

# Milton-Freewater Levee Project Team Minutes

August 18, 2010

The Milton-Freewater Levee Project Team met Wednesday, August 18, 2010 at 1:30 p.m. in the Albee Room of the Milton-Freewater Library.

The following Project Team members were present: Convener Senator David Nelson, Manford Anliker and Vern Rodighiero (Milton-Freewater Water Control District), Commissioner Larry Givens (Umatilla County), Mayor Lewis Key (Milton-Freewater), City Manager Linda Hall (Milton-Freewater), Christine Kelly (EPA), Scott Fairley (ERT Coordinator), John Zerba (Hudson Bay District Improvement Company), John Stephenson (U.S. Fish & Wildlife), Pat Vernon (DEQ), Tamra Mabbott (Umatilla County), Sarah Branum (BPA), Diane Driscoll (NOAA-Fisheries), Jed Volkman (CTUIR), Brian Wolcott (WWBWC), Cheryl York (Chamber of Commerce), Mike Garten (Community Member), Herb Bessey (USACE) and Project Manager Dick Townsend

Other guests: Ray Naff (Governor's Office), John Wells (Anderson Perry), Jonathan Thompson (CTUIR), Vicki Lee (M-F WCD), LTC Dave Caldwell (USACE), Leanne Steadman (City of Milton-Freewater), Tracy Schwarz (USACE), Andy Porter (Walla Walla Union Bulletin), Wade Foster (U.S. Representative Walden's Office), Alice Nelson, Phil Scheuers (Rep. Greg Smith's office), Melanie Hall (Valley Herald) and Samantha Tipler (East Oregonian).

In the absence of Convener David Nelson, who would be arriving later from another engagement, Mayor Key called the meeting to order at 1:35 p.m. He welcomed everyone to the Milton-Freewater Levee Project Team meeting. Those present introduced themselves. He asked if there were any changes to the June 30, 2010 minutes which had previously been emailed to everyone. Diane Driscoll referred to Page 2, paragraph 7 where it was stated that she didn't have a problem with vegetation removal on System "S". She wished to correct the minutes and clarify that removal of all vegetation was not what she meant. Diane said what flexibility is given in vegetation removal in various areas will likely depend on numerous circumstances. She expressed her interest in continuing to monitor and work with the District on this issue. Christine Kelly had an amendment to the minutes. On Page 3 (top paragraph) the language is "She also felt what was being proposed (goats) would not be in conflict of the Clean Water Act." In lieu of that language she proposed the following: "She also felt that temporary use of goats along the levee would not be in conflict of the Clean Water Act." There was Project Team consensus to make those changes to the minutes and they were approved as amended.

The next item of business was the report from the Work Group. Brian Wolcott said he and John Stephenson had been working on the use of goats to get rid of some vegetation on the levee. The next day he would be touring the levee with a goat herder to assess the cost and use of goats. Brian said that approximately one mile of levee could be grazed for about \$5,000. John said he would apply for funding of this pilot project after October 1<sup>st</sup>. There was also discussion on vegetation issues in the Sacramento area where a temporary compromise on a vegetation management plan between the Army Corps and environmental interests had been worked on.

Manford Anliker, President of the M-F Water Control District gave a brief report on the November election and the District bond measure. He said they are looking at all options to fix the levy and the District is studying numerous options so the problems can be fixed appropriately. The Board will be having a meeting on August 24th and the amount of the bond measure will be determined at that time. He said they have studied a small levee fix as well as a comprehensive fix, which could cost as much as \$15 million. What ever the amount, Manford said any money left over would be given back to the tax payers. Currently the tax rate for the District is about 7 cents/\$1,000 of AV. Which only brings in about \$20,000 + a year. Manford also said they were looking at some other funding possibilities. It was stressed that this project is done for the safety of the community and it is important for all district property owners to participate.

There was discussion on the grade control structure down stream of the drop structure. Herb Bessey said a more appropriate designation for this project would be “a fish migration enhancement structure”. There was interest by several parties to coordinate this project with other activities of the District when they address their levee maintenance efforts.

Brain Wolcott gave an update on the Watershed Council’s EPA 319 grant that was recently awarded. Efforts from this grant will enhance the work that the Corps and Anderson Perry will be doing to stabilize the Walla Walla River. The use of Lidar was discussed. Several parties were appreciative of the collaborative work between WWBWC efforts and the levee project.

Linda Hall gave an update on Flood Insurance efforts in the community. She said that the Flood Plain Management Ordinance would be adopted by the Council on August 23<sup>rd</sup>. Linda said they have had a successful public outreach effort and local insurance companies have reported writing about 400 policies thus far, which equates to about \$109,000 in premiums.

Wade Foster reported that HR 5114 has passed out of the U.S. House and is in the Senate’s Community Development and Finance Committee, on which Senator Merkley sits. No hearing is anticipated until mid-Sept. The bill would place a moratorium on flood insurance requirements and also is the omnibus bill for many FEMA operating provisions.

“In-kind” forms were passed around and Brian Wolcott asked for everyone to please fill them out and return them to him. They will help with current and future grants received by the WWBWC.

A signing ceremony was then held for the Declaration of Cooperation. Senator Nelson presided and asked Ray Naff to make comments. Ray said he was encouraged by the group’s efforts thus far and reminded them that there was still a lot of hard work ahead. He wished them well as they continued to work on the project. He thanked the Senator for his role as Convener. Dick Townsend said there have been some setbacks in this project. One was getting a new M-F WCD Board appointed, and the other, a recent USACE levee inspection report which showed significant levee disrepair beyond what was previously thought. Dick echoed Ray’s comments saying, there was still a lot of work ahead. He thanked the new District members for stepping up and the Project Team for their continued work on behalf of the community.

Certificates were given to those who have participated in the process over the last year. Those parties that had not already signed the DoC were asked to do so at that time. Each member of the Project Team also signed the Logo Board.

Senator Nelson indicated that it would be a good idea to reconvene the Project Team following the November Election. There was general agreement that this would be a good time to meet. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned