



Partnership for Lake Abert and the Chewaucan

Meeting #7 via Zoom

Wednesday, February 21 from 1-4 PM (PT)

Meeting Summary

Objectives: Discuss the updated Joint Fact-Finding report, review potential areas for further investigation, and review the high-level 2024 work plan.

1:00 - 1:30 p.m. Welcome, Updates, and Introductions

Aaron opened the meeting with a welcome and a high-level run-through of the agenda. This included opening the floor for introductions from new members of the group.

- Greg Green (*Ducks Unlimited*) introduced Ashley Tunstall, the Regional Biologist for Ducks Unlimited in the Bend area. Ashley will primarily serve the Southeastern Northern California (SONEC) region.
- Marcelle Shoop (*National Audubon Society*) introduced Emily Hamel, a Saline Lakes Ecologist who will be representing the Society moving forward.
- Mike Green (*US Fish & Wildlife Service*) introduced himself and spoke about his work as a Bird Biologist with migratory birds. He works with the USGS on the [Saline Lakes Ecosystems Integrated Water Availability Assessment](#).
- Vanessa Loverti (*US Fish & Wildlife Service*) also spoke about her work as a Shorebird Biologist.
- Richard Pyzik spoke later in the meeting as the new Watershed Program Manager and Aquatic Restoration Coordinator for the Fremont-Winema National Forest.
- Marc Hudson introduced himself as the Rangeland Program Director for the Oregon Agriculture Trust. He stated that they are looking to invest in the Chewaucan and to foster collaboration.

Discussion in the chat feature included Ed Contreras stating that the USGS, Ducks Unlimited, the USFWS, and other partner organizations would lead a spring migration waterfowl survey in southeastern Oregon and northeastern California. His understanding is that a flight survey is planned over the Chewaucan Marshes. Teresa Wicks with the Audubon Society of Portland replied that she has a table that summarizes special status species across a ton of different organizations for the Harney Basin that could be useful for our efforts. Henry followed up with her via email following the meeting.

1:30 - 2:45 p.m. Joint fact-finding narrative discussion

Henry gave an introduction to the Shared Narrative Report JFF document, and opened the floor for each Community Lead to offer an update on their chapter.

Drought Considerations

Ed shared that the drought chapter has not undergone major changes since the last iteration of the document.

Water Resources

Ron Larson shared that the USGS water level gauge on the lake is live and providing data, which has never been available before. He also shared that many of the graphs in the document have been updated and simplified. He requested feedback from many more people in the group and noted his preference that the JFF document should remain as a 'living' document due to pending information from upcoming studies.

Agricultural Practices

Tess spoke briefly on progress, namely comment resolution. Jack O'Leary could not make it- congratulations on the newest addition to your family!

Fish & Wildlife

Henry provided an overview of the chapter, as Stan Senner was not able to attend). He noted that the chapter has been reorganized to expand a more comprehensive view of the wildlife within the entire basin (beyond the lake) including multiple species lists, and section headings denoting geographic areas within the basin.

- Autumn Muir commented that Craig Foster and Marty St. Louis's significant contributions should be noted in the chapter.
- Teresa Wicks noted that some language around birds, timing, usage should be cleaned up. She has forwarded her comments to Bobby, and Henry has followed up with her.
- Craig Foster asked about prioritization and received feedback that it can be done as needed.
- Theo requests that links to any relevant ODFW bird data be made available, and noted that we should streamline the species data (including info such as their protected status, etc).
- Ron asked about where the sources in the report are stored. Henry responded that OSU is managing the database, but needs to finalize the new additions
- Greg Green notes in the chat that there could be a table or appendix for listing all species with special status. These include: Fed and State T&E, Species of Concern, OR Conservation Strategy.

Upland Processes

Autumn reviewed the new Uplands Processes chapter, and noted that the content of the chapter comes from the Strategic Implementation Area Report.

Theo requests that a thorough check to ensure proper sourcing is done and that a note is made for any text that is taken from other sources.

Autumn and Hannah confirm that they will verify all sources and finalize writing.



Cultural Heritage/Lived Experience

Henry notes that this chapter has not undergone updates, but that further discussions have occurred with key experts and knowledge holders. A synthesis of these conversations will be included in the next version.

NEXT STEPS: All comments submitted by March 1st.

The JFF team will do a comprehensive read-through of the document. This will include a final check for formatting and citation accuracy/consistency. The JFF team will also check in with community leads to finalize their respective chapters following the submission of feedback.

2:45 - 3:00 p.m. Break

- Ron brought up that federal agencies should be involved in the process and asked how they will be engaged. Aaron responded that we could possibly have federal agencies involved in our June meeting. Follow-up on the front has occurred via email.
- Trish concurred and Ryan Houston (ONDA) noted their previous attempts on this front.
- Richard Pyzik mentioned that he can advocate for this project to the USFS.

3:00 - 3:30 p.m. Conceptual model for the basin

- Colleen Withers presented the conceptual diagrams for the basin, including narrative and spatial versions. She asked for feedback on additional ribbons, as well as the diagrams as a whole.
 - Greg Green suggested that the location of the map in the basin could be reflected with a specific ribbon. He also suggested the inclusion of a QR code.
- There was a general discussion of StoryMaps, as well as ways to make the diagram more interactive. Examples from the IMWJV were offered.
- Phillip Milburn suggested that a ribbon could cover the observed effects of climate change on precipitation patterns and ET. He stated that this could add further context to the drought section.
- Craig suggested that there be a ribbon for each chapter of the report
- Ashley noted that there could be ribbons on the cultural and historical context of the area or on the geological context.

3:30 - 3:45 p.m. What ideas did the group have for spending some of the Jubitz Foundation \$?

- There was a general discussion of the options in the Jubitz poll
- There was a suggestion that a film could be expensive- Aaron suggested that OSU could complete this for cheaper than the standard cost.
- Roadside kiosks could be put in for about 3k per kiosk.
- The NRCS has additional funding for more SNOTEL sites
- OWRD is also going to put an AGRimet station in the area.
- Storymapping the conceptual diagrams could be accomplished within the JFF/OSU purview



- There was a broad discussion of MOTUS stations, which would cost approximately 10k and support bird banding efforts. Vanessa referenced connectivity to Mono Lake and the overall system view, and offered her support if the group goes this route.
- Ron had concerns that a groundwater report would be expensive- Trish discussed a higher-level screening approach
- Scott Hynek (USGS) suggested we loop in Paisley High School for monitoring activities.
- Aaron stated that other money was available, and that the group could pitch for more.
- Teresa suggested that the group could try to incorporate various survey methods used to monitor birds in hard-to-reach areas. This could include MOTUS, PAMs, and people on the ground (such as the IMW or ECAS surveys). She suggested this would be the most effective approach.

3:45 - 4:00 p.m. What do we want to write up in terms of a “Strategy for investigations”

The Planning Committee is meeting on March 27th to discuss water budgets in the region and debrief this meeting.

4:00 p.m. Adjourn