



Partnership for Lake Abert and the Chewaucan Meeting #4

August 30, 2023 via Zoom

Participants present: Trish Carroll, Ron Larson, Theo Dreher, JP Patt, Matt Anderson, Christina Rubidoux, Sara Slater, Colleen Withers, Lisa Brown, Tess Baker, Steph Hayes, Ed Contreras, Marty St. Louis, Cole Hendrickson, Teresa Wicks, Patrick Flanagan, Jack O’Leary, Dacey Mercer, Barry Shullanberger, Kaitlin Hakanson, Jimmy Leal, , Scott Hynek, Jami Ludwig, Johnathan VanRoekel , Colleen Withers, Philip Milburn, Barry Shullanberger

Guests: Chad Karges, Gary Marshall, and Brenda Smith (High Desert Partnership); David Pilz, Tess Gardner, Carlie Henneman (Walker Basin)

Oregon State University Team Members present: Aaron Wolfe, Henry Pitts, Georgina Mukwirimba

Oregon Consensus Facilitation Team present: Jennah Kiefer, Bobby Cochran

Action Item	Who	Date
Consider self-determination of voting/non-voting member status to be reflected in the Charter and decision-making process going forward.	All participating entities	Before December 6th
Identify suggested experts for each section of the Joint fact-finding outline.	Everyone	Before Sept 8th
Send questions or additional feedback regarding the Charter or work plan/timeline to OC.	Everyone	COB Sept 15th
Send personal “definition of success” exercise to OC.	Everyone	COB Sept 15th

Welcome

Facilitator, Bobby Cochran, opened the meeting with a general review of the agenda and an overview of the materials that had been provided in advance. He briefly reviewed the proposed work plan and timeline for the group’s next two years of collaborative work together. He also shared that the updated draft Charter was close to finalized, but still open for substantive input and refinement. In response to a clarifying question, he noted that all participants will need to self-determine whether they would like to be identified as a voting member or non-voting member in the group going forward, which would relate to the decision-making process. Details explaining these



requirements and considerations are outlined in the draft Charter. The intention is to finalize the Charter by the end of the year (likely at the December meeting) and have the voting members affirm it.

Introductions and Visions of Success

Jennah Kiefer reminded the group about the personal homework assignment related to identifying everyone's individual definition of success for this effort in the long term. She clarified that these would be collected by Oregon Consensus and then synthesized for the full group to reflect upon and potentially use to set specific objectives, indicators, and metrics going forward. For today, as part of the opening exercise, she invited everyone to introduce themselves and briefly share their high-level vision of success for the future of the basin and this collaborative group. A summary of responses included, but was not limited to:

- A healthy ecosystem and community that balances both long term agricultural and ecological needs
- Seeking bravery in our response to challenges
- Healing through the collaborative process
- Developing a shared understanding of the basin and avoiding panic
- Improved ecological conditions and water in Lake Abert
- Favorable outcomes for wildlife (particularly waterbirds) in Lake Abert and the Chewaucan Marshes
- Building a greater understanding of needs of constituents in this process
- Establishing the foundation for an ongoing and long-lasting collaborative effort
- Developing a baseline understanding of the system
- Understanding short-term goals that can be achieved
- Coalescence around facts and broad trust in the basin to bolster harder discussions down the road
- Avoiding panic and promoting an enhanced understanding of the basin
- Action towards improved habitat for wildlife that considers climate change
- Improved data landscape and analysis to inform the joint fact finding process
- Remembering the importance of indigenous wisdom and archaeological sites in the basin
- Actual implementation of solutions

Joint Fact-Finding

Aaron Wolf, OSU, shared an update on the Joint Fact-Finding (JFF) effort and noted that the subgroup had met twice since the June meeting in Paisley. He explained that coming out of that Paisley meeting, there were many key questions identified by the full group which the subgroup has since been working to refine and organize into themes. This formed the foundation of the JFF report outline (shared in the meeting materials). He also noted that the OSU team has been collecting and compiling all of the recommended literature shared to date, which will soon be accessible to everyone online. After reviewing the report outline sections, Aaron then reminded the group about the different types of knowledge being considered in this process: scientific, lived experience, and traditional ecological knowledge. Henry Pitts, OSU, shared that the subgroup has begun to identify potential experts for each



of the report key sections, but would like to solicit recommendations from the broader group too. Aaron clarified that there will continue to be ongoing opportunities for input on all of the JFF themes along the way. The group then shifted into two self-selected breakout groups for discussion.

Fish & Wildlife and Traditional Ecological Knowledge group highlights:

- Two recent droughts impacted widespread water habitats but it is unclear where else birds may go when Lake Abert is dry.
- Discussed priority wildlife in the basin and are likely not going to emphasize upland species in this process. Although they are important, water and shorebirds are recognized as being in trouble.
- Need to consider all aquatic species with a focus on trout.

