

MINUTES
VEGETATION MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
March 14, 2007

MEMBERS PRESENT: Peter Graham, Mike Koivula, Chris Melotti, Ross Penhallegon, Jan Nelson, Kai Williams, James LaRue, John Sundquist

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Arno Nelson, Orin Schumacher, Debby Woodruff, Ollie Snowden

B/CC PRESENT: None

GUESTS PRESENT: None

PUBLIC PRESENT: Jan Wroncy

Jan Nelson called the meeting to order at 5:33 p.m.

I. PUBLIC COMMENT

Jan Wroncy presented handouts about Giant Knotweed and went over some information regarding beneficial properties such as an herbal laxative and diuretic. The long shoots are edible if not eaten excessively and taste somewhat like rhubarb. It is used as an Asian medical herb and the EPA has registered an extract of Knotweed as a pesticide. It suppresses fungal growth especially powdery mildew and gray mold and could be used inside a greenhouse as a fungicide. She encouraged the committee to find ways to harvest it aggressively as long as it hasn't been heavily sprayed. Maybe in a few years it would be gone. Another weed she researched was Meadow Knapweed. There is a high infestation of it in the Triangle Lake area. It was spread by flooding. It doesn't like to be tilled. It is happily consumed by sheep and can be controlled by sheep. Sheep love the blossoms as well as goats, chickens, and pigs. It is a problem on the roadsides. It does not grow well in the shade and needs a fair amount of water. It does not grow high up on the banks due to lack of water. It is controllable. Wroncy heard from ODOT that there is going to be a meeting soon with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and other agencies on how to get this eliminated. As long as Lane County is still considering using herbicides and is not stopping land owners from spraying illegally on the roadsides, she encourages keeping the no-spray areas. It is very important for those having organic management practices to have the no-spray areas. Schumacher mentioned that he will be meeting with Dennis Joll of ODOT tomorrow and the BLM and the Siuslaw Watershed Council to look at the Meadow Knapweed situation in the Triangle Lake Area. It will not be a public meeting. Wroncy mentioned that they had talked in the past about introducing an insect to the population to reduce the Knapweed. Schumacher commented that the ODA did release them about 5 yrs ago. It was believed to be the Scarlet Moth. There has not been much success to date. Wroncy stated that the reason it didn't take so well is that we have had severe flooding since then. She also said one of big reasons for spread of the Knapweed is the illegal dirt bike riding. She stated that the County waits too long to mow it and then the taller stems lie down on the road and get tracked on the vehicle tires. Wroncy states that she believes there is a market for Knotweed. She referred to the handouts she distributed at the meeting. Wroncy stated that there was aerial spraying with DT not far away from her and that helicopters did fly over her area.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTESMotion:

Melotti moved to approve the Minutes of February 7, 2007, as corrected. Williams seconded. All present voted in favor. Motion passed.

III. GENERAL COMMENT

Melotti commented on the "Sparkless Bark" product that was mentioned in the Register Guard recently. It is made up of ground asphalt and ground shake shingles. It was recommended by the consultant hired by the County. VMAC made a motion of 2005 to not use this product. There is now a toxic clean-up by ODOT to remove it. J. Nelson asked if it was being used in road building. Melotti stated it wasn't.

Schumacher mentioned the situation regarding Doug Moser's passing. J. Nelson stated that he died recently and mentioned a gathering that is being held. Sundquist provided more information the gathering called the "Revolution" on March 25th at Moser's house up the McKenzie. Nelson passed around a card for people to sign. Melotti asked that the County send a condolence card to his wife, Carol Ack. J. Nelson mentioned that Moser attended Yale.

J. Nelson asked about a contact list for members. She asked if anyone objected to being on the contact list which includes home phone numbers, email addresses. No one objected and Woodruff passed around the list. Woodruff asked everyone to let her know if there are any changes to the list. LaRue asked to amend the drink list to add his name to it.

Penhallegon gave a brief description of his recent trip to Tajikistan.

