



Wasco County Soil and Water Conservation District  
Board Meeting Minutes – October 4, 2023

**Directors:** Bill Hammel Ken Bailey Shawn Sorensen  
Larry Powell Phil Kaser

**Directors Absent:** Bob Krein Stan Shephard

**Associate Directors Absent:** Bryce Molesworth

**Staff:** Josh Thompson Jennifer Sampson Abbie Forrest  
Drake Gilbert

**Staff via Teleconference:** Ryan Bessette Karen Lamson

**Guests:**

FSA: Lissa Biehn, County Executive Director  
Patti Fields, Program Technician

**1:03 PM Call to Order**

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

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

**Treasurer's Report:** Josh reviewed the August Treasurer's Report, noting income, expenses, account and fund balances. He noted a large expense to Watershed Professionals Network for the watershed assessments, and a few expenses that were part of the project in Bakeoven. *Phil moved to receive the August Treasurer's Report; Shawn seconded. Motion carried unanimously.*

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

**Action Items**

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

**Gibson** – Chelsie Gibson has hired Gerald Reffett with General Excavation to perform the work. There is an existing spring that is gravity fed to a water tank and a water trough. This application is to purchase a large concrete tank, that will be installed underground, that will be gravity fed. They can then use the underground tank to fill water to shuttle water to cattle on other parts of the property. They are requesting the maximum of \$7,500.

**Brewer** – David Brewer’s application is for a fuels reduction project. He has been working with Ryan. He will be pruning some of the lower limbs on his forest stand outside of Friend. He is requesting \$900.

**Johnson** – Kendal Johnson’s application is to replace an old handline with three quarter-mile wheel lines. He is requesting the maximum of \$7,500 as the total cost for the wheel lines will be \$15,000.

**Day** – James Day’s application is for brush management. They have a contractor treat 15 acres and remove brush for fire prevention. This is also part of his conservation plan. He is requesting the maximum of \$7,500.

**JC Meakin Ranch** – This application is for a spring development in Friend. It is a little unique as there is an existing concrete livestock trough that previously was spring fed, but they will need to replace the spring box and install new pipe to the existing trough. They are requesting the maximum of \$7,500.

Abbie reported if all applications are approved at the board meeting, there will be \$16,600 remaining in the general conservation cost share budget, and \$13,000 remaining in the haul road cost share budget for the year. Abbie noted that if some of these projects come in under budget, there could be more budget remaining. Ken suggested during budgeting, the board consider their cost share policies and possibly look at setting maximums for different kinds of projects.

*Ken moved to approve all five cost share applications presented; Shawn seconded. Motion carried unanimously.*

**b. Life Flight Membership** – Josh proposed the board add Life Flight memberships to the benefit package offered to full time employees. The memberships are \$115 per household per year, which would be less than \$2,000 per year for current employees. This would cover air and ground transport by Life Flight. *Shawn moved to approve Life Flight memberships for air and ground for all full time employees; Larry seconded. Motion carried unanimously.*

**c. Pesticide Stewardship Partnership (PSP) Strategic Planning** – Drake reported the SWCD has received a grant through ODA to create a strategic plan for PSP. ODA is offering this for every county that participates in PSP. He and Abbie have a draft plan that is 80% of the way done but they don’t have the capacity to complete the document the way that ODA requires. Drake proposed contracting WPN to finish the plan for ODA. This would be covered under the strategic plan grant, which he and Abbie were struggling to spend down. They anticipate the contract with WPN would be a maximum of \$10,000, but they do not have a final quote from WPN at this time. *Ken moved to approve staff to contract with WPN for up to \$10,000 to complete the PSP strategic plan; Shawn seconded. Motion carried unanimously.*

## **Updates**

**a. Next Meeting** - The next regular meeting is scheduled for November 1, 2023, at 1:00 PM, at the USDA Service Center and via Zoom.

