

Lower Willow Creek Irrigation Project

March 1, 2018 meeting notes

- Introductions – The following people attended the meeting: Kip Krebs, Joe Taylor, Judy Harris, Joe Van Lierop, Deacon Heideman, Jared Quisenberry, Ron Wilson, Peter Mitchell, Christina Kirwin, Rodger Lathrop, and Herb Williams.
- Purpose – Kip Krebs describe the current situation irrigators are facing on the Lower Willow Creek. Farmers are experiencing low water or no water in the later parts of the growing season. Kip and his neighbors are seeking a more reliable supply of water to irrigate their crops. Peter explained to the committee that the Port has statutory authority to own and operate a water distribution system, that the City of Arlington has a water right it would like to certificate, and that the Port's Willow Creek property is at the mouth of Willow Creek and the Columbia River.
- Maps, Farms, water - Herb Winters - Gilliam County Soil and Water sought to clarify his understanding of the wants and needs of farmers in Willow Creek bottom. Herb placed a map on the table of the area and each member discussed their farm, current irrigated acreage, and potential acreage. Kip drew in the name and location of each farm on the map. There are approximately 15 farm entities on the Lower Willow Creek irrigation area that are irrigating approximately 1,500 acres. The group thought approximately an additional 3,000 acres that could be brought into production if water was available, more if land on the upper portion and western sides of Eight Mile become a part of the project area. Most of new land discussed would be located on the mesa between Willow Creek and Eight Mile valleys.
- The first priority for the group is developing a reliable water supply for existing irrigators on Willow Creek. The second priority is to develop water for adjacent acreage.

Christina discussed the particulars of the grant application and the three primary requirements of the grant, ecological, economical, and cultural impacts. She also discussed the time requirement of the grant and the staff time to apply for and administer the grant. Peter said he would assist in writing the grant and could also use Port staff to administer the grant. Peter did need technical assistance from SWCD for their mapping and modeling tools particularly their shape files. Peter reiterated to the group the Port's board has made this project a priority project for the Port. The Port would also be willing to assist with locating matching funds to support grant requirements. Christina will be seeking approval of the SWCD board to assist the farmer's request for their portion of the staffing requirement.

- Summary – the next meeting will be held on March 22 at Kip's home. JR Cook, Northeast Oregon Water Association, executive director, will be invited to address the group and discuss potential ways a project could be structured to ensure all water rights are protected and enhanced as well as other ideas and methods that have proven to be successful in the Umatilla water basin.

Next meeting date: March 22 @ 5:00 p.m.