



## Wasco County Soil and Water Conservation District Board Meeting Minutes – May 4, 2022

**Directors:** Bill Hammel      Bob Krein      Stan Shephard  
Ken Bailey      Pat Davis

**Directors Absent:** Phil Kaser      Shawn Sorensen

**Associate Directors Absent:** Bryce Molesworth

**Staff:** Shilah Olson      Samantha Filbin      Drake Gilbert  
Jennifer Sampson

**Staff via Teleconference:** Abbie Forrest

### **Guests:**

**FSA:** Lissa Biehn, County Executive Director  
**NRCS:** Emily Huth, District Conservationist  
Jon Ludovico, Soil Conservationist  
**Wy'East:** Robert Wallace, Executive Director  
**Wasco County:** Tyler Stone, Wasco County Administrator

### **Guests via Teleconference:**

**OSU Extension:** Jacob Powell, County Agent

### **1:04 PM Call to Order**

Bill called the meeting to order and asked if there were any additions to the agenda. None were made.

**Minutes:** Bill asked if there were any additions or corrections to the April board meeting minutes. None were made. *Pat moved to approve the April board meeting minutes as presented; Ken seconded. Motion carried unanimously.*

**Treasurer's Report:** Shilah reviewed the April Treasurer's Report, noting income, expenses, account and fund balances. She noted the NACD transfer to the General Fund as those funds are received in advance. Shilah also noted the last payable for accrued leave payout is an estimate as Tammy is retiring at the end of June. There was discussion regarding Pacific Fisheries and their move out date, and any plans for that space. *Ken moved to receive the April Treasurer's Report; Pat seconded. Motion carried unanimously.*

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

### **Action Items**

a. **Google SIP Intergovernmental Agreement** – Shilah reported this was discussed in previous meetings and at the April board meeting the board gave preliminary approval of the agreement. Now that we have the formal agreement, the board will need to give official approval. Tyler Stone was present to answer any questions. Ken shared that the agreement reflects what was discussed at the last meeting, that all the taxing districts will receive a portion of these funds according to their percentage of total tax. The preliminary estimates are for the SWCD to receive approximately \$23,000 per year, but it will likely be at least 3 years before any funds are received. *Ken moved to approve the Google SIP Intergovernmental Agreement as presented; Pat seconded and thanked Ken for being so involved through this process. Motion carried unanimously.*

b. **Wy'East Update & Continued Advanced Precision Ag Support** – Robert reported he has had a lot of activity surrounding irrigation upgrades as there are concerns about the amount of water that will be available this season. Wy'East has applied for a RARE student, which is a graduate student from University of Oregon. They have approximately 35 students in the program throughout the state. Robert is in process of requesting to rent/lease desk space for the RARE student so they could work out of The Dalles. He is currently in the application process and has been awarded an USDA Rural Development grant to pay for the student. Hopefully, the RARE student will be on board and in The Dalles by September. He has been working on FAST and getting monitoring systems set up on pumps, but he hasn't seen anyone irrigating yet. Robert is expecting the delivery of two new E-tractors any day now. The Capital Press will be at Robert's place next Tuesday as they are doing a story on the E-tractors. Channel 8 news is also doing a story on the E-tractors. Next Tuesday, Robert will serve as a moderator for Forth Mobility, who is hosting an online forum to discuss electronic innovation, challenges, etc. CGCC is looking at developing an ag tech program, and they may ask Wy'East and/or the SWCD to be involved. Discussion ensued on the E-tractors and how they could be fueled when you're away from a charging station. Shilah reported that she has previously budgeted \$10,000 per year to provide support to Wy'East, and this was discussed in the budget committee meeting.

c. **Lower Deschutes Cooperative Weed Management Area Support** – Shilah reported that Tyler Holeman replaced Dan Son as the new coordinator for the CWMA. The SWCD has been paying them \$10,000 per year, and she wanted to bring it to the board to get official approval to continue that support. *Ken moved to approve continuing support for the Lower Deschutes CWMA at a rate of \$10,000 per year, and to continue supporting Wy'East at \$10,000 per year; Bob seconded. Motion carried unanimously.*

d. **USGS Mosier Gaging Station Cooperative Agreement** – Shilah requested to table this topic as she doesn't have solid numbers yet.

e. **Policy Review – Personnel & Board Duties** – Shilah reported she is working on these chapters. Both of the chapters are more involved than she originally thought, but she is making progress.

f. **Cost-Share Requests** – There are no applications at this time.

