists in decadal land changes and is encouraged on public and private land to establish base levels.
- The purpose of the 2001 report by Idaho Soil and Water Conservation Commission staff was to identify issues and work with landowners to resolve those issues.
- Adams County Soil and Water Conservation District works with many other government agencies and assists landowners interested in restoration projects.
- All photos were taken from public access points.

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- With improved management, “problem areas” can be easily fixed within a season or several years with different management practices.
- Significant water events naturally shift channels. With photo documentation, we can piece together the history of the landscape.
- Photos will be retaken this summer, people who live in the area can join to see what has changed over the last 20 years.

**Questions:**

**Q:** Was the drainage Big Creek?

**A:** Yes, that was one of the focus areas along with the Little Salmon River.

**Q:** What was the original reason for taking the photos?

**A:** The photos were taken by Idaho Soil and Water Conservation Commission staff to gather information for the district board. New landowners would come in to ask for better management practices, and they wanted to expand photo documentation to show landowners the effects of different management strategies in the local area. It was not intended to target any specific landowners and/or tell them how to manage their properties.

**Q:** Were all of these photos taken on the same day in July? Are you going to take the photos at the same time this year?

**A:** Photos in the Little Salmon watershed were taken on July 3rd, 2001. Yes, we will try to gather the new photos around the same time of year for more accurate comparisons.

**Q:** What is a point of action we can take from this?

**A:** The group should go out and retake some of these photos in 2022. All the photos were taken from the roads, not from private property so the group could easily repeat the photos on a field trip.

**Q:** Historical photos are a wonderful resource. Vegetation succession was clearly visible during a Wyoming project which had pictures from the 1870s. On another project, we were able to access old railroad photos to compare to the present with geographical landmarks. Where can we find more historical photos of the area?

**A:** The old railroad surveys took many photos. Keisha has gotten a few from the Adams County Historical Society. Jared- A lot of Natural Resource Conservation Service offices have local historical aerial imagery dating back to the 40s. The Emmett office may have a huge map case that has a lot of historical data that hasn't been opened in years.

Julie: State archives through the Idaho Conservation Commission may have them as well.

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If anyone has any questions, contact the Little Salmon River Watershed Collaborative at [lsrwc@redfishbluefishinc.com](mailto:lsrwc@redfishbluefishinc.com).

**Bob Skinner:**

- 5th generation Oregon resident
- Partnered with Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board funded through the Oregon lottery revenues as well as local watershed councils
- Water savings and water quality improvement project on Skinner Ranch
  - Underground 30" pipeline from the source which uses a gravity flow system over 2 miles
- Oregon was talking about measuring all water at the point of diversion (which was a threat to wild flood) and limiting to 3 acre feet per year
- Sage grouse country
- The government wanted to stop ponding of water because of West Nile virus which was running rampant through the area
- Pivots were installed and ponds were leveled
- The project cut wastewater to virtually zero. Any measurable amount lost is typically caused by user error
- Currently irrigating 2,750 acres on the ranch, able to water more acres and increase pasture production with the new irrigation system.
- Used to run an open canal with about 800 inches of water going in at the start and about 100 inches coming out at the end
- Now, the system starts with 400 inches of water at the point of diversion and about that same amount comes out with no risk of pollutants returning to the system.

**Questions:**

**Q:** Did you ever consider generating electricity from the pipeline? The power supply may pay for giving power back to the grid. Elk Creek has a generator facility.

**A:** No, we haven't looked at it but may consider it in the future. We do have solar systems, but no hydroelectric.

**Q:** What kind of crops are you raising with this irrigation?

**A:** Grass hay, alfalfa, grain (oats, barley, triticale).

**Q:** Did this impact stock water at all?

**A:** The state has not talked about limiting stock water and we have drilled a well for it. We do not live on a perennial stream and need to conserve as much as possible.

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**Q:** Can you estimate what your water savings was?

**A:** This particular project was easily more than half. But what is wasting water?

Flooding is still occurring downstream of the pivots. If you're guaranteed a finite water amount, we expect it to be fulfilled.

**Q:** What is the fall over the course of the two miles

**A:** About nine feet with a 30 inch pipe necked down to a 24 inch pipe. We're able to irrigate an extra hundred acres.

**Q:** Are you able to run your pivots on the gravity run system?

**A:** Yes and no, we have two turbines to pump to one mile down and then gravity the second mile.

**Q:** Is the water you're saving due to not losing any down the transfer of the canal?

**A:** Yes, that is correct

**Q:** Do you have any photos?

**A:** No, unfortunately that wasn't a main method of documentation I used.

### **Natural Resource Conservation Service Programs**

Presentation from Madison Gates and Jared Everson, Natural Resource Conservation Service

- The Soil and Conservation Service was created by Congress in 1935 during the Dust Bowl to preserve soils. In 1995, the name was changed to Natural Resource Conservation service to encompass the expanding duties of the agency.
- Our mission is, "Ensuring productive lands in harmony with a healthy environment." Implementing best management practices on productive lands, not only for agriculture, but for all systems that provide vital ecosystem services.
- All programs are 100% voluntary. People approach NRCS with a restoration goal in mind and work together to develop a plan.
- The 5 steps to assistance are Planning > Application > Eligibility > Ranking > Implementing
- Environmental Quality Incentive Program - EQIP
  - Applications can be individuals or entities. There is a \$900,000 annual income cap for assistance
  - Some programs that may be available for this area are
    - Riparian buffers
    - Cover crops
    - Prescribed grazing

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- Fish and wildlife habitat
  - Stream habitat improvement
  - Tree and shrub planting
  - Irrigation water management
  - Upland wildlife habitat
- Variable contracts based off of needs
- Not all plans are approved, there is only a limited amount of funding. However, applications can be resubmitted after modifying plans if not funded initially,
- Since we are not an enforcement agency, we do not know what issues you are facing on your land

**Questions:**

**Q:** Do you run the NRCS projects for this area?

**A:** This particular watershed crosses county lines, however funding is allocated by county. We are funded for Idaho County (Team 4), and there is separate funding for Adam County (Team 5). The EQIP program is offered across the state.

**Q:** It seems the NRCS is more focused on Snake River drainages in Boise and funding projects where there are highly erodible soils. What class of soil is here?

**A:** There is high clay content and low soil erodibility in the Little Salmon River area. There are stipulations for where projects can occur and each Team has a different set of priorities in their areas. Highly erodible lands are very visible so there is often money available for projects in those areas..

**Q:** Is there much competition for projects?

**A:** Yes, since I have started, there has only been one year without competition. We typically accept 30-40% of the applications received. A lot of projects are good ideas, but do not have much ground support or are not as well planned. Those are the ones we want to come back and reapply after working with us to clarify goals.

**Q:** Does EQIP funding include only money for the rancher and farmer to implement or could it include staff to assist in implementing the project.

**A:** For each project, we have a flat rate. That funding can be delegated as needed but we do not provide support staff for projects.

**Q:** How many EQIP applications have there been in Adams County? What makes applications successful?

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**A:** Not sure about Adams County, but in Idaho County, we had about 50 last year. Each Team has a local working group that meets in the fall to select priorities. Anyone can be on the working group and can help control what makes a good project which can change yearly or hardly at all depending on those involved. Wendy Green with the Adams County Soil and Water Conservation District said it's been difficult to get people involved in the working group because it is based in Weiser.

**Q:** What projects are happening in this area?

**A:** From the head of the canyon down to Riggins, there is little private land but if people wanted to do soil restoration on an area that is degrading they can do so. We would be happy to look at grazing management plans, riparian restoration, and habitat restoration. Through one of our programs we can pay for photo monitoring to gather data. We can assist with irrigation changes as well. NRCS has solutions for many types of water issues.

**Q:** It is my understanding that we do not have highly erodible soils in this area so we wouldn't get an approved application. I had an application in Jordan Valley declined due to soils not being highly erodible, but in Parma, the project would have been 100% funded.

**A:** That is not necessarily true for this area. We can help fund pivot systems. Application approval depends on the priorities set for the area by the local working group, so that's why it is important to get involved. Programmatically, we don't exclude projects. Notices are put in the paper and we market to the communities to ask people to join. The best way to get involved is to connect with Jared to get on an email list for future meetings. Whoever shows up delegates where the project monies go.

**Q:** Have there been specific projects in the Little Salmon from Riggins to Smokey Boulder?

**A:** The most visible project was stream restoration in the Pollock area after the flood of '96. There was a lot of restoration that happened in the Pollock area. We've done grazing management and riparian restoration in the Little Salmon River watershed.

**Q:** Does the working group publish their list of priorities for funding years? How could an applicant make their application stronger?

