



Wasco County Soil and Water Conservation District Board Meeting Minutes – February 7, 2024

Directors: Bob Krein Ken Bailey Stan Shephard
Larry Powell Phil Kaser Shawn Sorensen

Directors Absent: Bill Hammel

Staff: Shilah Olson Josh Thompson Jennifer Sampson
Abbie Forrest Drake Gilbert

Staff via Teleconference: Karen Lamson Ryan Bessette Samantha Filbin

Guests:

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

Guests via Teleconference:

Wy'East RC&D: Robert Wallace, Executive Director
OSU Extension: Jacob Powell, County Agent
Mosier WC: Mary Bushman, Co-Chair

1:00 PM Call to Order

Bob called the meeting to order and asked if there were any additions to the agenda. Abbie added an additional cost share application.

Minutes: Bob asked if there were any additions or corrections to the January board meeting minutes. None were made. *Ken moved to approve the January meeting minutes as presented; Shawn seconded. Motion carried.* Shilah made a note that unless the full board is present to vote, motions should not be recorded as carrying unanimously in the event that someone not present might want to object.

Treasurer's Report: Shilah reviewed the December Treasurer's Report, noting income, expenses, account and fund balances. Shilah reviewed the January Treasurer's Report, noting income, expenses, account and fund balances. Shilah reviewed the additional loan report, noting loans receivable and payable and asked the board for feedback. Ken requested the interest rate and payment amount be added, and to identify the payment frequency. Ken inquired how the tax income was looking compared to last year. Shilah reported it looks like the tax income will be more than last year and we should come in close to our budget estimate. *Ken moved to receive the December and January Treasurer's Reports; Phil seconded. Motion carried.*

Public Comment (5 Min. limit/person) – None at this time.

Action Items

a. Policy Review – District Cost Share Program Policy – Abbie presented an updated district cost share policy, based on board input. She stated she did not need board action at this time, but requested the board review the updated policy and provide feedback. She plans to ask the board to approve the policy before the next fiscal year. Ken suggested on the cost share applications to add a “printed name” line near the signature line, so that board members can clearly read the applicant’s name.

b. Cost Share Requests – Abbie presented four cost share requests:

D.Brewer – Abbie was contacted by David Brewer regarding his approved cost share application. The original quote on his fuels reduction cost share project was not reflective of what the contractor is actually going to charge. He had previously requested \$900 in his cost share application, and the new estimate would put his request up to \$2,000 if the board approved increasing his award amount.

J.Markman – This is for a haul road project that Scott has verified. The haul road is on 8mile, near their corrals. The roads are covered in snow at the moment, so the before photos are not very clear showing the condition of the road. However, staff have seen the roads before the snow fell and it is a good candidate for a haul road. This is phase 1 of a multi-phase project. They are requesting the maximum of \$3,000.

B.Underhill – This is a haul road project for Brandon Underhill. This is phase 3 of the project. The board previously approved phases 1 and 2. This will be the final stretch along their wheat field and they are requesting the maximum of \$3,000.

Wamic Company – Josh declared this application a conflict of interest as it is his project. He has a 6-tower pivot, and has been getting some large rutting from the pivot tires. They have had to change how they harvest because of the rutting. He has a quote for Shark Wheels, which are a new design for a pivot wheel, which claims to reduce rutting by 90%, which will greatly reduce erosion from the ruts. The Shark Wheel company is willing to provide him two wheels free of charge as they would like him to do a trial with this year’s versus last year’s models, and to compare their performance over five years.

Ken moved to approve the increase in David Brewer’s cost share to \$2,000, and to approve the three new cost share applications; Shawn seconded. Motion carried.

c. OSU Extension Cherry Day Sponsorship – Shilah reported the OSU Extension Horticulturist, Ashley Thompson, is requesting sponsorships for their Cherry Day event on February 27th at the Discovery Center. The Cherry Day draft agenda and sponsorship request letter are included in the meeting packet. Ashley suggested a donation of \$500, but any donation is appreciated. Shilah shared the District historically sponsors the bull tour and crop tours with coffee, donuts, and the portable restrooms. The Extension Service uses the sponsorships to offset the cost for participants. *Phil moved to sponsor Cherry Day for \$500; Shawn seconded. Motion carried.*

