



Council still working amid COVID-19 economic struggles...

July 9, 2020

Despite economic uncertainty across the nation, the Lake County Umbrella Watershed Council (LCUWC) is continuing to assist Lake County landowners with watershed health improvements.

Among many funding partners, the Council often cooperates with agencies like the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife, Oregon Department of Forestry and Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) to fund watershed enhancement projects. The LCUWC is currently managing over 20 watershed projects valued at more than \$2,000,000.

The economic impact of the COVID-19 shutdown has forced organization's like OWEB to reduce its operating budget. OWEB is the LCUWC's primary funding source, but the Council is still optimistic about the 2020-2021 biennium as it seeks to partner with other agencies and successfully complete projects with existing OWEB agreements.

OWEB held a two-day Board meeting June 10-11, 2020. The Board decided to "rebalance" its current budget to award some project proposals (submitted Fall of 2019), but withhold enough funding to award more project proposals to be submitted July of 2020, but awarded in March 2021.

The Board also agreed to postpone new Focused Investment Partnership (FIP) applications to a later date. A FIP grant seeks to fund a large-scale project or series of projects up to 12million dollars over a 6-year period. The Warner Basin Aquatic Habitat Partnership, consisting of the LCUWC and many partners, was recently awarded FIP funding for a series of fish passage and habitat improvement in the Warner Valley. Before the new FIP grant cycle was postponed, the LCUWC through the Klamath Lake Forest Health Partnership (KLFHP) was preparing to apply for a Forest Health FIP. The LCUWC remains optimistic and will be prepared to submit its application when the next FIP cycle arrives. Instead, the LCUWC will apply for smaller forest health projects to continue its efforts during the interim period.

OWEB did determine it can fully fund its existing agreements with current grantees. The LCUWC has 16 existing agreements with OWEB and will continue work on these projects.

OWEB's future budget is uncertain at this time, but the group will provide an update after the next financial quarter. If you would like more information about OWEB and its COVID-19 response, please visit www.oregon.gov/oweb.

If you have any questions regarding LCUWC funding and current projects, please visit www.lakecountywsc.com or contact Colleen Withers (Program Manager, Fiscal Administrator, 541-610-3134), Brandi Neider (Stream & Riparian Coordinator, 541-219-0493), or Autumn Larkins (Upland Coordinator, 541-817-5649).