Wasco County Soil and Water Conservation District
Board Meeting and Budget Hearing Minutes – July 8, 2026

Directors:	Shawn Sorensen	Jeff Crump	Larry Powell

Directors via Teleconference: Stan Shephard

Directors Absent:	Bill Hammel	Bob Krein	Phil Kaser
Staff:	Shilah Olson	Abbie Forrest	Dana Woods
	Drake Gilbert	Ryan Bessette	Andrew Grabacki

Staff via Teleconference: Karen Lamson

Guests:
FSA: Lissa Biehn, County Executive Director
Wasco SWCD: Pat Davis, Director Emeritus
ODA: Eric Nusbaum, SWCD Operations Specialist

Guests via Teleconference:
Wasco SWCD: Ken Bailey, Director Emeritus
Michael Miller

1:00 PM Call to Order
Shawn called the meeting to order and asked if there are any changes to the agenda. A quick round of introductions was done. Shilah asked to table the following action items: the CWDG dump trailer lease, updating the Long Range Plan, and the Board Duties and Responsibilities Handbook.

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

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

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

Public Comment (5 Min. limit/person) – none

Action Items

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

V. Ashley – This application is for an approximate 0.3 mile haul road. The map in the application packet also shows an additional 0.1 mile that the landowner would like to include which does not currently appear to be an active road and does not exhibit a resource concern. The amount requested is $3000. *Larry moved to approve this cost share application for the original 0.3 mile haul road; Jeff seconded. Motion carried with Jeff, Stan, Larry and Shawn voting in favor.*

B. Markman – This application is for a 1.3 mile haul road. This is a continuation of a previously approved and completed haul road. Rather than completing the road in phases, this application is to finish the entire road. The amount requested is $7500.

D. Van Vactor – This application is for an irrigation upgrade to replace two wheel lines with a 3-4 tower pivot. The landowner was working with NRCS but the funding did not go through. Along with district cost share funding, the landowner may seek small grant funding as well. The project exceeds the District's efficiency improvement criteria of 20%.

J. Meakin – This application is for an approximate 0.2 mile haul road. This is an extension of a previously approved and completed haul road. The requested amount is $7500.

Jeff moved to approve the three district cost share applications as presented; Larry seconded. Motion carried with Jeff, Stan, Larry and Shawn voting in favor.

b. Highline: Contracting with GSI for COBU on Tygh Valley Wells – The draft scope of work and fee schedule was provided with the meeting materials. Each well that was drilled on the Highline Ditch Elimination project will need a claim of beneficial use (COBU). This proposal covers three of the four wells. The final well will also need either a COBU or an extension of time. Shilah asked the Board to consider approving the contract with some latitude for the fourth well in case it gets completed this summer. The additional cost would be approximately $3000. *Jeff motioned to approve contracting with GSI for COBU on Tygh Valley Wells with latitude for the possible addition of the fourth well; Larry seconded. The motion carried with Jeff, Stan, Larry and Shawn voting in favor.*

c. CWDG: Leasing Dump Trailer with Wasco Co & Subleasing to MCFR – tabled.

d. FY 2026-2027 Annual Plan of Work – The summary document was provided for Board review. Shilah and Abbie prepare the Annual Plan of Work document based on each grant and available staff hours. The annual plan of work is one of the legal requirements as an SWCD. Eric Nusbaum commented that he would like to see a Strategic Plan which feeds into the annual work plan. He offered to share examples with Shilah. Shawn asked how often the Strategic Plan should be reviewed/updated. Eric responded that there is no set rule and that some districts do a review each year. He did mention that an extensive "deep-dive" review should be done every five years. *Larry made a motion to approve the Annual Work Plan summary document; Jeff seconded. The motion carried with Jeff, Stan, Larry and Shawn voting in favor.*

Stan left the meeting at 1:30.

e. Updating Long Range Plan – tabled.

f. Board Duties & Responsibilities Handbook – tabled.

Updates

a. Next Meeting – The next regular meeting is scheduled for September 9, 2026, at 1:00 PM, at the USDA Service Center and via Zoom.

b. Annual Meeting Follow Up Discussion – Shilah requested feedback from the Board regarding the Annual Meeting. Shawn commented that he enjoyed the presenters. Jeff commented that he thought it was nice and it gave the opportunity for public to participate. Shilah commented that she thought it was a nice event and that she wished that we had more public participation. The Annual Meeting is another one of the legal requirements of an SWCD.