**A:** Yes, it is published in the paper every year. Your local conservation district can provide a link for public members to join the working group. There is the option of attending virtually. The Little Salmon River is part of the Weiser EQIP Working Group. In 2019, rankings were based on resource concerns:

1. Water quality
2. Soil erosion
3. Degradation of plants

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4. Soil quality and
5. Insufficient water

In 2020 , rankings were based on land use (changed from resource concerns to land use):

1. Irrigated cropland
2. Irrigated pasture
3. Rangeland
4. Forestland
5. High tunnel systems
6. Wildlife streambank protection

**Q:** Will your funding be impacted by the Infrastructure Bill?

**A:** It is highly unknown how that funding will trickle down. Our agency is still operating under the 2018 Farm Bill which should be updated within the next few years and provides the bulk of NRCS funding. Overall, our funding is very good.

**Q:** Do neighbors ever work together on a project?

**A:** Not typically, but more so with riparian projects. It does make a difference as far as application ranking. EQIP is only one program NRCS offers. There are 5 different programs available with different funding pools. The Regional Conservation Partnership Program works with the local conservation districts to review proposals and set aside funds in advance.

**Q:** How much do landowners have to match?

**A:** We only offer flat rates that typically cover about 75 percent of the projected costs. However, that hasn't been as accurate recently due to material supply issues.

**Q:** Do you provide funding for riparian fencing?

**A:** Not exclusion fencing but friendly to wildlife specifications.

**Q:** Do you charge for your services to come out and evaluate?

**A:** No, we are 100% free for our services to consult. Even if you don't receive funding the first year, you can reapply indefinitely. Or, you can withdraw an application at any point up until signing as well.

**Q:** There used to be a group called the Agriculture Stabilization and Conservation Service. Is that you or someone else now?

**A:** No, it is now the Farm Service Agency (since 1996). Originally, through Congress, Agriculture Stabilization and Conservation Service had the funding and NRCS provided the grant management source.

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**Q:** Who is with the Farm Service Agency out of Council?

**A:** It is in Weiser in the Forest Service Building. Kim Royer is in charge of that program now.

**Q:** How do we build a field guide of all the resources available for riparian restoration?

**A:** Every agency has programs that are not always permanent due to funding specifications, and there can be restrictions about who can apply. Private landowners may have to go through another partner agency to submit a proposal. The Adams County Soil and Water Conservation District would be a great house for a resource pool. If we want to make one in Idaho County, NRCS can do so.

**Q:** Wendy would you be willing for a follow up conversation on what funding resources would be available?

**A:** Yes.

**Steering Committee** - They meet once/twice in between the meetings and anyone is welcome to join. Their next priorities will be finding presenters and what other resources this collaborative would like to consider.

- Linea Hall, [hallranch1879@gmail.com](mailto:hallranch1879@gmail.com)
- Randy Fox, [rfox@idahoconservation.org](mailto:rfox@idahoconservation.org)
- Wes Keller, [wesleyk@nezperce.org](mailto:wesleyk@nezperce.org)
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**Purpose Statement**—Feedback on the purpose statement should be directed to the steering committee. A copy can be found at the end of this document. This is still in a draft and the document will be reviewed quarterly to be sure it still reflects the focus of the group.

**Action Items:**

- Photos: Repeat 2001 photo points, review NRCS and State archives
- Email with the purpose statement, photo and short biography of the Steering Committee Members.

Next Meeting: **April 5th, 2022, 11:00am-3:00pm MST** at the New Meadows Community Center and on Zoom

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**Purpose Statement**—Feedback on the purpose statement should be directed to the steering committee

The goal of the Little Salmon River Watershed Collaborative is to improve water quality and quantity in the Little Salmon River watershed through:

- Building trust-based relationships within the collaborative to address community concerns and interests
- Engaging stakeholders across disciplines and land ownership boundaries
- Discussing comprehensive issues affecting water quality and identifying projects that will help the Little Salmon River meet state water quality standards
- Engaging existing landowners by providing information, resources, and support to pursue implementing water efficiency measures while preserving their existing water rights
- Identifying ways to conserve landscape and lifestyle of the Little Salmon River Watershed and mitigate impacts of future development on river health and water resources, making both land and water resources sustainable for future generations.
- Crafting potential solutions to guide restoration on public and private lands in the Little Salmon River watershed

The end product of this collaborative effort includes identifying a list of specific actions, interested parties and resources to improve water quality and quantity in the Little Salmon River watershed.

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