



Wasco County Soil and Water Conservation District
Board Meeting Minutes – July 12, 2023

Directors: Ken Bailey Larry Powell Shawn Sorensen
Stan Shephard

Directors via Teleconference: Bill Hammel

Directors Absent: Phil Kaser Bob Krein

Associate Directors Absent: Bryce Molesworth

Staff: Shilah Olson Jennifer Sampson Abbie Forrest

Staff via Teleconference: Ryan Bessette Josh Thompson Samantha Filbin
Karen Lamson

Guests:

FSA: Martha Blair, Program Technician
NRCS: Emily Huth, District Conservationist
SWCD: Pat Davis, Director Emeritus
The Wild Bunch 4H: Lacy Underhill
Addie Underhill

Guests via Teleconference:

OSU Extension: Jacob Powell, County Agent
Mosier WC: Mary Bushman, Co-Chair

1:00 PM Call to Order

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

Minutes: Shawn asked if there were any additions or corrections to the regular June board meeting minutes or the June special board meeting minutes. None were made. *Ken moved to approve the regular June meeting minutes and the June special meeting minutes as presented; Stan seconded. Motion carried unanimously.*

Treasurer's Report: Jennifer reviewed the June Treasurer's Report, noting income, expenses, account and fund balances. She noted a few of the larger expenses were for the 15MUS project, closing out the Mosier Deep Well, and others. Ken inquired about the DEQ loan payment. Jennifer explained that it was our first payment, and there was no receivable to match as they withheld the first years' payment from the final payout to Wade Root. The next DEQ loan

payment will occur in January 2024. *Larry moved to receive the June Treasurer's Report; Bill seconded. Motion carried unanimously.*

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

Action Items

a. Cost Share Requests – Abbie presented seven cost share applications:

Mead – William and Kimberly Mead submitted an application to replace a K-line irrigation system destroyed by the Miller Road Fire, which was partially funded through a cost share and an OWEB small grant several years ago. Abbie noted in their budget, they list alfalfa seed, which she did not recommend as a justifiable expense that the District should fund, but the remainder of the budget is for constructing the new wheel line system and spraying some of the weeds and working the fields. They are requesting the max of \$7,500.

JFDIC – This application is for juniper removal along the JFDIC irrigation ditch in the Miller Road Fire boundary. They will mainly be removing burned and fallen trees. They requested the max of \$7,500.

Walters – This application is for an irrigation system upgrade, after the existing system was damaged by the Miller Road Fire. Josh is assisting on this project. They are requesting the max of \$7,500.

Meakin Ranch – This is a Haul Road application. They have already applied base rock and were waiting on the cost share application for the remainder. Scott has been out to inspect the site. They are requesting the max of \$3,000.

Dulings Natural Pasture – This is a Haul Road application. This is a multi-phase project and this application is for the next phase. They are requesting the max of \$3,000.

B.Markman – This is Phase 2 of a haul road project. Phase 1 was completed this past spring. Scott has inspected the site and determined this section does not need base rock. They are requesting the max of \$3,000.

Markman LLC – This is a Haul Road off of Eightmile. It is a pretty straightforward project. They are requesting the max of \$3,000.

Ken moved to approve all seven district cost share applications; Stan seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

b. GSI Contract – Shilah reported the board previously approved a contract with GSI Water Solutions to continue the work they started last fiscal year for Mosier Million. The contract is currently half spent down, and Shilah is requesting to extend the contract through this fiscal year. The only change is adding the ARPA clauses as previously amended. *Bill moved to approve extending the contract with GSI through June 2024 for the Mosier Million groundwater work; Ken seconded. Motion carried unanimously.*

c. MOU with Wy'East – Shilah reported over the last several years, the District has been providing administrative support to the Wy'East Council, and in the last year they've gotten into a solid financial position, so they are able to pay for that assistance. The MOU has been updated with the current fiscal year's billing rates for Jenn, Sam, and Abbie, and space rent for Wy'East's RARE student (the office next to Josh's office) at \$825 per quarter. Shilah's time is provided as in-kind since she serves on the WyEast Council with the approval of the SWCD board. The MOU formalizes the SWCD's relationship with Wy'East, so it is clear how the two entities work together. *Ken moved to approve the MOU with Wy'East; Larry seconded. Motion carried unanimously.*

d. Summer Celebration in Partnership with Wy'East, July 20th – Shilah reported at the last board meeting, the board agreed to do a celebration with Wy'East, but the board did not define exactly what the District would contribute. Shilah estimates the event will cost approximately \$1,200. Shilah noted that the RSVP system was glitchy, so she asked for a head count at the meeting of who would be attending. Seven meeting attendees RSVPed at the board meeting. Jennifer will pass that information on to Wy'East. *Ken moved to split the cost of the Summer Celebration with Wy'East 50%/50%; Stan seconded. Motion carried unanimously.*

