



Wasco County Soil and Water Conservation District
Board Meeting Minutes – January 8, 2025

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

Directors Absent: None

Staff: Shilah Olson Dana Woods Abbie Forrest
Drake Gilbert Ryan Bessette

Staff via Teleconference: Karen Lamson Samantha Filbin

Guests:

NRCS: Emily Huth, District Conservationist
Wasco SWCD: Pat Davis, Director Emeritus
Wasco SWCD: Ken Bailey, Past Director
Wy'East RC&D: Robert Wallace
DS Consulting: Emily Stranz, Facilitator
Public: Steve Springston

Guests via Teleconference:

NRCS: Dellaina Morse
Public: Dan Hazel

1:03 PM Call to Order

Bill called the meeting to order and asked if there were any additions to the agenda.

Administer Oaths of Office to Directors Hammel, Krein, Powell and Crump: Shawn administered the Oath of Office verbally to Bill, Bob, Larry and Jeff. All four signed the written Oath of Office.

Officer Elections: Bill called for officer nominations. Shilah reviewed the current officer positions: Bill is Chairman, Bob is Vice-Chair, Shawn is Secretary/Treasurer. With those positions, Bill and Shawn are signers on the bank accounts. Shilah also indicated that a slate of nominations could be done rather than nominating each position individually. *Shawn moved to keep all of the positions the same and re-elect Bill as Chairman, Bob as Vice-Chair, and Shawn as Secretary/Treasurer for 2025; Stan seconded. Motion carried unanimously.*

Minutes: Bill asked if there were any additions or corrections to the December regular board meeting minutes. None were made. *Larry moved to approve the December regular board meeting minutes as presented; Shawn seconded. Motion carried.*

Treasurer's Report: Shilah reviewed the December Treasurer's Report, highlighting a couple of large Grant related expenses, income, account and fund balances. *Shawn moved to receive the Treasurer's Report for December; Jeff seconded. Motion carried.*

Public Comment (5 Min. limit/person) – Ken Bailey noted that there's a new Board member present and that introductions would be helpful. Self-introductions were made by those present.

Action Items

a. District Cost Share Requests – None at this time.

b. Budget Committee Appointments – Currently, there are 3 budget committee terms expiring. Budget committee members Jason Lewis, Lacy Underhill and Chuck Covert have all expressed willingness to serve an additional 3 year term. *Bob moved to appoint Jason Lewis, Lacy Underhill and Chuck Covert to another 3 year term; Phil seconded. Motion carried.*

c. Associate Director & Director Emeritus Appointments – Currently, the SWCD has a Director Emeritus and no Associate Directors. The draft succession plan outlines the benefits of appointing Associate Directors. Shilah noted that the board may want to consider appointing Ken Bailey as Director Emeritus following his recent retirement from the board. *Shawn nominated Ken Bailey as Director Emeritus; Bob seconded. Motion carried. Ken accepted the nomination.*

d. Board Succession Planning – Emily Stranz was present to review the Draft Succession Plan Document. The Succession Plan is a grant deliverable on one of the NACD Grants. Emily noted that she used resources from NACD, ODA and SDAO to prepare the draft plan. She also noted that the plan would be amended to add Ken Bailey as Director Emeritus. Emily asked for clarification regarding the Secretary /Treasurer and if it is one position or two. Shilah responded that it is two by policy but treated as one. Shawn indicated that he would like to know what the District Manager's thoughts are on the Succession Plan. Shilah responded that she is happy with the document. Bill asked if the District could pull from other Counties to fill vacant positions if nobody wants to take it or if the Board could appoint someone or fill the position with someone from a different zone? Emily indicated that there is a process for decreasing the number of zones if necessary, which would shrink the number of Board members. Ken commented that he believes that the Board can appoint for a zone position to complete the open term. Jeff inquired about how the zone perimeters are decided. Shilah responded that ODA helps establish the zones. Nationwide, there are roughly 3000 soil & water conservation districts that work in close partnership with NRCS. Stan asked if it was true that there is talk of closing a lot of these offices across the U.S.? Shilah and Emily both responded that they had not heard anything about that. *Shawn moved to accept the Board Succession Plan with the minor changes that were discussed. Larry seconded. Motion carried.*

e. OACD Board Position – Shilah reported that the OACD Board has a vacant representative position for the Columbia Plateau region (this region covers Crook, Deschutes, Hood River, Gilliam, Jefferson, Sherman, Wasco and Wheeler Counties). If anyone is interested in serving the remaining 1 year term of this position, please send your name and statement of qualifications to Andrea Kreiner at OACD by January 15, 2025.