- b. OACD Annual Meeting & Conference, October 16-18, Redmond** – Josh reported the annual OACD meeting is October 16th-18<sup>th</sup> and it is not too late to register. If anyone would like to attend, please let Jenn know.
- c. 15mile Managed Underground Storage** – Josh reported the District was supposed to remove the monitoring wells by May of 2023 per their permit, which was not done. He is working with Walt from GSI to see if they would be able to keep the monitoring wells in place for phase two of the pilot project, in order to avoid extra expense of decommissioning the wells just to install them when work starts up again. December 2023 would be the soonest construction would recommence on the MUS project, and it will likely be an intermediate procurement so the District will go out for bid.
- d. Highline Ditch Elimination** – Josh reported he is still working with Simers to get the diversion legal with fish screen and passage. Exemptions from screening are possible, but they are trying to see if they can develop something feasible. They have two years remaining on the permit.
- e. 2020 White River Fire & 2022 Miller Road Fire** – Josh reported last week, contractors completed aerial Open Range G application, funded by the grant from OWEB, on the White River Fire area. ASAP Flying Service were the contractors and they used Dan Nelson’s airstrip on Juniper Flat. It was ASAPs first time doing open range application but it calibrated well. On the Miller Road fire, Josh is inspecting completed fence a couple of times a week. They have completed \$3.4 million in new fencing. The fencing is supposed to be completed by December 31<sup>st</sup>, but they might require an extension. The new fences are entirely wood free, and everything is steel, so they should be fireproof. The District has received another \$35,000 grant from OWEB for the Miller Road Fire, which they will use for strategic woody debris removal for fire breaks along key roads. Josh is working with the Oregon State Fire Marshall on this project. The District will also receive administrative funds from OWEB for contracting seasonal crews for fuels management and initial attack during fire season for various local fire departments.
- f. Mosier Million #2** – Josh reported they will need to secure agreements from a couple more landowners. He hopes he’ll be in the contracting process soon. Josh explained the District has a long list of wells they’d like to repair, but they will keep working down the list until they can get landowners to agree and they can fully expend the grant funding. Discussion ensued.
- g. SDAO Best Practices Checklist – Emergency Preparedness Planning** – Josh reported staff have put together a draft emergency preparedness plan they will bring to the next board meeting for approval. All items on the checklist have been completed, so the District will receive the full 10% off insurance.
- h. Tree Sale** – Jenn reported the tree sale is officially open. Tree orders can be made on the paper form which is included in the meeting packet, or online at the SWCD website. She reported the District has received three tree orders to date.
- i. Wasco County Fair & 4-H Auction** – Jenn presented a thank you card and picture from the Wasco County Youth Livestock Auction. The picture will be displayed in the SWCD office.

## **Agency Reports**

- a. **NRCS** – Emily was unable to attend the board meeting.
- b. **FSA** – Lissa introduced Patti Fields, the new program technician for FSA. Patti will be covering tree fruit, organics, and some administrative tasks. Patti shared she lives in Sherman County and has a wheat and cattle ranch. She previously worked for FSA for 10 years and worked for the Sherman County Museum. Lissa reported she was on KODL with Scott this week. She announced FSA just distributed \$2.4 million in payments to Wasco and Hood River Counties. This included payments for ELRP 2021 and 2022. If you were signed up for LFP, you were automatically signed up for ELRP due to the drought and the lack of grazing over the last several years. LFP signups for 2023 are going on right now for livestock losses due to drought. The Emergency Relief Program phase 2 payments for 2020 and 2021, which are revenue based, are being processed as well. They served over 100 applications for ERP in Wasco and Hood River Counties. Lissa reported they have entered their new fiscal year and there will not be a government shutdown for at least 43 days. CRP payments are also going out this week. They don't anticipate many ARC/PLC payments for 2022. NAP signup for cherries for the 2024 crop year has a deadline of November 20<sup>th</sup>. Rangeland NAP has a signup deadline of November 30<sup>th</sup>. Acreage reporting is due by December 15<sup>th</sup> for fall planted crops including wheat and feed grain. When completing acreage reporting, you also have to submit a production sheet. LAA1 (North County) on County Committee is up for election this year, and ballots will be going out in November.
- c. **OSU Extension** – Jacob was unable to attend the board meeting.
- d. **Wy'East RC&D** – Robert was unable to attend the board meeting.

#### **Committee Reports**

- a. **Audit Committee** – The audit committee had nothing to report.
- b. **Facilities Committee** – Josh reported he is making progress on the SWCD shop building. He has discussed the plans with an architect and does not think it will cost too much to put a packet together for the permits. The District might not be able to afford to build the shop this year, but they might at least apply for the permits and perhaps build the shop in phases as the budget allows. He invited board members to tour the proposed shop site with him. Josh shared a video captured on the building security cameras of a cougar walking around the building. He also reported there was a prowler caught on the security cameras Sunday morning. The prowler hit one of the lower security cameras with a flash light and caused some damage. Josh filed a police report requesting \$600 in restitution for the camera and a charge of criminal mischief.
- c. **Watershed Council Updates** – To be discussed in the coordinating board meeting immediately following the SWCD board meeting.

#### **District Manager Report**

- a. **Work Plan Progress & Grant Status** – Josh reported the grant status report is included in the meeting packet. He shared all staff are working diligently on their tasks and there is no shortage of work.
- 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: 1:56pm**  
Jennifer Sampson