Water Resources, Ranching and Drought group highlights:

- From the ranching standpoint, sustainability is essential and requires taking care of the land. Therefore, it's important to clarify what actions are already being taken to do so and what ranching actually entails.
- Restoration projects are already underway on the Chewaucan.
- More engagement with OWRD information shared during the Paisley meeting is needed.
- Desire to build out the JFF report bullet around water in Lake Abert to highlight trends over time and natural system vs consumptive use to gain a more complete hydrologic picture of what's happening.

As for next steps, the JFF subgroup will meet again soon and continue to systematically organize literature with an end goal of an accessible, online resource. Work will continue to build out details in the JFF report as information is agreed upon. There will be a more complete draft to review by the December 6th meeting.

Panel Presentation: Case studies of collaboration

High Desert Partnership

Speakers: Chad Karges (Malheur Wildlife Refuge), Gary Marshall (Local Rancher), Brenda Smith (Director)

Chad and Gary reflected on the past and how there was a desire to find a “better way to do business,” which led to them helping in the creation of the High Desert Partnership. Gary noted how conflict between private landowners and public agencies had always been present but from the 1980s, there was a rapid, significant change for the worse. The use of large public meetings on each issue seemed to produce clear camps that were identified prior to the start of each meeting. Chad emphasized the social impact beyond ecological conservation work and the need for holistic management to occur in order for solutions to be sustainable. When Chad came to the Malheur Wildlife Refuge in the 1990s, they began compiling good ideas from groups around the area and outreaching to hear concerns from stakeholders with regards to the development of a refuge management plan. Building trust and developing relationships was an important component of the foundation, but it took years before launching into a larger collaborative group as a whole.



Brenda shared that High Desert Partnership (HDP) is not a collaborative, but a 501C-3 that supports six other collaboratives in Harney County. She highlighted one with the most overlap to the Partnership for Lake Abert and the Chewaucan, the Harney Basins Wetland Collaborative, mainly due to the SONEC and Pacific Flyway connections. She explained that HDP strives to support groups as they make shared decisions and to support implementation of solutions. Among the other collaboratives within HDP, there are economic and youth focused efforts. She also noted that the multiple collaboratives regularly overlap given that they are a central gathering place where everyone is welcome at the table and serve as champions of common ground, striving to build consensus.

Questions: Funding is primarily through grants given by state and federal agencies, though philanthropic giving is highly important to their 9 full-time staffing capacity. They don't solicit many private donations. HDP has been very helpful with coordinating landscape scale projects.

Walker Conservancy & AMP Insights

Speakers: Carlie Henneman (Walker Basin Conservancy), David Pilz & Tess Gardner (AMP)

David is the co-founder and partner at an environmental consulting firm based in Bend, OR, AMP Insights.. One of their long term clients is the Walker Basin Conservancy, which was represented by Carlie Henneman, the Water Program Director with WBC. Carlie used a slide deck to provide more context on the WBC and their work in the past decade. They have two offices, in Reno and Yerington, NV. About a ¼ of the basin is located in California, where most of the headwater uplands are located. Most of the WBC work thus far has occurred in NV. There are four main agricultural centers in the basin, most of which support alfalfa, though conversion to row crops has become more prominent in recent years. Walker Lake was known as a world-class fishery, a thriving recreation center, and was incredibly important to Paiute bands in the region. The lake has lost half its surface area and 90% of its volume over time, which has drastically increased salinity levels. The last trout was caught in 2009, which denotes that the lake has passed a tipping point despite previous notable declines over the past century. In 1991 the Walker Lake Working Group was formed, which jumpstarted a lot of interest in the area. Sen. Harry Reid worked to pass legislation to support desert lakes, as he often took the highway south to Las Vegas, not unlike Hwy 395 along Lake Abert. The Walker Basin Restoration Program was passed in 2010, which primarily supported the purchasing of water rights. Carlie mainly works to find willing private landowners who would like to sell their water rights, which currently amount to 22 permanent water transactions. They also work to lease storage rights from nearby reservoirs, as well as provide accessible data through the Walker Basin HydroMapper. Through the purchasing of water rights, they've also gained significant land holdings. A lot of their staffing capacity, which is supplemented by AmeriCorps members, is dedicated to restoration efforts. They've also been able to open large swathes of land to the public, including Nevada's most recent state park. Carlie provided more details on operations, and closed by stating that Walker Lake was up 15ft from last year to date!



Questions: Carlie noted that their work has helped support agriculture in the region, and explained a little bit about how they've become part of the puzzle for local farmers and ranchers. There was an emphasis on keeping land in production, which shifts occurring in method and practice.

The group participated in a chat waterfall following a two-minute partner breakout reflection with takeaways from the two presentations.

Next Steps and Adjourn

In closing, Jennah Kiefer reminded the group about the next meeting scheduled for October 24 via Zoom and then two days in-person in Paisley December 6 and 7.