



Wasco County Soil and Water Conservation District Board Meeting Minutes – February 11, 2026

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

Staff: Shilah Olson Dana Woods Abbie Forrest
Drake Gilbert Allie Marker Dean Dark

Staff via Teleconference: Karen Lamson

Guests:

Wasco SWCD: Pat Davis, Director Emeritus
NRCS: Emily Huth, District Conservationist
FSA: Lissa Biehn, County Executive Director
Public: Steve Ronfeld

Guests via Teleconference:

Accuity CPAs: Glen Kearns, CPA
Wheatland Ins: John Anderson
OSU Extension: Jacob Powell, County Agent

1:00 PM Call to Order

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

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

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

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

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

FY 2024-25 Audit Presentation – Glen Kearns

Glen greeted the board and presented the fiscal year 2024-25 audit. He noted that an unmodified opinion, also known as a clean opinion, was issued. He then went on to review the year-end Balance Sheet as well as the Statement of Activities. Glen noted that one of the things that they look at is the unassigned fund balance that rolls into the next fiscal year, and how it equates to operating dollars for the next year. Ideally, they like to see 3 to 6 months of operating expenses carried over. The District's unassigned fund balance falls within the ideal range. He also noted that during the course of the audit, they did not experience any testing issues, nor did they find any non-compliance issues during their compliance review.

Glen then went on to review the findings that are outlined in the Report to the Board of Directors. Both findings are considered significant deficiencies and are the result of the size of the District and the number of financial staff. The first is related to the lack of segregation of duties due to the limited number of employees. The District has developed procedures which mitigate this condition to some extent. The second is a significant deficiency issued which explains that while the District is responsible for their financial statements, Accuity CPAs prepared the financial statements as the District lacks staff qualified to prepare the statements. This is very standard as almost no small districts are able to prepare their own financial statements.

Wheatland Insurance Renewal Update – John Anderson

John Anderson was in attendance to provide an update on the SWCD's Insurance. He met with Shilah and Dana in the fall and did an annual review and updated the schedule. Insurance premium rates are up 15% from the previous year. The SDAO Best Practices Program resulted in a 10% premium discount. Total annual premium for liability coverage is \$12,638. Shilah commented that John has been very helpful and responsive over the years, and she appreciates working with him.

Action Items

a. District Cost Share Program: Before presenting the District Cost Share applications, Abbie noted that it is the 20-year anniversary of the District Cost Share program. Allie created a tri-fold brochure that was shared with the Board. The brochure highlighted the accomplishments of the program over the years. Abbie then went on to present three District Cost Share applications, noting that there are three separate landowner applications, but the three properties are operated by the same person:

H2T, LLC – This application is for a 0.4 mile haul road. The amount requested is \$4000.

James Miller – This application is for a 0.3 mile haul road. The amount requested is \$4000. No current road exists so there is no demonstrated resource concern.

FDD Ranch, LLC – This application is for a 0.4 mile haul road. The amount requested is \$3000.

Shawn moved to approve the district cost share applications for H2T, LLC and FDD Ranch, LLC as presented and to not fund the James Miller application due to the lack of demonstrated resource concern; Phil seconded. Motion carried with Stan, Shawn, Bob, Jeff, Phil and Larry voting in favor.

b. Appoint Budget Officer – Oregon Budget Law requires that each local government have a budget officer, either appointed by the governing body or designated by the local government's

charter. The budget officer prepares the proposed budget for the coming fiscal year. *Jeff moved to appoint the District Manager as the budget officer for the 2026-2027 budget; Shawn seconded. Motion carried with Stan, Shawn, Bob, Jeff, Phil and Larry voting in favor.*

c. Add Abbie Forrest as Check Signer to Bank Account – Shilah asked if the Board would consider adding Abbie Forrest as a check signer to be a backup for immediate needs checks when no other signers are available. A policy revision would be necessary to provide examples of circumstances that would allow Abbie to sign checks. The Board had additional questions, so this item was tabled until the next meeting. Shilah will bring additional information with a draft financial policy proposal for review in March.

