



Wasco County Soil and Water Conservation District
Board Meeting Minutes – April 8, 2026

Directors: Bill Hammel Jeff Crump Bob Krein
Stan Shephard Larry Powell Shawn Sorensen

Staff: Shilah Olson Dana Woods Abbie Forrest
Drake Gilbert Allie Marker Scott Susi

Staff via Teleconference: Karen Lamson Samantha Filbin

Guests:
Wasco SWCD: Pat Davis, Director Emeritus
NRCS: Emily Huth, District Conservationist
FSA: Lissa Biehn, County Executive Director

Guests via Teleconference:
Wasco Co. Tax: Jill Amery, Assessor
OSU Extension: Jacob Powell, County Agent
Wy'East RC&D: Robert Wallace, Executive Director

1:00 PM Call to Order

Bill called the meeting to order and asked if there were any additions or changes to the agenda. Shilah apologized to the Board for the lengthy agenda and noted that if time gets tight, she would at least like to get through the policies.

Minutes: Bill asked if there were any additions or corrections to the March regular board meeting minutes. None were made. *Shawn moved to approve the March regular meeting minutes as presented; Larry seconded. Motion carried with Bill, Jeff, Bob, Stan, Larry and Shawn voting in favor.*

Treasurer's Report: Shilah reviewed the March Treasurer's Report, noting beginning balance, income, expenses, account and fund balances. *Bob moved to receive the Treasurer's Report for March; Stan seconded. Motion carried with Bill, Jeff, Bob, Stan, Larry and Shawn voting in favor.*

The loans payable/loans receivable report was also included for information.

Public Comment (5 Min. limit/person) – none

Wasco County Tax Assessor Update: Jill Amery was present providing an overview of the District Tax Revenue to the Board. She provided brief explanations for reasoning behind the county wide drop in assessed value due to reappraisals, appeals and refunds noting that the appeal process can sometimes take years to resolve. The District's current year tax revenue decreased by approximately \$20,000 compared to previous year. Jill noted that Avangrid is the County's first solar project to come online, so she's not sure what to expect.

Action Items

a. District Cost Share Program: Abbie presented four District Cost Share applications:

E. Stranz – This application is for a roof runoff rainwater harvesting system. The amount requested is \$6613.

3 Corners Farm – This application is for a water conservation upgrade for a hydroponic farm. The amount requested is \$6250.

Jeff moved to approve the district cost share applications for E. Stranz and 3 Corners Farm as presented; Larry seconded. Motion carried with Bill, Jeff, Bob, Stan, Larry and Shawn voting in favor.

B. Krein – This application is for spring development to provide livestock and wildlife water near the Buck Hollow drainage. This project will also be partially funded through the OWEB Bakeoven project. Bob Krein declared a conflict of interest since this is his project and recused himself from the vote. *Shawn made a motion to approve the district cost share application for B. Krein as presented; Stan seconded. Motion carried with Bill, Jeff, Stan, Larry and Shawn voting in favor.*

D. Brent – This application is for cross-fencing. Abbie declared a potential conflict of interest because her husband would be contracted to do the fence work for this project. *Shawn moved to approve the D. Brent district cost share application; Jeff seconded. Motion carried with Bill, Jeff, Bob, Stan, Larry and Shawn voting in favor.*

b. CWDG: Chipper Lease Agreement & Roadside Vegetation Contracting– Four documents were provided for Board review. The first, an Intergovernmental Equipment Lease Agreement with Wasco County, formalizes the District's responsibility for the County-owned chipper. The second, a companion document will allow the District to sub-lend the chipper to Mid-Columbia Fire and Rescue for wildfire-mitigation work through an Equipment Use Agreement. Also provided were the Roadside Fuels Advisory Working Group Charter that documents the multi-agency process used to prioritize road segments, develop prescriptions and support transparent decision making consistent with the CWDG grant, CWPP and NHMP. The final document provided, the Request for Qualified Contractors, outlines the updated contracting pathway for contractors to pre-qualify to do vegetation management work. *Shawn made a motion to approve the IGA with Wasco County and the Equipment Use Agreement with Mid-Columbia Fire and Rescue; Larry seconded. Motion carried with Bill, Jeff, Bob, Stan, Larry and Shawn voting in favor.*

c. IGA with Wasco County for Weed Abatement –Wasco County has adopted an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) along with Resolution 26-007 that delegate administration

of the County's noxious weed control program to the SWCD. The resolution also designates the SWCD Board as the County's Weed Advisory Board and transfers a surplus spray truck to the SWCD to support program operations. Although the IGA includes enforcement terminology, the County retains all regulatory authority and the District's role will remain administrative and non-regulatory. Scott commented that it would be helpful for the Board or the County Weed Advisory Board to adopt the State's Priority noxious weed list. *Jeff made a motion to authorize staff to enter into the IGA with Wasco County for administration of the County's noxious weed control program; Shawn seconded. Motion carried with Bill, Jeff, Bob, Stan, Larry and Shawn voting in favor.*

d. MOA with CTWS for Weed Abatement –The Memorandum of Agreement between the SWCD and the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs was provided for Board review. This is a partnership agreement that would allow the District, with notification to CTWS Natural Resources, to treat noxious weeds on Reservation and Trust lands as part of a coordinated, integrated vegetation management strategy. *Shawn motioned for staff to move forward with the MOA with CTWS for Weed Abatement; Bob seconded. Motion carried with Bill, Bob, Jeff, Stan, Shawn and Larry voting in favor.*

e. Contracting Helicopter for Aerial Rejuvra Spraying with ODFW: The District is working with ODFW to contract aerial application services for a Fall 2026 Rejuvra treatment on approximately 1300 acres in the Lower Deschutes River area. The SWCD-ODFW agreement for this project is still active with \$45,000 in unspent funds available. ODFW has secured quotes from four aerial application contractors. Based on cost, aircraft capability, operator availability and positive references from ODFW and SWCD partners, staff recommend that the Board authorize staff to negotiate a contract with Northwind Aviation for the Fall 2026 Rejuvra application on ODFW-owned and adjacent partnering lands in the Lower Deschutes. *Shawn made a motion to authorize staff to finalize the contract with Northwind Aviation; Larry seconded. Motion carried with Bill, Jeff, Bob, Stan, Larry and Shawn voting in favor.*

f. Public Meetings Policy & Training Reminder – Item tabled in the interest of time.

