

## MANAGER'S REPORT - DECEMBER 2022

This report provides an overview of District issues and projects that we have been working on since the last board meeting.

**OPERATIONS:** Ben will be at the meeting to provide updates on the various operational issues.

**DISTRICT CREW:** Two out of three ain't bad. Of the three employees (one permanent and two temp) we hired last month, Ryan Patrick Stewart is still here as a permanent hire and Johnny Lopez is here part-time as a temp through the winter. The third hire did not show up as he found another job. At this time, we have 1) Ben de los Santos, our superintendent. 2) Alan Svatonsky who is our CDL driver and pesticide applicator. Both are experienced in ditchriding, repairs and can run the equipment. 3) Daniel Rector was hired in July, coming from CID and is taking Tassie's place – main canal ditchrider, learning Irrigon, learning repairs, has experience cleaning canal with gradall, not excavator yet. 4) Ryan Stewart who is young and coming from Rotchy, who did the sewer work in Irrigon, and other construction work. He has travelled and is an equipment operator who understands maintaining the equipment. He doesn't know backhoe much, but he has that generational "thing" and knows how to use Google and You Tube. He worked with Alan to do the maintenance we needed on the backhoe and trouble-shoot an issue with one of the dump trucks.

We have two temps – Shara, who did the Boardman run last year remains and is currently supervising and working with the inmate crew. She has worked with Daniel on repairs. We are considering using her to help Ben's shop organization; keep the repair and maintenance records up to date; and keep work order information in front of the crew. We can use her in the office at times to help where Chris did in the past. For now, she will likely start off as the Boardman ditchrider next year. She works 6 – 6.5 hrs. daily. Johnny is the other temp and he is helping where needed. Both temps will be kept busy this winter.

We have one permanent opening and we have been searching for the right person. I believe we have an opportunity. A couple moved to Southshore Drive three years ago. She was working in Pendleton and he with the Roza Irrigation District in Sunnyside. Roza has the same Aqua System gates and telemetry as we do and have recently upgraded. His job title is "Pump and Maintenance Mechanic". He has been there 11 years, starting out as ditchrider and welder/fabricator. He has applied to the District. Ben and I met with him last week. With the gas prices and his wife now being at Good Shepherd in Hermiston, he is considering taking a job with WEID. We cannot match his pay at Roza, he understands, but he is willing to look at less pay for the right package I don't typically take hires to the Board, but this is a significant hire for the District and we will need to work with the budget to make this position happen.

**CANAL & LATERAL CLEANUP** The AIC crew from Two Rivers will be here through this week, removing weeds along the Relocation lateral and cleaning the Boardman laterals. The mowing along the main canal continues as we have crew and time.

**CROSSINGS:** Lisa and I met with Reclamation in Hood River about the crossing issues. Mainly that we are not getting noticed and come in as a spoiler when letters are not correctly written and don't address all the issues. Of course, we didn't say that and just asked that a consistent format be used that includes getting any environmental or structural issues out as soon as possible and getting a copy of the application to us Chet and the Field Office Manager from Bend also discussed ideas. After that meeting, Chet put out what Reclamation's guidelines for crossing work are:

Bev, thanks for the conversation and concerns raised with the Regional Director, Jennifer Carrington at the OWRC Conference. Per the Regional Business Practice and Solicitor guidance Reclamation is to issue Letter Authorizations to the utility companies wanting to cross or bore under Reclamation facilities. Per this guidance the applicant receiving the Letter Authorization is agreeing to the conditions in the authorization which are based on the Applicants application. The Umatilla Field Office will continue to allow the District to sign the Letter Authorization with their concurrence. Prior to this the District will be able to view the application and work with the Realty Specialist and other UFO employees to make sure the District and Reclamations needs are met, before a Letter Authorization is issued. Reclamation will ensure field staff is available to perform onsite visits prior to the Authorization should the District request this. We will also coordinate with the District if onsite field inspections are needed while the applicant is crossing or boring under a District/Reclamation facility.

I asked how he and Engineer, Matt, are included in the process (as that has been an issue in the past). He replied:

We get a land use review form filled out by Wendy Morrison and it also has the application and drawings with the package. The Land Use Review goes to Matt, Ricky Hlawek and myself for review which generally covers the engineering, O&M and NEPA.

And more from Chet ....