d. Annual Meeting – June 5, 2024 in conjunction with regular board meeting – Shilah led a discussion on the annual meeting, and how in the years since COVID, the board has held the annual meeting in conjunction with a board meeting. Staff suggested this year, the annual meeting should present the legally required annual report and audit in conjunction with the June board meeting, followed by a no-host social hour at the Bargeway Pub after the meeting. Resolution 20240207 is included in the packet and establishes the date of the annual meeting as June 5, 2024. *Shawn moved to approve Resolution 20240207 to host the annual meeting in conjunction with the June 5 board meeting, with a social hour at Bargeway Pub to follow the meeting; Phil seconded. Motion carried.*

e. FY 2023-24 Audit Services – Pauly Rogers & Co – Shilah reported Jennifer has sent out 65 requests for proposals for audit services for the 2023-24 fiscal year and has only received two positive responses so far. Jennifer reported she has not received an official proposal yet, but Pauly Rogers & Co estimated the audit cost at approximately \$19,000, and they are located in Tigard. KDP estimated the audit cost at approximately \$26,000, and they are located in Medford. Shilah led a discussion on audit requirements and how certified municipal auditors are getting harder to find. *Shawn moved to contract with Pauly Rogers & Co for the 2023-24 fiscal year audit; Phil seconded. Motion carried.*

Updates

a. Next Meeting - The next regular meeting is scheduled for March 6, 2024, at 1:00 PM, at the USDA Service Center and via Zoom.

b. SDAO Annual Conference – Feb 8-11, 2024 – Seaside – Shilah reported she, Shawn, Jennifer, and Samantha will be attending the SDAO conference. Bob suggested discussing the issues surrounding auditors at the conference.

c. Public Meetings Law Training Requirement – Shilah reported there is a new rule for board members of entities with \$1 million or more in annual expenditures. All board members are required to take public meeting training at some point during their term of service as a board member. The Oregon Ethics Commission will likely offer trainings, as well as SDAO. Shilah wants the board to be aware of this new rule. She and staff will watch out for upcoming trainings for the board.

d. Neighborhood Meetings – Shilah led a discussion on neighborhood meetings. She reported at the previous board meeting, consensus was to not have neighborhood meetings unless we have important information to share. She suggested the issues surrounding the PSP program were concerning enough they might warrant a neighborhood meeting. Bob suggested the District share this information at Crop meetings that will be taking place next week. Drake suggested hosting our own North and South County neighborhood meetings, but to wait until there are more results on glyphosate and Fifteenmile Creek. Discussion ensued.

e. 15Mile Managed Underground Storage (MUS) – Josh reported there have not been any updates since the last board meeting. Discussion ensued on the positive and negative aspects of the project and if it was worth continuing to pursue an unproven project. Ken suggested as long as the District (and other districts) can learn from the MUS project, then it is worth moving forward with it.

f. Highline Ditch Elimination – Josh reported the grant funds have been extended another year, and they are working to get the fish screen resolved. He hopes the project will be completed this year.

g. 2020 White River Fire & 2022 Miller Road Fire – Josh reported he is still working on ECP fencing with FSA. Winter has slowed the work down but there is still quite a bit of fencing to be completed. Currently there is only 1/5 of a mile completed. He is still waiting to hear back on the forest service grant for fuels reduction that Wasco County applied for. He is waiting on the weather to clear, and then he will start contracting on the \$35,000 grant from OWEB. Discussion ensued.

h. Mosier Million #2 – Josh reported the mini-RFP went out for the first three wells. The mandatory pre-bid tour took place Monday. The City of Mosier is going to allow the use of the old rock pit in Mosier for a staging area. Discussion ensued regarding whether or not the protest period was required as there was only one qualified bidder.

Agency Reports

a. NRCS – Emily reported the local work group meeting is scheduled for February 29th in Dufur at the Parish Hall. There will be snacks and refreshments. The CSP application deadline is March 29th. She is still working on EQIP and has \$5 million in requests, but currently they are not getting that much funding. She plans to see what she can pull from other funding pools. They have a new staff member, Erin, who is from Oregon and started a couple weeks ago. Erin has a forestry background and is excited to learn more. Now NRCS is down to one vacancy.