g. Update Financial Policy & Add A. Forrest as Signer on Bank Account – Item tabled in the interest of time.

h. Overtime, Comp Time, and Holiday Preservation Leave Policy – Item tabled in the interest of time.

i. Cancel VSP Contract – Last year, the District switched to a Regence Medical Plan offered through SDIS that has a VSP plan embedded in it. Staff recommend discontinuing the standalone VSP plan, which requires 30 days' notice and must be cancelled by May 1st. Cancelling the standalone plan will save the District approximately \$2000 per year. One employee who is not on the District medical plan relies on this coverage, so Shilah would like to explore offering a small vision waiver/opt-out stipend. A full cost proposal will be presented at the May Budget Committee and Board meetings. *Bob moved for the District to move forward with cancellation of the standalone VSP plan; Shawn seconded. Motion carried with Bill, Jeff, Bob, Stan, Larry and Shawn voting in favor.*

Updates

- a. **Next Meeting** – The next regular meeting is scheduled for May 13, 2026, at 1:00 PM, at the USDA Service Center and via Zoom. The Budget Committee Meeting will be May 13, 2026 at 10:00 AM.
- b. **Director Elections** – Zones 2 & 4 and At-Large 2 are up in 2026. The Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) oversees SWCD Director elections statewide, including eligibility requirements, filing deadlines and zone-verification rules. Details, forms and the 2026 election calendar are available at ODA's SWCD Elections webpage.
- c. **Long Range Planning** – Staff finalized the community survey and EDDM postcard and submitted both to Minuteman Press for printing and distribution. They should begin reaching households in Wasco County any day. Preliminary survey results will be shared with the Budget Committee and the Board at their May meetings.
- d. **Highline Ditch Elimination** – The Highline Ditch Elimination project continues to move forward.
- e. **Bright Night Power Community Investment Plan (CIP)** – Bright Night power has provided Shilah a draft description of the conservation initiatives that they are interested in potentially funding. CIP Funds would be sent to Mid-Columbia Economic Development District (MCEDD) who would then distribute the funds for qualified projects. Discussion ensued. Board consensus is that staff should work up a budget request to provide Bright Night Power.
- f. **Updating SWCD Employee Handbook – Working with HR Answers** – All updates have been completed. Shilah will have a final walk through with HR Answers on April 15th.

Agency Reports

- a. **NRCS** – Emily reminded everyone of the Local Working Group meeting Thursday April 16th from 10-noon at the Dufur Parish Hall.
- b. **FSA** – Lissa reported that Friday April 10 is the ECP deadline for the 2025 fires. April 17th is the deadline for general CRP reenrollments and signups as well as the Farmer Bridge Assistance (FBA) Program. FBA payments are flat rates based on the number of planted acres. April 30th is the SDRP deadline for Stage 1 or Stage 2. Lissa also mentioned that they have not yet been cleared for emergency grazing of CRP, which requires eight consecutive weeks of drought conditions. Lastly, Lissa commented that April 24th is the deadline for 2025 specialty crop acreage reporting.
- c. **OSU Extension** – Jacob reported that the Wasco County Crop tour will be June 1st. Tour will start at 8:30 AM at the Dufur wheat variety trial fields next to the Miller Ranch. June 10th will be the Experiment Station Field Day in Moro followed by the Oregon Wheat Growers League 100 year Anniversary, beginning at 1:00 PM. Jacob noted that there is some State funding that is being routed through OSU for the purpose of increasing resiliency within the County. OSU is considering scheduling a meeting in the fall to review some fuel breaks. Jacob also shared that he will be presenting at the May 6th Virtual Fencing workshop in Antelope.
- d. **Wy'East RC&D** – Robert reported that one of the grants that they have funding through is a USDA Rural Development technical assistance grant to support agricultural producers and rural small businesses apply for REAP (Rural Energy for America Program) grants. The application period for these grants has been closed for a while, and he's been told that the application period

won't open again until fiscal year 2027. He commented that the e-farms program is going well this year and they don't have any funding for this program lined up after this year. Robert also reported that they have submitted for the next round of funds through the Oregon Department of Energy (ODOE) C-REP grant, which will be released upon the submission of updated guidance documentation required by ODOE.

Informational Reports

- a. **Internal Financial Review** – none
- b. **Facilities Status** – no updates
- c. **Watershed Council Updates** – Coordinating Board Meeting to follow.

District Manager Report

- a. **Work Plan Progress & Grant Status** – Shilah noted that the grant status report is included in the meeting packet.
- b. **Activity Reports and Schedules** – No activity reports were presented; however, they are available for review upon request. The schedule was distributed with the agenda.

Adjourn Regular Board Meeting at 3:12 pm

Convene Wasco County Watershed Councils Coordinating Board Meeting

Dana Woods