d. Set Annual Meeting Date – One of the District’s legal requirements is to have an annual meeting once a year. Shilah noted that years ago, it was held in February with dinner provided. The last several years, it has been held in June with a no-host social gathering afterwards. The Sherman SWCD annual meeting is scheduled for March 3rd. Board consensus was to plan the annual meeting for June. Shilah will bring a resolution to the next meeting,

e. Updating Long Range Plan – Review Priorities & Objectives– Prior to the meeting, Shilah had created posters that listed current operational and resource priorities and objectives. Each person in attendance was given stickers and was asked to vote on areas of importance by placing a sticker next to the listed items. Some emerging issues were identified such as green energy, urbanization and urban issues such as declining farmland and farmland under solar. Piping was also identified as an emerging issue. Based on the number of stickers, water conservation was identified as the biggest concern listed under resource priorities. Shilah did note that water conservation didn’t specify ground / surface water, quality / quantity, etc. Jeff suggested possibly doing a postcard mailing survey to all residents to gather feedback regarding resource concerns and priorities.

Updates

a. Next Meeting – The next regular meeting is scheduled for March 11, 2026, at 1:00 PM, at the USDA Service Center and via Zoom.

b. Lower Deschutes CWMA – Dean provided an update regarding the Lower Deschutes CWMA. Currently Oregon State Parks is not included in any of the weed control agreements, but they have expressed interest in contributing funding. Dean is currently working on a proposal for Deschutes State Park weed treatments, roughly 1000 acres in all. He is also working on an MOU for all cooperating agencies.

c. OWEB Grant Process Update - written update provided.

d. Highline Ditch Elimination – written update provided.

e. Fires: CWDG Grant, Larch Creek TA, 2025 fires – written update provided.

f. East Cascade Oak Partnership – CR Surveys, USFS, ODFW Stockton – written update provided.

g. Pesticide Stewardship Partnership Program – written update provided.

h. Updating SWCD Employee Handbook – Working with HR Answers – written update provided.

Agency Reports

a. **NRCS** – Emily reported that the CSP deadline has passed. NRCS has received 66 EQIP applications. She noted that OSU Extension Cherry Day is next week. She will be attending Career Day for 8th Graders at CGCC. The Local Working Group meeting is scheduled for April 16th, and the location is yet to be determined. NRCS is working collaboratively with John Runyon to facilitate the meeting.

b. **FSA** – Lissa reported that ECP fencing sign-ups from the 2025 Wasco County fires will be February 23 to April 10. She also noted that LFP eligibility was reached on 9/22/25. Continuous CRP signups start on February 12th and will end on March 20th. Lissa commented that there are 1.7 million acres nationwide enrolled in CCRP so it is very competitive. General CRP signups will be March 9 to April 17. Stage 1 SDRP enrollment is currently open and closes April 30th. Stage 2, including shallow losses, uninsured and quality losses enrollment will also close on April 30th. Farmer Bridge Assistance, FBA, will be coming soon. Producers are encouraged to create login.gov accounts to track application and payment status. Lissa also noted to please get acreage reporting completed once spring plantings are done.

c. **OSU Extension** – Jacob reported that they have a Master Gardener Coordinator position that is currently open, so they have been wrapping up that interview process. He noted that the drone workshop that was held in Moro on February 10th was not as well attended as the previous one. Mike Davis is working on setting up a class for ag drone certifications. On Monday February 16th, Jacob will hold a Red Cross First Aid/CPR bilingual class at CGCC from 8-12:30. He has several Spanish First Aid/CPR classes scheduled in Hood River. On February 17, he will have an English only First Aid/CPR class in Sherman County. He will be doing a wheat presentation to students during Career Day on February 24th and 26th. Jacob noted that the Wasco / Sherman Wheat League meeting will be held March 3 at 4:00 pm at the Grass Valley Pavillion. Lastly, Jacob noted that there will be a Farm Succession Planning training presented by Oregon Agricultural Trust in Mid-March that will cover financial and estate planning.

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

Informational Reports

a. **Internal Financial Review** – none

b. **Facilities Status** – no updates. Shilah will reach out to Darrin at AKS for an update on shop / facilities expansion planning.

c. **Watershed Council Updates** – Drake reported that the upcoming Watershed Council meeting dates are as follows: Bakeoven will be March 3rd, The Dalles will be March 11th, Fifteenmile is scheduled for March 24th and the next Mosier meeting is scheduled for April 28th.

Note: Since this Board meeting, these meeting dates have been rescheduled.

District Manager Report

a. Work Plan Progress & Grant Status – Shilah noted that the grant status report is included in the meeting packet. The District currently has 37 active grants and 13 submitted or pending applications.

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 2:50 pm