IV. BUDGET - SNOWDEN

Ollie handed out a spreadsheet to members showing the latest version of the budget information regarding cuts and revenues/expenditures for Public Works. He explained to the committee how this year is different compared to previous years because of the Secure Rural Schools (SRS) factor and that because the County may not be getting this funding; there will be major changes to the budget. The County Road Fund gets about \$40 million in money each year. Half of that funding comes from SRS. It has been in existence since 1908, It came into effect when Congress was setting aside National Forest Reserves in the Western States and local officials complained that money was being taken off the tax roles. In return Congress agreed to share the timber revenues from these lands. The fund expired late October and has not been renewed. The County now has to make a new budget with the assumption they will not be getting \$20 million dollars for the road fund budget, but there is still a possibility of a 1 year extension. There has been an attachment to the War Fund Bill for this extension. Peter Defazio is optimistic about the renewal. The President could still veto this bill. At this point the budget is being planned without this funding. The new income tax that the Commissioners enacted will not help the road fund. The tax is designed to help pay for public safety ,It will have no effect whatsoever on the road fund. There has been talk about local revenue taxes. There is possible interest in a County-wide gas tax, a system development charge in rural areas. Snowden doesn't think it will be a big revenue generator. Surveyor's fees have been increased and facility permit fees may be increased. The Board has expressed interest in a county-wide vehicle registration fee. The Board could enact this fee but it must be referred to the voters for approval. This may change. The service priority list was created with budget #2 in mind. The County-City Road Partnership is not on this list because it has been done away with already. \$3 million had been going to this in prior years. Another cut is the Capital Improvement Projects that aren't highly leveraged have been cut as well. The goal of the priority list is to reach \$20 million in reductions. Snowden went over some of the lines on the list and explained how they were being affected based on reduction savings and how many positions would be eliminated. He explained that even with

these changes, we are still far away from reaching the needed \$20 million reduction. J Nelson asked for definitions of some abbreviations on the list. FTE stands for Full Time Equivalent. Ollie explained how the Inmate Road Crew would be affected by the cuts. Because there would be Union 626 workers laid off because of the budget cuts, the Inmate crew will go away due to 626 contract language. The sheriff's crew did provide brushing, blackberry removals, etc. Maintenance on Local County roads will be significantly cut back. The concept is that the County will continue to do safety measures such as signing, clearing of downed trees, etc. They wouldn't be able to do much else and the vegetation management activities would be cut back drastically.

Ollie explained that with budget #2, everything below the line on this list would be cut, and to the extent that we continue to do services above the line, we would backfill that with \$12 million of our \$30 million road fund balance. The Board agreed with this. The Board has a chance to add back some Capital Improvement Projects (CIP). There are 4 projects that can't wait that long. There are 3 roads that are related to Assisted Housing Projects and the 4th is the Bob Straub Parkway. These were scheduled to go to bid this summer. The Board decided today to go ahead with these projects. That takes another \$6 million from the fund balance. This is all County Road Fund money. Half of that money is from SRS and most of the rest is from the State highway fund and weight mile fees and registration fees. If the County gets the Federal Funding by the end of April, the Board will give direction to do a modified budget. If so, everything above the weigh master's line on the list would be added back into the budget for another year. But then we would have to evaluate again in 2 years. The congressional delegation is saying that the reauthorization will not look like it has for the last 6 years. One proposal talked about a reauthorization that would take affect after the 1 yr extension and it would be a step down proposal that would be 90%, 80%, 70%, and 60% and then no more money. The problem is that the first time this reauthorization was passed, there was a huge budget surplus and the East and Midwest Senators look at this as a West Coast bailout. Also the Idaho and New Mexico Senators think Oregon gets too much money from SRS and they want to get more money and for Oregon to get less. The projects added back to the budget today total about \$638,000 and the Bob Straub Parkway is \$6 million. There are other projects on the CIP that will be looked at more in May. Some may be added back on. The County would have to redo standards to vegetation maintenance and then if someone had a crash because the stop sign was obscured by vegetation, the County has a better defense if the Board has clearly directed the level of service the County is to provide on local roads. Snowden explained that 43.5 positions would be eliminated from Public Works (PW). 40. 5 of those would be in engineering, 5 from Land Management (LMD), 2 from PW administration. 20 positions would be cut from the road maintenance 626 union, 2.5 from AFSCME union and 21.5 positions from ADMIN union. At this point Schumacher and Arno would need to make this work with certain priorities such as bridges and guardrails, collectors and arterial roads. J. Nelson wanted to know if a new income tax was looked at to help. Snowden said no, the income tax is only for public safety. Melotti asked about charging utility fees in County right of ways. Snowden explained that the County cannot do that. The County cannot charge a franchise fee either. Koivula asked about money sharing with Lane Transit District (LTD). Snowden explained that LTD actually wants money from the County road fund to help with the bus rapid transit. Koivula asked if the work on Bob Straub Parkway could be held off for a few years. Snowden explained that they have a time obligation to do the work meanwhile costs continue to grow. J Nelson asked if the Governor's office is talking about helping out the County. Originally they said no but now they are looking at considering ways to help such as increasing state gas tax. Sundquist asked for clarifications again on the budget currently vs. proposed. Snowden explained that they are already working on a budget #3 which would be somewhere between budget #1 and #2 which would add some services back to the list. Sundquist talked about bio-swailes and low maintenance plans for the future. Snowden stated that the County may have to lower the standards. Arno explained the bio-swailes situation and the right-of-way widths, etc.

