# Wasco County Soil and Water Conservation District
# Board Meeting Minutes – September 9, 2026

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| **Directors:** | Bill Hammel | Phil Kaser | Stan Shephard |
| | Shawn Sorensen | Bob Krein | Larry Powell |

**Directors via Teleconference:** Jeff Crump

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| **Staff:** | Shilah Olson | Abbie Forrest | Dana Woods |
| | Allie Marker | | |

**Staff via Teleconference:** Karen Lamson

**Guests:**

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| Wasco SWCD: | Pat Davis, Director Emeritus |
| NRCS: | Emily Huth, District Conservationist |
| FSA: | Lissa Biehn, County Executive Director |
| Wy'East RC&D: | Michael Kluz, Director of Operations |
| Public: | David Bridges |
| Public: | Raz Mason |

**Guests via Teleconference:**

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| Wasco SWCD: | Ken Bailey, Director Emeritus |
| WPN: | John Runyon |
| Public: | Michael Miller |

**1:00 PM Call to Order**
Bill called the meeting to order and asked if there are any changes to the agenda. None were made.

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

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

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

**Public Comment (5 Min. limit/person) –** Abbie introduced David Bridges, who has an approved district cost share project for rainwater harvesting. His project has been completed but the final cost went over his approved amount. He is here to ask the Board to consider approving additional funding in the amount of $564.94, increasing his total award amount to $4664.94. He explained that the additional cost was a result of additional hours spent on the project at an increased hourly rate based on the new 26-27 approved cost share rates. Phil asked how much water he had collected with his system. Mr. Bridges responded that he had collected 9000 gallons of water last year. *Phil moved to approve the additional cost share reimbursement of $564.94; Shawn seconded. The motion carried with Larry, Shawn, Stan, Jeff, Phil and Bill voting in favor.*

**Action Items**

**a. District Cost Share Program: Review Applications –** Abbie presented two cost share applications:

**J. Ferrer –** This application is for a rainwater harvesting system. The landowner intends to use the harvested water to water animals, native plants and a garden to ease the burden on his declining domestic well. The amount requested is $7500.

**C. Dorst –** This application is for a rainwater harvesting system. The landowner would use the water for his livestock and garden, alleviating some of the pressure on his domestic well. The requested amount is $6075.

Jeff commented that we might want to verify if permits are needed for these types of projects. Shilah responded that in the cost share agreements that are sent to landowners once their projects are approved, there is wording that states that it is the responsibility of the landowner to obtain the necessary permits, reviews or water rights necessary for the work and not the SWCD's responsibility.

There was much discussion regarding the increase in funding requests for rainwater harvesting projects in the Mosier area.

*Shawn moved to approve the two district cost share applications as presented; Jeff seconded. The motion carried with Larry, Shawn, Stan, Jeff, Phil, Bob and Bill voting in favor.*

Bob addressed the Board with a hypothetical project question. He declared a conflict, but was asking for Board feedback in terms of whether or not his proposed project would meet the district cost share requirements. Bob currently rents pasture from another landowner. The pasture water comes from an open ditch, which leaks and floods a neighboring property. Bob's proposal would install pipe from the ditch to the rented property, eliminating the flood issue and increasing irrigation efficiency. The total project cost is estimated to be $12,000. Board consensus is that the project would meet the requirements of the district cost share program and that he should go ahead with an application to be presented to the Board at a later date.