Wasco County Fair & 4-H Intro – Addie Underhill presented a flier and cookies to the board and discussed her 4-H club, The Wild Bunch. She invited the board to the livestock auction at the Wasco County Fair, August 19th at 3pm. Shilah suggested that the board consider purchasing an animal at the fair. Discussion ensued on the different ways to support the youth livestock auction. *Ken moved to make a donation to the youth livestock auction pool of \$1,000; Larry seconded. Motion carried unanimously.*

Updates

a. Next Meeting - The next regular meeting is scheduled for September 6, 2023, at 1:00 PM, at the USDA Service Center and via Zoom. The August meeting was cancelled.

b. 15Mile Managed Underground Storage (MUS) – Josh reported he has been working with GSI to determine the best course of action, given the MUS grant with OWEB is ending. A couple grant applications have been sent out for more funding, and the SWCD still has to get the permits renewed. Shilah reported she is going on a site visit at the MUS with OWEB tomorrow to meet with their grant program staff. They are waiting on the OSU professor and grad student to begin work on the project.

c. Highline Ditch Elimination – Josh reported he has completed the irrigation system for Mayfield, but they still need to install a pump in the Wassenmiller well and make some changes to their irrigation system as it is partially funded by EQIP. He has an appointment with Simers and their contractor to look at the next phase of the diversion.

d. 2020 White River Fire & 2022 Miller Road Fire – Josh reported on the Miller Road Fire, he has been doing a lot of fence inspections through ECP. USDA funds up to \$3.2 million are designated for replacement fence from that fire, including new fence construction and removal of burned fence. He has inspected four of them so far. The second grant for the White River Fire has been approved by OWEB. He is still waiting to hear from OWEB on the \$35,000 grant for the Miller Road Fire for woody residue treatment in strategic areas. Josh has developed a plan with

the local fire chief to treat dead juniper and use them for fire break on the flat. Stan asked about how the contractors receive payment. Josh explained it's the landowners' responsibility to pay the contractors. FSA is currently processing the payments and there are three payment levels based on the size of the contract. There are a couple of large contracts that have to go to the national office for payment because they are so large. Landowners will be receiving \$1.60/mile for burned fence removal and \$5.60/mile for new fence construction.

e. Mosier Million #2 – Shilah reported they have received designs for the first three wells and will be getting together next week to finalize the package to negotiate work with the well driller. Shilah noted she is considering re-opening the driller pool to get some more drillers.

f. SDAO Best Practices Checklist – Emergency Preparedness Planning – Shilah reported this is a rolling agenda item, to get 10% off our insurances. The District automatically gets 2% off for being a member of special districts. They will need to complete some trainings and need to update the emergency preparedness plan. Stan asked about the survey from the auditor. Jennifer and Shilah explained that it is meant to be a disclosure of any possible conflicts of interest, and it is intended to be between the board members and the auditor in case they want to report anything suspicious like fraud.

Agency Reports

a. NRCS (update via email) – Emily apologized for not attending board meetings for the last four months. She has been traveling and attending trainings. Emily reported she has a new staff member, Dellaina Morse, who started last Monday right before the 4th of July. She has a passion for forestry and rangelands and was a pathways intern in Klamath Falls. Dellaina is originally from California. Jon is leaving at the end of the month as he accepted a position with Connecticut NRCS, which will be closer to his family. And she has a third vacancy that has yet to be advertised. Emily is just about finished with the EQIP cycle this year, awarding around \$900,000. They did a lot of forest health, including a Joint Chiefs proposal with fuels reduction, forest health, and wildlife enhancements. She is submitting range proposals and she'll hear back later if they are approved for funding. She expanded the range proposals to include the Miller Road Fire area to help with juniper removal, pasture, etc. She is also submitting a proposal to replace the fish screens in the Fifteenmile basin. NRCS Chief Terry Cosby will be here next Wednesday, as well as Damon Brosnan and Ron Alvarado. Emily will take them on a brief driving tour. They said if anyone was available who wanted to talk about their projects, they're open to it. She knows they are focused on the drought in the county, fire breaks, water quality, and more. She thinks they'll arrive to the office around 10:30am or 11am that day, and then their next stop is Hood River. Shawn and Shilah met Chief Cosby at the NACD summer meeting in Puerto Rico. She invited the board to meet with them if there is time.

