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6/12/23

Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board
OWEB Grants Review Committee
75 Summer St NE, Salem, OR 97301

Dear Committee members:

I was informed by the Council Coordinator that the Lower Columbia River Watershed Council has received a “no fund” capacity grant recommendation from OWEB staff.

I attended the LCRWC meetings for many years as an “ex-officio” partner (OSU Extension), helping as I could with membership and clientele recruitment, providing technical advice and recruiting outside expertise as needed. I was elected to the Council about 7 years ago and have, over the last year, been the Secretary.

The combination of the pandemic and the inability of a previous coordinator to translate some good concepts into on the ground action was frustrating for all of us. The Council came close to disbanding when it let the previous coordinator go about a year ago but chose to move forward.

There is a lot to be done within the LCRWC. While most of the culvert passage work has been done under the guidance and hard work of Margaret Magruder, the previous coordinator until she was elected as the Columbia County Commissioner, a lot of other watershed improvement opportunities still remain.

The Clatskanie river system is a high priority at the state/regional level and the current coordinator has made significant strides in engaging the key industrial and small woodland owners that abut the river and its tributaries. This is a relatively small group of owners/managers for most of the riparian habitat.

The relationship with the Columbia SWCD has continued (they are the LCRWC fiscal managers) and have been significantly improved with the current Coordinator.

Getting Council engagement is a challenge with less than 5,500 total residents within the Clatskanie School District Boundaries. That represents ~ 90% of the anadromous fish habitat within the Council’s border. Many residents commute to work in the Longview/Kelso area. That said, the Council has had several potential new members attend recent meetings.

I know this is a tough decision. Please feel free to call or email me if you wish to discuss this further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chip Bubl". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Chip Bubl

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June 8, 2023

TO: OWEB Grants Committee

Re: Lower Columbia River Watershed Council Capacity Grant

Dear Committee Members,

It has come to our attention that the Lower Columbia River Watershed Council (LCRWC) has not been recommended for capacity funding. The LCRWC has been an active and vital participant in implementing the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds since the Council was formed in 1996. The LCRWC has been a significant partner with Columbia County in many projects over the years, especially in important culvert replacements to address fish passage issues. The LCRWC encompasses highly significant stream reaches in Columbia County and has historically had active relationships with landowners and successfully implemented many effective projects.

It appears that the issues of membership and management play a role in the OWEB staff recommendation to not fund the LCRWC. We have reached out to the Columbia SWCD and OSU Extension in Columbia County and would like to offer staff support to assist in the development of a plan to remedy these issues and maintain the operations of the LCRWC. We request that the capacity funding for the LCRWC be granted for the next biennium so that the Council would have the funding to continue operations and to work with us while we address the underlying issues.

We would be happy to meet with OWEB staff to receive the guidance and information required to successfully carry out this project to support the LCRWC in meeting the necessary criteria. Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

Casey Garrett, Chair

Kellie Jo Smith, Commissioner

Margaret Magruder, Commissioner