**g. FY 20/21 Annual Report** – Shilah reported there are still a few edits she wants to make on the Annual Report, if anyone has any edits please get those to the SWCD staff so they can have it formally printed. The annual report has been submitted to ODA, so the legal requirements have been met.

**h. River Democracy Act** – Shilah reported the board was sent a letter by email, and printed copies were available in the meeting for those present. She, Samantha and Abbie worked together to make it concise and express why the Wasco SWCD is opposed to the River Democracy Act. Wheeler County brought it to our attention, and other districts are also being vocal about their opposition to it. *Pat moved to approve and send the letter in opposition of the River Democracy Act to our legislators; Ken seconded. Motion carried unanimously.*

#### **Updates:**

**a. Next Meeting** - The next regular meeting is scheduled for June 1, 2022, 1:00 PM, at the USDA Service Center (TBD) or Zoom. This meeting is also the budget hearing.

**b. SDAO Best Practices Checklist – Ethics Law, ORS 198 & 568, Training** – Shilah wanted to remind the board we are subject to government ethics laws, and we're subject to ORS 198 and 568 (which cover special districts and conservation districts specifically). ODA is really good about keeping us on track with the legal requirements. Our other requirement is to have training for board members on some of these topics and have them sign that they received the training. Pat commented that he serves on other boards, and he thinks there is a YouTube video that is put out by the state that covers government ethics. Shilah will investigate this.

**c. Mosier Groundwater: Deep Well #2 & Mosier Million #2** – Shilah reported that the deep well is still making progress and is waiting on electrical. Bill just signed the grant agreement and signature card for the Mosier Million grant which will be sent to the state. SWCD staff will be working up contracting documents in the near future.

**d. Tygh Valley Water Projects: Highline Ditch & Lindell Dam Removal** – Shilah said that permits are in place on Highline, and drilling is underway on the 4<sup>th</sup> Tygh Valley well. The Lindell dam removal project is just waiting for the in-water work period this summer.

**e. Noxious Weeds** – Scott has been out discovering noxious weeds and writing grants. The SWCD just received an Early Detection/Rapid Response grant for weed control. Staff are looking into acquiring a spray tank and possibly another vehicle to use for weed control.

**f. Bull Tour Recap** – Shilah reported the Bull Tour was fun and informative, although not as well attended as she's seen in the past. The SWCD did provide coffee, donuts, and porta potties.

#### **Agency Reports:**

**a. NRCS (Conservation Plan Review/Approval)** – Emily reported they are finishing up ranking for the CSP program. NRCS has been helping FSA with grasslands signup, and they have been in the field doing grassland evaluations. Drake and Abbie have been a big help on applying for Bakeoven rangeland improvement funding. Emily introduced Jon, our new Soil Conservationist. He worked for NRCS in Iowa for two years and started last Monday. He is originally from Massachusetts.

**b. FSA** – Lissa congratulated the county on 100% acceptance rate for CRP bids. All 65,000 acres went in. They are in the middle of grassland signups, which go through next Friday. They have been relying heavily on NRCS and SWCD staff for stand evaluations. Continuing signup for CREP, SAFE, and HELI are ongoing, and these are non-competitive. LFP is being offered for the 3<sup>rd</sup> consecutive year. If any livestock growers have leases that have changed or if they're year to year, they need to get those updates in sooner rather than later. Livestock water hauling is still available (through ELAP). Let FSA know within 30 days if you've been hauling water or if you're hauling feed or buying extra feed. If you are hauling livestock to feed that you don't normally use, there is a new program component retroactive to 2021. They will be looking at that through June 30<sup>th</sup>. ELAP will be available for private and state land leases for grazing losses from fire. ELRP (emergency livestock relief program) is new and if you signed up for LFP you automatically got paid for ELRP. They anticipate a crop version of that coming soon. County Committee elections are coming up for LAA3 (Tygh Ridge south) and nomination forms will be accepted after June 1<sup>st</sup>. Acreage reporting is due July 15<sup>th</sup> for crops and grazing ground. They lost their CED in central Oregon, so now Lissa is covering the Redmond office as well. They only have one staff member, who is brand new to the agency, so other FSA staff have been traveling to Redmond to help her learn about the programs. Emergency Grazing is available, but will need SWCD or NRCS staff verify to make sure any proposed fields can withstand the increased pressure.