b. FSA – Martha reported the acreage reporting deadline is July 15th for any CRP, perennial forage, or spring planted crops. July 14th is the deadline for the emergency relief program phase II, and PARP (pandemic assistance relief program). As long as they hear from a producer by the deadline, they can work with them. The Livestock Forage Program is in effect due to drought for more than eight consecutive weeks at D2 status. Livestock owners are encouraged to talk to FSA to sign up for LFP before the deadline on January 30th. ELAP is also available if livestock owners are having to haul water or transport feed and/or livestock above normal levels due to the drought. You will need to file a notice of loss within 60 days in order to be eligible. Emergency

grazing of CRP is also available, but you need to contact FSA before you start grazing. The Noninsured crop disaster assistance program (NAP) has had a lot of people filing notices of loss, such as cherries. FSA is encouraging those who cannot harvest their fruit to contact them. FSA has to be notified within 72 hours of the loss. They are still waiting to hear the results on grassland CRP rankings, but they will send notification letters as soon as they know. CREP is a continuous signup, and general CRP is done for the year. County Committee elections are coming up for LAA1 (northwest Wasco County area) and they are accepting nominations for anyone who wants to run for committee.

c. OSU Extension – Jacob suggested Emily may want to take Chief Cosby out to the wildfire site that is South of Hwy 197 as there is definite erosion on that site. Jacob reported he is working on getting the wheat research trials ready for harvest, and get his newsletter sent out for July. The wheat outlook isn't outstanding, but it should be better than 2021 with the severe drought. Cherry harvest also does not look exceptional, but it could be worse. Educational programming will start up in November. The 2023 Crop Tours were successful and well attended. Discussion ensued on options for companion cropping with wheat, such as peas and radishes, and the results of that.

d. Wy'East RC&D – Robert was not able to attend the meeting.

Committee Reports

a. Audit Committee – The audit committee did not have anything to report.

b. Facilities Committee – Josh reported his progress on building security upgrades. He noted the building has had a couple incidents lately. Someone broke into the back gate and looked around, but it appeared that nothing was stolen; and someone in a motorized wheelchair stole the door mat from the FSA door. The Dalles police and Homeland Security were contacted about the break-ins. Josh now checks the security cameras daily for motion.

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

d. OAHP/SWCC – Ken reported he is no longer on OAHP. They have put a request in for some more funding for easements from the legislature but did not receive any in the most recent session. So, they will try again in the next round. Last year, they received \$5 million. The SWCC has not met since he last reported. They will meet in August in Burns. That will be his last meeting with the SWCC as he is trying to step down from the state level.

District Manager Report

a. Work Plan Progress & Grant Status – Shilah reported the work plan progress and grant status reports are included in the meeting packet. The Work Plan is closing out with the end of the past fiscal year. Most items were completed, but they fell short on a couple of goals. They only got a couple of small grants awarded, and the conservation awards are just a holding spot as there have not been any good opportunities for awards in recent years. They also fell short on marketing and getting newspaper articles out there. They also came out a couple activities short in our public information and outreach so they will look at that going forward. They had 238 technical assistance contacts but did not quite reach their goal. Discussion ensued on why

the District didn't reach some of those goals and ways we could get around those obstacles in the future. Shilah noted that the 15MUS and Highline projects have been extended. Shilah commended Abbie and Drake on all their work with the local watersheds. Shilah shared an OWEB evaluation form with the board that said how the watershed councils have met all of OWEB's merit criteria and no staff conditions were imposed. Staff have applied to OWEB and secured a new biennium of funding for the new capacity grant. Discussion ensued on what activities the capacity grant covers. Currently the District has 33 active grants.

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.

Stan asked for any updates on cleaning up the waterfront park. Shilah reported she doesn't have any updates at this time.

Adjourned: 2:45pm

Jennifer Sampson