**b. FY2025-2026 Annual Report –**The 2025-2026 Annual Report was distributed for review and feedback. The Watershed Council Annual Report was included as well. The feedback received from the Board was positive. *Larry motioned to approve the Annual Reports for*

*distribution; Shawn seconded. The motion carried with Jeff, Stan, Larry, Shawn, Bob, Phil and Bill voting in favor.*

**c. Contracting HR Answers for Salary Study –** Shilah has been working with HR Answers on the recently updated Employee Handbook as well as updating job descriptions for staff. The District has always followed the GSA wage scale and contracting with HR Answers for a salary survey presents an opportunity to see how the District wages compare to comparable entities and similar job descriptions and to make sure that they align with other organizations pay structure. Jeff commented that he would like to see a not to exceed amount in the contract. Shawn asked if there are funds in the current budget to cover something like this. Shilah responded that there are plenty of funds budgeted in the Professional Services category. *Bob motioned to approve contracting with HR Answers for a salary study, with a not to exceed amount of $6,580; Shawn seconded. The motion carried with Jeff, Stan, Larry, Shawn, Bob, Phil and Bill voting in favor.*

**d. Updating Long Range Plan –** The Draft Long Range Plan was distributed for review. This document is one of the District's five legal requirements and helps guide the direction that the District is heading over the next five years. This document is updated approximately every five years. The Draft version was sent to ODA so that they are aware that the District is in the process of updating it. *Bob made a motion to accept the Long Range Plan as presented with room for improvement as needed; Phil seconded. The motion carried with Jeff, Stan, Larry, Shawn, Bob, Phil and Bill voting in favor.*

**e. Board Duties & Responsibilities Handbook –** The Draft Board Duties & Responsibilities Handbook was distributed for review. This revised handbook incorporates the current Board Policy Manual and By-Laws into one document. *Bob motioned to accept the Board Duties & Responsibilities Handbook as presented with room for improvement as needed; Larry seconded. The motion carried with Jeff, Stan, Larry, Shawn, Bob, Phil and Bill voting in favor.*

**Updates**

**a. Next Meeting** – The next regular meeting is scheduled for October 14, 2026, at 1:00 PM, at the USDA Service Center and via Zoom.

**b. OACD Meeting & Conference – Gleneden Beach, Nov 3-5, 2026 –** If anyone is interested in attending the OACD Conference, please let Shilah or Dana know. The early-bird registration deadline is September 30. You can still register after September 30 at the regular conference price.

**c. FY 25-26 Audit Communications Plan –** The FY 25-26 Audit Communications Plan from Accuity was distributed for Board review. No action is necessary, it is informational only.

**d. Providing Input on Miles Creek TMDL –** No update at this time. There is a Rules Advisory Committee meeting scheduled for September 10 from 10 am to noon.

**e. FAST 2026 Recap-** Drake provided written updates. There was one alert issued lasting 6 consecutive days this year. The creek was regulated back to 1860 Water Rights users by mid-late July.

**f. 15mile Managed Underground Storage & Water Budget & FAST –** The OWEB grant that was submitted this spring was recommended for funding but ultimately fell below the funding line. Rather than submit a third OWEB grant for the project during the August grant cycle, it was decided to attempt to submit a WaterSMART grant in October in hopes that a fresh set of eyes on the grant may yield better results.

**g. Mosier Groundwater Restoration & Mosier Million #2 –** The deepening of the final well has been completed. GSI is working on the COBU (Claim of Beneficial Use).

**h. Highline Ditch Elimination –** The final landowner to transition off of the ditch continues to work towards project completion. District staff are assisting with electrical line installation. The pump and the pumphouse are on site and will be hooked up after the electrical inspection. Design on the river fish screen is complete and meets the ODFW criteria.

**i. Fires: 2026 Fires, 2024 Larch Creek, CWDG Grant (R2 & R4) –** The 2026 fires include the Grasshopper fire, the Black Rock fire and the Little Buck Fire. Abbie is currently working with neighboring districts to compile and escalate concerns and needs from these fires. Work continues on the Larch Creek Fire as well as the CWDG. Shilah noted that the District will contact the staffing agency to hire back the CWDG crew once they are done at MCFR.

**j. ECOP FIP Projects – Stockton Oak, CRGNSA –** OWEB Grant awards to support oak habitat enhancement as well as rush skeleton weed control in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area.