**c. OSU Extension** – Jacob reported he is working on an online class through OSU's PACE program (professional and continuing education). This will be an Ag wildfire preparedness class for ag communities that aren't forested. This class will be available to sign up and take any time. It is an eight-module class and should take roughly two to three hours to complete. OSHA has requirements for producers that have employees who could be suppressing wildfires on their properties. He is organizing a class for fire suppression equipment and tactics for employees to be safer. Rangeland fire protection groups are also being formed, with some in the gorge area. There is a crop tour coming up for Wasco County on June 9<sup>th</sup>. It will start in Dufur at 9am, at Wheat Variety trials, which are over by the orchard block on the other side of Hwy 197. He is still working on the agenda and directions but will hopefully have that out by the end of next week. Robert Wallace will be present to give a demo on the E-tractor. The SWCD will bring donuts, coffee, and porta potties. On June 15<sup>th</sup>, the Sherman experiment station will have a field day. South County will also have a crop tour that day in the afternoon.

#### **Committee Reports:**

**a. Audit Committee** – The audit committee was not present.

**b. Facilities Committee** – Pat reported they had an excellent meeting this morning led by Josh. They took a tour of the facility, checked out the fisheries office and discussed possible

options for that space in the future. Staff has done a fantastic job of doing cleanup and getting rid of outdated things that aren't needed anymore. They have accomplished a lot of updates including a new security camera system. Now staff who are leaving late at night can check the cameras to ensure it is safe to leave. They discussed replacing the ceiling as it is 30-40 years old and has some stains and breakage. The building also needs a deep cleaning of the carpet, which they scheduled for later this summer. They had a tour of possible locations of the proposed shop building and discussed shop options, including considering some sort of meeting room. The main functions of the shop will be storage, and a refrigerated area so the conex boxes and the cooler rental for the tree sale can be phased out. They briefly discussed the nursery near Dufur and some upgrades that are needed there. The main concern committee members had was to make improvements with a long-term plan in mind so the property will be functional for years to come.

**c. Watershed Council** – Drake reported that for The Dalles Watershed Council, he's been tagging fish in Mill Creek every morning. Scott has been dealing with the Chenoweth Creek area, spraying weeds, and cutting invasive trees. Both Scott and Drake went out with a beaver dam analog consultant on the lower Chenoweth project and decided against that, and they would go with large woody debris instead as it is easier to permit. PSP support is occurring, and Drake has received permission to install staff gauges. E.coli monitoring will be starting in June. On Fifteenmile Creek, he has been tagging fish every morning as well, but it has been oddly slow. There will be a Fifteenmile Underground Storage Stakeholder Engagement meeting on June 29<sup>th</sup>. This will likely be the last stakeholder meeting. They are getting ready to run FAST models again and he is working on getting contracts signed. In the Mosier Watershed, the Deep Well and Mosier Million were discussed by Shilah. At their last meeting, they discussed extending PSP into the Mosier area. In Bakeoven, Abbie and Drake just finished a large grant application for Bakeoven rangeland restoration for a little under \$400,000 from OWEB. As a County, they have talked about updating the watershed assessments for each watershed. The last ones were done 15-25 years ago. If these could be updated, they could be useful for another 20 years. This will be discussed with OWEB and NOWC. Drake and Abbie are hoping to update the action plan in tandem with the watershed assessments. They are estimating the overall watershed council action plan would cost approximately \$25,000.

**d. OACD/OAHP/SWCC** – Ken reported that ODA has finally filled the district position with Karen Stutzman from Polk County. She's currently serving on the OACD board and will have to step down to take her new position. OAHP met last month and are working on getting applications out by mid-summer. They will be accepting applications for easements from mid-September-October. The easements stay in farm or resource land and buy up the development rights off a piece of property, and what remains is the right to farm. There are a lot of land trusts in Oregon that hope to use this as a demo and will be looking to develop a funding request for next year's legislature. The SWCC is meeting next week.

#### **District Manager Report:**

**a. Work Plan Progress and Grant Status** – Shilah reported the grant status and work plan progress reports were emailed to the board. We are closing in on end of fiscal year and are able to check a few things off the work plan. The Annual Meeting was held last month, and the budget committee meeting was this morning. After the June meeting we'll have

a formally adopted budget. The only thing not on track is conservation awards. It was left on the work plan as a reminder, but they've mostly stopped doing that at the state level. There are currently 33 active grants. Last week OWEB and ODA Weed Board met and approved a couple grants. We also have an approved MOU with Sherman SWCD to share Sam's time to help Misty with Sherman NRCS activities. Since 1990, we have completed 315 grants, totaling over \$318 million.

**b. Activity Reports and Schedules** – No activity reports were emailed however they are available for review upon request. The schedule was distributed with the agenda.

**Adjourned: 2:54 PM**

Jennifer Sampson