c. Legislative Tour Recap from June 24 – The OACD and Wasco SWCD hosted event highlighted ODFW's restoration work on the Lower Deschutes Wildlife Area. The tour showcased ODFW's large scale rangeland restoration work funded through the Natural and Working Lands Fund. The tour had no legislative participation but there was some media presence, which resulted in articles in the Central Oregon Daily News and the South Wasco Times about the restorative work being done to target the invasive annual grasses. A couple of legislative officials reached out to OACD for follow up information.

d. Providing Input on Miles Creek TMDL – The SWCD and Wasco County both submitted letters of feedback to the TMDL Basin Coordinator at DEQ. Copies of these letters were provided prior to the meeting. Shilah noted that DEQ and ODA acknowledged the concerns provided in the letters. On August 4th, SWCD staff along with DEQ, ODA, and Wasco County Planning have a field visit scheduled to review the concerns.

e. 15mile Managed Underground Storage & Water Budget & FAST – No updates but Drake did comment that he has been seeing OWRD and the Water Master out in the field recently.

f. Mosier Groundwater Restoration & Mosier Million #2 – A landowner that received a new well as part of the Mosier Million #2 project has expressed concern about the amount of water that he's getting from the new well. He is finished with harvest but is worried that he's not getting enough water to sustain his trees through the summer months. Shawn asked what the options are at this point. Drake responded that he is working with the technical folks to determine if it's a pump problem or a well construction issue.

g. Highline Ditch Elimination – Staff continues to work with ODFW on the fish screen design options.

h. Fires: CWDG Grant, 2024 Larch Creek – The current USFS CWDG grant through Wasco County runs through 2029. Shilah is working with Melissa to update the grant budget to shift some funds around. Wasco County did not receive funding for their round 3 application through the USFS. They are taking the feedback that they received from round 3 and working on submitting a round 4 application. Shawn asked if the District has access to the grant related metrics that Melissa tracks. Shilah responded that the District does have access and that it would be a good item to highlight in the annual report. IAE continues to work on the Larch Creek fire post incident restoration planning.

i. Director Elections – Zones 2 & 4 & At-Large 2 are up in 2026 – Shilah reminded the Board that elections information and materials can be found on the ODA website. Eric commented that the incumbent's deadline to file is 10 days before the new candidate filing deadline.

j. SDAO Best Practices Checklist – Public Meetings Training Reminder – Shilah reminded the Board that this is a required training for any person who is serving as a Board member of a public entity. The link to complete the training online was previously sent out. Shilah has learned that it can be done as a group training as well if that is something that interests the Board.

Agency Reports

a. NRCS – Emily was not able to attend the meeting as they are working under some tight deadlines, so she provided written updates ahead of the meeting. NRCS has 3 funded projects (2500 acres) through EQIP. All are rangeland projects involving juniper removal, virtual fencing, prescribed grazing, and weed treatment in South County. A total of $350,000 awarded. There are 6 funded projects (25,378 acres) through CSP. These are a mix of cropland and range. $1.7 million awarded total. NRCS is working on 37 CRP contracts between status reviews and new enrollments. General Conservation Plans are due to FSA by August 14 and Continuous is due by September 18. Emily is continuing to cover Hood River County and is going over there 2 days a week typically.

b. FSA – Lissa reported that they are currently working on ASCF and SDRP. The ASCF application deadline is August 7 and the SDRP deadline for both Stage 1 and Stage 2 is August 12. County committee elections are currently in the nomination phase. Nominations close on August 1. Lissa noted that ARC/PLC will be coming soon. Emergency grazing and LFP are open. She also reminded everyone that acreage reporting is due by the 15th for spring planted crops.

c. OSU Extension – Jacob was not able to attend the meeting and sent a written update prior to the meeting. There is a Wildfire Fuel Break Tour and Training for Ag Producers planned for Wednesday, August 26th, starting in Moro, likely at 8 am. More details coming soon. This will include an hour of classroom time and then a tour around the county looking at fuel breaks for the rest of the morning.

d. Wy'East RC&D – Robert was not in attendance.

Eric passed along that ODA has an open Water Quality position in the South Willamette Valley mid-coast area.

Informational Reports

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

b. **Facilities Status –** No updates at this time. Building plans for the proposed shop are still pending. Pat commented that a pre-engineered building could be more cost effective than a stick built, but building plans would be necessary to compare the two.

c. **Watershed Council Updates –** The Coordinating Board meeting was postponed due to lack of quorum. Drake commented that the Councils are in a summer holding pattern.

d. **Weed Board –** Scott is working on the County weed list for the September meeting.

District Manager Report

a. **Work Plan Progress & Grant Status –** Shilah noted that the new work plan was adopted earlier in the meeting. The grant status report is included in the meeting packet. The District currently has 39 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.

Adjourn Regular Board Meeting at 2:15 pm

Dana Woods