**k. Lower Deschutes Aerial Rejuvra Spraying Project with ODFW –** This project continues to move forward. The helicopter is currently under contract.

**l. NW Natural Financial Contribution for Lower Chenoweth Restoration –** The District will be receiving a $30,000 contribution from NW Natural for Lower Chenoweth Restoration. The idea is that this project would look similar to the Chenowith Creek Restoration project that was funded by Hydro.

**m. Pesticide Stewardship Program Update & Changes –** The PSP program will be going away and there will be no more grants to local watersheds.

**n. Director Elections – Zones 2 & 4 & At-Large 2 are up in 2026 –** The zone 4 position had no candidates file. The end of October is the deadline to file as a write in for that position. Zone 2 and at-large 2 both had candidates file to be on the ballot.

**o. SDAO Best Practices Checklist – Public Meetings Training Reminder –** Shilah reminded the Board that this training needs to be completed by all Board members by the end of October. She did learn that the training can be done at a meeting if needed.

**Agency Reports**

**a. NRCS –** Emily reported that they do not have any fire rehab funding at the moment, but she has requested it. The funding would be for herbicide application and seeding only. Her concern is that the funding will come too late. Next year, EQIP funding will be awarded on a first-come first-serve basis. Applications will be reviewed and scored as they are received. The three priority resource concerns will be irrigation efficiency, wildfire hazard mitigation and invasive species / pests. NRCS recently hosted a meeting with the Oregon Wheat Growers League, giving the wheat producers an opportunity to provide thoughts on the CSP program and how things are going with NRCS. The NRCS West Region Chief, Hans Hunt, will be visiting The Dalles office on September 23rd. Emily and her staff will take him on some site visits. Lastly, Emily passed on that there is a reorganization coming for NRCS Oregon. She does not have many details at this time but there may be some staffing changes. She will keep everyone updated.

**b. FSA –** Lissa reported that she would like to hold a wildfire meeting within the next couple of weeks and wanted the Board's opinion on if they thought the meeting would be better attended if it was held during the day or later in the evening. Bob asked what information would be available at the meeting. Lissa responded that it would be information regarding the ECP and EFRP disaster programs and that she wanted to get the information out to as many people as possible. The Board felt that the 3-5 timeframe would be best. Lissa indicated that her original thought was to have the meeting at the fairgrounds but she is also looking at different community center locations in the Maupin and Wamic areas. She is anticipating ECP sign-ups in mid-October. ELAP is available due to fires and drought. Lissa also reminded everyone that acreage reporting is right around the corner and that ARC/PLC will be coming soon. Emergency grazing is also available on CRP.

**c. OSU Extension –** Jacob was not able to attend the meeting, but he did send an email indicating that he had no new updates to share.

**d. Wy'East RC&D –** Michael Kluz, Director of Operations, was present to provide updates. He noted that Wy'East attended the Eastern Oregon Economic Summit which focused on the ongoing drought issues within the region. The E-Farms program has two remaining events this year. They will be attending a planning retreat this week for the future of the E-Farms program, which is currently in phase 2 of the project. They are hoping to have it wrapped up by the end of the year. The REAP program is currently on pause but they are still able to provide technical assistance to rural small businesses and agricultural producers. Finally, for informational purposes, Michael noted that Wy'East is able to provide pump testing assistance throughout the County.

**Informational Reports**

**a. Internal Financial Review –** No questions or updates at this time.

**b. Facilities Status –** No updates at this time.

**c. Watershed Council Updates –** tabled for Coordinating Board Meeting to follow.

**d. Weed Board –** Shilah noted that the weed list will be ready for the October meeting and that the District will be bringing back one seasonal spray technician through the staffing agency.

**District Manager Report**

**a. Work Plan Progress & Grant Status –** The updated written grant status report was unavailable, so Shilah reported that staff is currently working on 34 active grants and that there are seven pending applications with six more grants in the works.

**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 3:00 pm**

Dana Woods