b. FSA – Lissa reported the ARC/PLC deadline is March 15th. Currently they are working on LFP payments as the deadline to sign up was last week. The county still is in D2 drought, but they are hoping they won't have LFP for 2024. Spring acreage reporting will be due July 15. FSA has a new employee, Iris Jones, who will be starting Monday. She is coming from Idaho and will most likely be taking over Tiffany's programs. Patty is finishing up on NAP payments for Cherry losses for 2023. Reports for NAP are due by next Friday, February 15th. They have been hearing stories of cherry losses and livestock deaths from the recent winter storm, but they have not received any actual reports. Lissa requested everyone report their losses, even if it was a small loss, because it could add up if there are more losses later in the year. Anyone who wants to re-enroll in CREP or put new ground in CREP needs to sign up before March 15th. Lissa requested assistance in CREP outreach efforts if anyone is able to help.

c. OSU Extension – Jacob reported he will be hosting a farm first aid training on February 21st in the Dalles at CGCC from 12:30pm-5pm. The class will cost \$20. There will be a pesticide training on February 28th at CGCC from 1:30pm-4:30pm, which is worth three ODA credits. He is going to try to provide more trainings throughout the year in order to keep them shorter, as opposed to just a few longer training classes. He has been conducting research on biological products on dryland wheat, and he will host a webinar on March 1st to discuss those results. The North Central Livestock Association won't have a bull tour this year, but instead will have a Spring Showcase Exposition on March 23rd at the new indoor fair facility at Sherman County Fairgrounds. The Showcase will begin at 1pm and feature livestock events, speakers, booths, and live music. He will start planning crop tours in March and April, to probably be held in early June. The wheat

crop outlook should be a good yielding crop this year, but with the moisture and warm temperatures, it could be a bad year for stripe rust.

d. Wy'East RC&D – Robert expressed appreciation for both Jennifer and Shilah for working with him and assisting in assembling a 2024 budget. Funds for Wy'East are up 40% from last year. There will be a public announcement soon, for funding they received through USDA Rural development. This will probably take place mid-March in Dufur. The SWCD is invited if anyone wants to attend. This is for a three-year grant for providing technical assistance on the REAP program. Wy'East is no longer in contract with BPA so they are coordinating with local utilities to see how they want to pursue handling agriculture irrigation projects going forward. Wy'East is in contract with Energy Trust of Oregon, and they are the state lead for energy programs. With the E-Farms program, Wy'East has picked up a new F150 Lightning, new electric side by side, and one more Monarch electric tractor. Robert hopes to have a number of these electric units available for demonstrations and trials. Today and tomorrow is the Central Oregon Farm Fair in Madras. Wy'East has one staff member there today and Oregon Water Resources will present there tomorrow. In Deschutes County, Wy'East plans to attend the Central Agriculture Show on April 6th and 7th. They also intend to present at the State FFA convention the second week of March. In May, they are trying to organize a “Ride and Drive” event in The Dalles, so attendees can test drive these electric vehicles. They are currently hiring for several new staff members as they are losing some. Michael Kluz and Lanier Fussel will be leaving to attend grad school. They have made an offer to a new Finance and Operations Manager, but they have not officially accepted yet. They are also hiring a part time position for someone to help with the equipment delivery and maintenance. Wy'East has received some funding from Google – Tides Foundation, and are putting together a proposal for a climate resiliency/clean tech project.

Committee Reports

a. Audit Committee – Shawn reported that everything looked good.

b. Facilities Committee – Josh reported he attempted to schedule a facilities committee meeting, but Bill was not available.

c. Watershed Council Updates – To be covered in the coordinating board meeting immediately following.

District Manager Report

a. Work Plan Progress & Grant Status – Shilah reported for anyone attending the coordinating board meeting, there are handouts on the back table. Abbie put together a handout highlighting what the watershed councils have been working on. The grant status and work plan progress reports are included in the meeting packet. Tasks are on track for the work plan. The Annual Meeting is scheduled for June 5th and the Tree Sale will be March 16th. The order deadline for the tree sale has passed, but if you are still interested contact Jennifer or Scott to see about purchasing leftover tree stock. Conservation Awards are on the work plan as a placeholder in case we become aware of new award programs. The District currently has 28 open grants totaling \$3.8 million with approximately \$2.5 million remaining. Shilah noted the Young Life grant was not recommended for funding this round with OWEB, but the 15Mile large wood enhancement grant was recommended for funding. The DEQ FAST grant was approved, they are just waiting on the agreement.

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.

Adjourned: 2:15pm
Jennifer Sampson