Schumacher explained that doing the bio-swales is much easier when you are building something brand new rather than going in to try to regrade, etc. an existing area. An example is Bob Straub Parkway. LaRue stated that this doesn't take care of the Blackberries. Sundquist stated that it does keep the weeds out by establishing a ground cover. Schumacher stated that it is primarily used for water filtration requirements. J. Nelson would like to look at different approaches for different areas where maintenance is less needed. The grass in her area doesn't grow very tall and wouldn't need as much maintenance. Arno explained that it is cheaper to keep up with the maintenance more often than to wait until the vegetation is taller. Snowden stated that the money is an issue with the maintenance. LaRue asked if the methods of maintenance have been considered such as spraying in high traffic right-of-ways. Sundquist stated that the audit from the outside said it will cost more than 4 times as much as mowing. Snowden stated that the internal auditor came to a different conclusion. Arno stated that the inmate work crew helps a lot with the maintenance and we would lose that crew. J. Nelson stated that blackberries help to stop erosion. Sundquist asked about the strategic plan. How would this all affect the vegetation maintenance? He thinks there are a lot of things that haven't been explored yet. Snowden stated that he recommended that the County maintain a full range of maintenance services even on local roads through the end of September and doesn't expect to see any cutback until after that period. Sundquist still encourages bio-swales even on established areas. Arno explained that bio-swales don't prevent culvert work and are not typically built beside the road. Sundquist explained they saw it from the Marion County presentation and Yamhill County presentation. He explained that they are a much shallower ditch with grass or native plants to filter the runoff. Snowden explained that other counties have faced this problem and some counties have formed road districts to go out and maintain roads that the county could not. J. Nelson requested any information on the counties that are already doing this so VMAC can look into their plans. J. Nelson stated that there are people on Central Road who are already doing their own roadside management such as mowing. Snowden explained that under the proposal he presented to the Board today, things are the same with the road work until at least September.

V. FIREWOOD PROGRAM - SCHUMACHER

Schumacher explained that Johnson Rd did not have Black Locust, but old Marcola Rd is covered with Black Locust. Melotti explained that it is a huge stand of Locust. Melotti stated that it is pretty old based on the rings he counted. He would like to do some research and obtain history. Melotti explained that this is an invasive species and would be a huge undertaking to remove. Schumacher explained that this is an issue of bi-product use and what to do with the wood that we take out from storms and removal operations and what do we do with it. He has contacted an Urban Wood Co. about how they get their wood. They work with the City of Springfield to take the bi-product. Lane County sometimes hauls the wood to Lane Forest Products or stores it. There is the possibility of dropping off the wood and letting this company mill it. The homeowner has first rights to that wood. Then the problem is how much can these mills take and they may only want certain types of wood such as hard wood. It may work for smaller sites. Schumacher explained that the Black Locust owners have not been contacted yet and most of it is not even in the County ROW.

Jan Wroncy stated that she has a strong objection to the removal of the Black Locust. She stated that it is a premium wood and doesn't have to be treated and is a very good wood for fence post. Schumacher stated that it has a great bi-product use but it does become an issue as a ROW problem. Schumacher stated that it is listed as a nuisance on Lane County's list not necessarily others agencies. Melotti stated that it is listed on other agencies lists. Schumacher explained that if we have someone who is interested in using this wood, then he is all for it. Schumacher explained that if we make it available to the public, there are issues with safety and

right of ways. Nelson wanted to know if there could be a stockpile somewhere where people can go once a year to pick up wood. Arno explained that then it is an issue of management and it has to be fair and equal. By the time the wood is cut up and loaded, how much money is actually going to be saved? Schumacher stated that when it is convenient and makes sense, he could see it happening. J. Nelson stated that a man down the road from her has a saw mill set up and he may be a possibility for use by the County. J Nelson suggested that she could make up a list of various places to use as stockpiles for the County. Arno explained that there are many other issues involved in doing this. Schumacher will look into this issue.

VI. ADOPT-A-ROAD

There was not enough time to discuss this topic in tonight's meeting. It will be moved to next month's meeting. Melotti was going to present information regarding his adopt-a-road section and the status, but he needed some more information and maps which Arno stated he can supply. Brief discussion on right-of-way.

VII. IVM STATUS UPDATE , ANNUAL REPORT - SCHUMACHER

Schumacher is still willing to work on the Annual Report, but needs to present to the Board next month if VMAC is ready to accept and agree on the report as written.

Sundquist asked if there are other Knotweed sites that will be targeted for herbicide applications. Schumacher stated that there is a River Road site he would like to see targeted this year, and there are also other areas out on Row River.

This Annual Report is for Dec 06-Dec 07. Schumacher handed this out to the committee last month so members could prepare questions.

J. Nelson asked if it was inferred that the methods that were unsuccessful, would be treated differently. Schumacher referred to the back page that states that until the budget is established, these planned projects are tentative.

Sundquist asked about Public Safety projects on page 4. Schumacher explained this covers removing shrubs, tree concerns, landscape materials, reseeding grass concerns, noxious weed issues, nuisance issues, and site distance concerns, these are projects beyond just routine maintenance. This would cover complaints, and responding to calls of issues in ROW.

Sundquist stated that the Annual Report is ok with him. Sundquist motioned to approve the Annual Report and Melotti and LaRue seconded the motion. Nelson commented on proposed herbicide issues statement. Schumacher stated that is part of the last resort policy. Why would we use an herbicide if it wasn't effective? Schumacher explained that they are testing it as a comparison of efficacy compared to other alternative methods. If they find it is ineffective they will not continue to use it. Koivula opposed due to the discussion of cost and suggested another column be added to the table. Schumacher explained that cost is based on the County's budget. There is a cap and the money has to be looked at. Motion passed with one opposed.

VII. ROAD MAINTENANCE UPDATE - ARNO

Arno explained that road maintenance started on 4 -10 hour days which is more productive. By the end of next week, all the slides will be cleaned up. There were some big slides. One example was a slide that cost \$270,000 on W. Boundary Rd. There is one more on Hamm Rd and one on Big Creek over by Florence.

They will be doing AC (asphalt-concrete) overlays. They clean things up such as driveway approaches, cross pipes, ditches, etc. This is about 100 miles per year of overlay work. They will be starting this in April or May. Sundquist wanted to know if they anticipated cost going up. Arno stated he hoped not, since last year there was a 38% increase. There will be asphalt products bid openings in April and they will know more than of costs.

APPROVED: _____

Sundquist wanted to know if the repaired slides are hydro seeded. Arno stated that it depends on the area. W. Boundary & Hamm Road only require to be built back with rip rap. Big Creek will have hydro seeding. The smaller ones just require hand seeding.

Koivula explained that members usually get a copy of the work plan. Woodruff explained that she had handed out a blank work plan at the last meeting so members could fill it out.

Koivula stated that instead of advertising for a replacement for Doug Moser, VMAC should use the previous applications to find a replacement. Schumacher will check into the possibility of doing that.

VIII. NEW ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING – WED., APRIL 11:

- Adopt-a-Road
- Committee assignments-Bio-swales, Unions, and Illegal sprays in the row
- Update Work Plan
- Committee Member Replacement

Meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

Debby Woodruff, Recording Secretary