

Jefferson County Agricultural Drought Resiliency Group

Update on Workgroups, etc.
Tuesday, August 22, 2023; 3-5pm
OSU COAREC, 850 NW Dogwood Ln, Madras
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)	Lars Santana (NRCS)
Brad Klann (JCSWCD Board & producer)	Lisa Seales (DRC)
Brad Moore (Energy Trust and Wy'East RC&D)	Lisa Windom (JCSWCD)
Craig Weigand (JCSWCD Board & producer)	Lloyd Forman (JCSWCD Board & producer)
Elaine Cornick (Culver land steward)	Mark Wunsch (Jeff Co Commission & producer)
Ellen Hammond (JCSWCD)	Rob Galyen (JCSWCD Board & producer)
Gordon Jones (OSU Extension)	Scott Duggan (OSU Extension)
Heidi Hartman (OWEB)	Scott Samsel (JCSWCD Board & producer)
Jeremiah Dung (COAREC)	Staci Merkt (JCSWCD)
John Spring (COSI)	Robert Wallace (Wy'East RC&D)
Josh Bailey (NUID)	

Gordon Jones and Heidi Hartman introduced themselves to the Group. Gordon is the new OSU Extension Central Oregon Agronomist and Heidi manages the OWEB grant that funds us through December 2023.

II. Data

A. Lack of JeffCoAg data for USDA Census of Ag (<https://www.nass.usda.gov/AgCensus/>).

- The following is from Dave Losch, USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service:
 - The response rate from growers in Jefferson County (44%) is the lowest response rate in the state (and it was 5 years ago also); state average is ~75%.
 - Data include: income, expenses, products, grower demographics
 - *“The data inform decisions that will help shape the future of American agriculture for the next five or six years. Individual data is held strictly confidential by law. Growers need to complete their report by May 31. By not responding, you risk being unrepresented and therefore underserved in USDA farm programs and funding, rural development, disaster assistance, irrigation projects, and more.”*
- **Why isn't JeffCoAg responding? How can we get a better response in 5 years? Info is critical for grant writing and for being prioritized for funding!**

The Group had a lot of suggestions for lack of response, none of which seems to be specific to just Jefferson County:

- Landlords are aging out and don't have the relevant info
- Nobody is growing commodities, so growers see it as a waste of time
- Lots of absentee landowners

- Takes ½ - ¾ day to fill out the forms.
- Ellen find out: Do Deschutes and Crook Counties have similar low response rates?
- Getting landowners to respond: NUID sent out reminders. **Make a plea during Farm Fair!**

III. Communication

- Ellen will send out monthly updates unless there is a time-driven need

IV. Drought Plan

- **Next reviewers: Mark Wunsch, Josh/Collin, Brad Klann, John Spring, Scotty Samsel**

IV. Workgroups

1. Water Availability
 - a. Ellen met w/Josh Bailey and Gary Calhoun about Tools
 - b. Workgroup to meet in late October (not Elk Season)
2. ~~Irrigated~~ Croplands (deleted 'irrigated' because some people are experimenting with non-irrigated crops)
 - a. Ellen met w/Gordon Jones about Tools
 - b. We will need some data to show success and to prioritize tools. The Workgroup will decide what to work on without additional data and what we really need more data for. Potential data include:
 - 1) Soil Organic Carbon (SOC) across NUID
 - 2) Potential maximum SOC
 - 3) How close irrigators are to meeting their crops' ET
3. Ranchlands
 - a. Ellen spoke w/Ally Steinmetz and Scott Klopp about Tools; Ellen modified matrix to remove some of the cropping tools (due and added 'streambank vegetation')
 - b. We will need some data to show success and to prioritize tools. The Workgroup will decide what to work on without additional data and what we really need more data for. Potential data include:
 - 1) Extent of juniper control projects
 - 2) Stream and floodplain connection
 - 3) Adequate streamside vegetation
 - 4) Weed presence
4. Agrivoltaics
 - a. Met Aug 11
 - b. OSU is a REGIONAL leader in agrivoltaics research (Chad Higgins)
 - c. Will focus on on-farm net metering; identifying research needs.
 - 1) Net farm-metering means that the power that is generated stays on the farm and offsets existing power load.
 - 2) On-farm includes: grazed under, cropped under, placed on 'fallow ground' such as a pivot corner, placed on or over ponds or water conveyance systems, used to pump livestock water from ground or surface source
5. General Public Outreach
 - a. Met 3 times so far
 - b. **The Group reviewed the highlights of the draft Outreach Plan and had the following suggestions:**
 - 1) Plan (recommendations to be discussed with Outreach Group:
 1. Change 'diverse' back to 'unique'. It is unique BECAUSE of its diversity
 2. Add "rangeland grasses and forbs" to seed crops
 3. Replace "lawn" with "turf and greenscapes"
 4. Emphasize FAMILY farms

5. Correct the sentence about NUID and water rights.....
 6. Under regulatory changes emphasize that "Central Oregon" ag, not just JeffCo, needs help. Point: Water law and infrastructure are 100 years old.
- 2) Video: maybe interview Kate Casad, Joanie Homes, or Leslie Elliot Black
 - 3) Crop signs: don't compete with OSU and Oregon Women for Agriculture

V. Moving Forward

1. Requests for data (from Drought Mtg notes): Group Discussion
 - a. Inventory all the actions and investment amounts that have occurred in the last 20 years to increase water use efficiency, shift crop types, increase water retention, and re-use tailwater
 - Group: put on hold. This is a huge ask and will dilute energies from higher priority tasks.
 - b. Catalog all the ag products produced in Jefferson County and provide a tight summary for public consumption
 - Difficult to do because it changes so quickly. Ellen is already getting info from NUID Crop Reports. She will try Tom Norton, Joanna Symons, or Auction Yard for cattle numbers
 - c. Show how efficient each type of irrigation system is in Jefferson County
 - Croplands Group decides if needed.
 - d. Economic and yield data to show if there is a benefit to investing in changing irrigation infrastructure
 - Croplands Group decides if needed
 - e. Research alternative crops and cropping/livestock systems that could do well here
 - Ellen contacted new OSU Ag Economist, TiDelbridge
 - f. Research marketing options
 - Ditto
 - g. Research opportunities for developing processing infrastructure, such as oils. Joining with neighboring dryland farmers in Sherman and Wasco counties might create a large enough yield to make it worthwhile.
 - Ditto
 - h. Figure out what to measure to show success
 - Workgroups and Group will decide
2. Grant Opportunities: Lisa Windom

Lisa is working on 2 BOR WaterSmart Opportunities. One could fund the Group process and outreach, the other could fund research study on pond conditions and needs, with a goal of securing funding for pond lining and clean-out.
3. **Next Meeting = Monday, November 27 (between Elk Seasons and OWRC conference)**
 - Noon-2pm (lunch provided)
 - Madras Airport
 - Guest Speaker = DRC (projects that affect Jefferson County ag)

Ellen ToDo:

1. **Ask Dave Losch about Crook and Deschutes County response rates for the Census of Ag**
2. **contact new Weedmaster: Zack Burger (503-812-3337)**
3. **Figure out how to get beef cattle numbers for the County**