

Henry's Fork Watershed Council Meeting Minutes

February 9, 2021

Introductions and Community Building

Aaron Dalling, co-facilitator from Fremont-Madison Irrigation District (FMID) welcomed everyone to the virtual meeting via Zoom. The group went around with introductions and then called for a moment of silence before opening for announcements and community building.

Aaron, FMID shared that the Watershed Council has lost a few early members in recent months, including Lloyd Bradshaw who had a long career with NRCS and was a member of the Henry's Fork Watershed Council when it was first formed.

Rob Van Kirk, Henry's Fork Foundation (HFF) shared that Richard Beasley and Lloyd both passed last fall, and the Council recently lost Lou Benedict. Lou worked for the Idaho Department of Lands in Idaho Falls for decades. Lou was also a regular participant in the Watershed Council in the first five years, before he retired.

Brandon Hoffner, HFF recognized the passing of Joselin Matkins, Executive Director of the Teton Regional Land Trust, early this year. Joselin was a leader in conservation in eastern Idaho and someone who will be greatly missed in this community. She had great enthusiasm and foresight to make this watershed a great place to live.

Teton Basin Aquifer Recharge: Expanding Innovative Irrigation Management Practices

Amy Verbeten, Friends of the Teton River

Friends of the Teton River is partnering with Teton Basin water managers and Teton Water Users Association to demonstrate and evaluate an innovative approach to water management in Southeastern Idaho. This stakeholder-driven, science-based, voluntary approach uses market forces to incentivize early season aquifer recharge. Resulting benefits include increased stream flow during the warm, dry months of July, August, and September, which serves to create a more reliable water supply for agricultural water users and enhanced farm productivity, and improved habitat and water quality critical for sensitive fish and wildlife species.

Canyon Creek Flow Restoration - Modernizing Canyon Creek Canal Company Irrigation Infrastructure to Enhance Flow and Irrigation System Operation

Sarah Lien, Friends of the Teton River

Friends of the Teton River (FTR) is working in partnership with the Canyon Creek Canal Company (CCCC), based in Newdale, Idaho, to identify infrastructure and operational enhancements that would benefit CCCC water-users and improve hydrologic function in the

Canyon Creek watershed. Through point of diversion changes and irrigation system efficiency upgrades this project aims to significantly improve flow and temperature conditions in Canyon Creek, a high priority Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout (YCT) tributary to the Teton River.

Introduction to HFF WaterSmart Applied Science Grant Project

Rob Van Kirk, Henry's Fork Foundation

The U.S. Department of Interior's WaterSMART (Sustain and Manage America's Resources for Tomorrow) program supports water conservation and improved management of the nation's water and related resources. Through the program, the Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) "will continue to work cooperatively with states, tribes, and local entities as they plan for and implement actions to increase water supply through investments to modernize existing infrastructure and attention to local water conflicts." The WaterSMART program has partially funded several basin studies around the West, including one in the Henry's Fork. In addition, USBR administers numerous WaterSMART grant programs that provide funding to irrigation entities, local governments, tribes, research institutions and nongovernmental organizations to meet program goals. These programs include small infrastructure improvements, planning and capacity-building, small-scale efficiency implementation, water recycling and re-use, and water marketing strategy. The Applied Science program is relatively new in the WaterSMART portfolio; the first call for proposals was issued in 2019, and the second will be issued later this year.

The Henry's Fork Foundation (HFF) applied for and was awarded an applied science grant during the first round. HFF's proposal was one of only two funded in Idaho and 19 funded around the West, including several from large research institutions. HFF will conduct a three-year project in FY 2021-2023 at a total cost of \$561,000: \$273,000 in federal cash, \$183,000 in cash and in-kind contribution from HFF, and \$105,000 in in-kind contributions from HFF external partners. The project goal is to improve water-management precision to meet irrigation demand, maintain fisheries, and recover aquifer levels in the Henry's Fork watershed. To accomplish this goal, HFF will develop a suite of hydrologic models, apply these models to water management scenarios, and develop a website to host watershed-specific data and an end-user model interface. The five models to be developed are groundwater-surface models for the lower Henry's Fork and Teton Valley, a watershed-scale management optimization model, automated generation of watershed climatic and hydrologic data, and predictive models of seasonal water supply and management. The project will install new real-time streamflow gages on Henry's Fork at Parker, Teton River at Tetonia (Harrop's Bridge) and Buffalo River at Highway 20 and make the real-time data available on the website. The project team consists of current HFF staff/consultants/graduate students Matt Hively, Jamie Laatsch, Christina Morrisett, Melissa Muradian, Amber Roseberry, and Rob Van Kirk; BYU mathematics professor Curtis Nelson; and retired professional geologist Heidi Blischke. The team will formally solicit input from stakeholders via the Henry's Fork Watershed Council and the Teton Valley Water Users Association. Specific input requested will include desired data types and formats, functionality of website interfaces, end-user modeling capabilities, and modeling scenarios.

Community Building and Wrap Up

Jamie Laatsch, co-facilitator from the Henry's Fork Foundation called for one minute of silence to reflect on the meeting and prepare any final announcements or comments.

After the minute of silence, she thanked participants for attending and for their questions for presenters. She added that if anyone has any suggestions for future meeting presentations or has a project or program they would like to present on, please email council@henrysfork.org.

Keith Esplin, Eastern Idaho Water Rights Coalition thanked everyone for great presentations. He noted that while we would rather be together in-person, the virtual meetings still do a great job making information available.

Aaron Dalling, FMID shared that there are times when anglers and irrigators don't see eye to eye, but projects like those presented on today are examples of when we can work together and find common ground.

Michael Whitfield, Teton County Commissioner gave kudos to presenters and expressed that he looks forward to hearing more about these projects in the future.