f. ODOE C-REP Agreement and Sub-Award to Wy'East – The SWCD has received an award from ODOE in the amount of \$998,778. The SWCD is the applicant / fiscal sponsor of the grant and Wy'East will be doing the work. Shilah is asking for board approval to sign the grant agreement and to move forward with the subaward, which anticipates passing all the grant contractual obligation on to Wy'East. Robert was present at the meeting noting that he has a couple of clarification questions with ODOE. Bob inquired about the size of some of the equipment. Robert gave a brief overview of the equipment outlined in the grant. *Bob motioned to authorize Shilah to sign the grant agreement with ODOE and to move forward with the subaward to Wy'East. Shawn seconded. Motion carried.*

g. Donation to S. Wasco School District for Josh Thompson Memorial – Shilah reported that Kim Mead had reached out regarding a funding gap in the desired goal for the Josh Thompson Memorial Scoreboard. Shilah brought this to the Boards attention to see if they were possibly interested in making a donation or if they had any ideas on who to reach out to for funding. Shawn noted that he has no problem with making a donation as long as it fits with the SWCD Charter. Shilah commented that if a donation is made, her recommendation would be to use Unrestricted funds such as Tree Sale money. Shawn asked that Shilah look into the legality of the SWCD making such a donation. *Bob moved to make a \$5000 donation for the Josh Thompson Memorial Scoreboard, pending the results of legality investigation; Phil seconded. Motion carried.*

Updates

a. Next Meeting – The next regular meeting is scheduled for February 12, 2025, at 1:00 PM, at the USDA Service Center and via Zoom. Regular Updates will be provided in writing to save time.

b. SDAO Annual Meeting & Conference, Feb 6-9, Bend – Shilah reminded the board that the SDAO Conference is coming up. This Conference is a great place for information and networking. Josh will be honored with a legacy of service award at the banquet on Saturday evening. Several members of Josh's family will be attending the banquet. Shawn asked if it is possible to attend the dinner on Saturday night without attending the Conference, which is an option. Dana or Shilah can assist with registration.

c. Fifteenmile Groundwater Issues – Drake reported that he had what he considered to be a very successful meeting with Tyler Stone and Nate Stice. The County is willing to see where they can fit in to assist property owners. Steve Springston was present at the meeting to give an update on the OWRD's testing results. OWRD was in the area the week before Christmas and measured 6 different wells. Discussion ensued.

d. 15Mile Managed Underground Storage (MUS) & Water Budget – The SWCD has received the draft results of the study on soil conditions within the basin completed by Jason and Salini. The main reason for the failure of the basin sited within study is lack of soil aggregate present within the native sediment.

e. Mosier Groundwater Restoration & Mosier Million #2– SWCD is working on putting out an RFP for bids on the final two wells for this round of funding. Anticipated startup of late-spring/early-summer.

f. Fires: 2020 White River, CWDG Grant, 2024 Funding – The work on the 2020 White River Fire Grant is complete and we are working with ODFW on the final report. The work on the CWDG grant is underway. Work should begin once the weather cooperates, and the ground is dry enough prior to fire season. OWEB has announced a funding opportunity for the 2024 Larch Creek Fire. This funding is only for Technical Assistance and Planning, rather than on-the-ground restoration work.

g. Highline Ditch Elimination – Work continues on this project. All water rights transfers have been completed, and 4 wells have been drilled. Abbie and Shilah are working with ODFW & Kerns on a fish screen and irrigation system. No water rights remain on the ditch and no landowners are relying on it or plan to go back to it.

h. County Weed Control Efforts & Lower Deschutes CWMA – Scott and Dean continue to work on grant applications and partner coordination in the effort to expand weed control opportunities in the county. Samantha is working on her pesticide applicators license to she can assist with weed spraying this summer.

i. FY2023-24 Audit – The SWCD received a 3-month extension from the Secretary of State, as the auditors needed additional time to complete the report and financial statements.

Agency Reports

a. NRCS – Emily reported that the CSP application deadline is February 28th. The Wasco County Local Work Group meeting is scheduled for February 27th from 10-12 at the Dufur Parish Hall. The SWCD has committed to assist with lunch. NRCS has been busy with EQIP and has received 62 applications. EQIP is funded through the IRA and used for energy/water efficiency upgrades. Emily also noted that they have a new staff member in the office, Michael Cistulli. Michael previously worked for the NRCS in Idaho.

b. FSA – Lissa was not in attendance.

c. OSU Extension – Jacob was not in attendance.

d. Wy'East RC&D – Robert attended the Groundwater Week in Las Vegas. Provided updates regarding blended technology of solar/electrical systems that would automatically switch between power sources as necessary. Wy'East has a new Project Manager, Dara Morantes. She will be working a hybrid schedule. Her main focus will be promoting and assisting with REAP Grants. The e-farms program has received a JCB mini-excavator that will be in the rotation of demo equipment. The e-farms program will be expanding into Washington this year thanks to a contract with Puget Sound Energy through FORTH.

Committee Report

a. Audit Committee – no questions or comments.

b. Facilities Committee – Shilah sent updates via e:mail. Ken Bailey is currently on the facilities committee and can remain on the committee as Director Emeritus. Phil inquired as to how often the committee meets. Phil volunteered to be on the facilities committee.

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 that the District currently has 37 open and 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.

Adjourned: 2:45 pm

Dana Woods