Wendy (Morrison) correct me if I am wrong however we have 30 days to acknowledge we received the application. It is my understanding that the application will be forwarded to WEID by Wendy Morrison. Can I suggest once WEID receives the application try and respond within 30 days to determine if the application is complete and then set up a field visit. I would like to keep this process of receiving the application to the application is complete as agreed upon by WEID and Reclamation to under 60 day if possible which I think is a reasonable amount of time.

Of course, we can agree to this. If Reclamation keeps up their part, works with us to assure the application is complete, we can move these applications much quicker. I really applaud Chet for digging into this as the guidelines were already there (I know because I read them last year). The local office just needs to follow them. And we now ALL have specific direction.

**WINDWAVE CROSSING AT I-84:** Due to weather, we postponed our on-site meeting. This week, Ben talked to ODOT and they indicated that they would need to have their bridge inspector be brought in on this project, due to the siphon. We have alerted Windwave (who is in denial) and Reclamation and are trying to get something set up.

**SPECIAL BOARD MEETING.** We will meet with the CTUIR representatives on Wednesday, December 14 at 1:45 pm in a special meeting to review, discuss, consider and possibly take action on the tribal water right settlement. I may take pictures, just sayin....

**TELEMETRY COMMUNICATION/ROCK CONTRACT:** Cecil Rock came by and gave us an invoice for renting the equipment to place the antenna for \$2800. The first authorization of \$29,578 is complete (paid in 2021 and 2022). The sites are communicating except the siphon, which needs antenna adjustment. He will give us a bid on the new tower at the office. We will review his contract and work as part of our budget discussion at the Thursday board meeting.

There is still work to do on the gates. Repairs and upgrades are possible. Will put \$10,000 in budget for this work.

**BUDGETS:** Working on budgets and hope to have them for distribution at Wednesday special meeting.

**BOARD POLICY:** You have copies of the updated board policy. Please review it and be ready to make changes and take action at the upcoming Board meeting.

**GRANTS/MODERNIZING OUR CANAL:** I have identified and contacted someone to help us with applying for the DEQ Revolving Loan grant and/or OWEB grant. It is Marc Thalacker. As Manager of Three Sisters, he had led the way on finding funding for many districts and helping FCA grow. He and his wife have a consulting firm, specializing in helping small districts. They will come to our district in January. I believe they are the folks to help us get additional funding, using Senator Merkely's support.

**FEDERAL INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING:** I put our application in for the additional funds of \$60,000 under the federal infrastructure act to complete our work on the Gattenbein corner project. The project involves drainage and lining the canal.

**OWRC CONFERENCE/DIRECTOR:** Lisa and I attended the OWRC conference. Vern, you were missed. As always, there is a lot of information and updates on the federal and state levels. As important are the outreach opportunities to other managers, district employees, state and federal folks. I retired from the Board of Directors, a position I have served for 25 years representing WEID plus three or so years when in Hood River. Lisa will take my place on the Board. Ray Kopacz also retired and his replacement will serve on the Board. Fortunately, Annette Kirkpatrick, HID, is an officer so Umatilla is well represented with these three. I will attend a few meetings and try to attend the Tri-State group.

**MANAGER RECOGNITION:** I really want to thank the Board (especially Dalarie and Vern) and Lisa for their nomination to the SDAO committee for myself as Manager of the Year. I guess I am the MOY. Boy, what an honor! The videographer showed up last week, on Monday to do his video. Since it was so icy, I thought he might not make it, but he did. We will get to review the video before prime time. The actual presentation will be at the SDAO conference in Sun River on Feb. 10 and 11. They always have a good conference with relevant information

for our Districts. We will be listening closely to the new contracting rules. Lisa and I both plan to attend. She has been to several and, if you recall, finish their Leadership program last year. But for now, about me and thanks a lot. I really appreciate this recognition coming so close to the end of my career. But, how close is it??? I remain on the rolling two-year plan.

**POWER BILLS:** With Lisa being ill around Thanksgiving, attending the OWRC conference and being ill again, the power bills have not gone out. She is working on them. They will have a January 31 due date.

**HOT TOPICS:** There are two “hot topics” being talked about at conferences – the new Employee Family Leave Act and Cybersecurity. Lisa has information on these and will discuss them at the Board meeting. SDAO is making the push on cyber security, FYI.

**CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY:** Some of our folks will continue working between the Christmas and New Year holiday. Unfortunately, this year, a lot of employees have been using their PTO on sick leave. The office will be closed December 23 – 30. Lisa will be in to check mail and do payroll on the 29 and 30<sup>th</sup>.