Wasco County Soil and Water Conservation District
Board Meeting Minutes – October 14, 2026

Directors: Bill Hammel, Phil Kaser, Bob Krein, Larry Powell, Jeff Crump

Directors Absent: Stan Shephard, Shawn Sorensen

Staff: Abbie Forrest, Dana Woods, Drake Gilbert, Allie Marker, Ryan Bessette

Staff via Teleconference: Karen Lamson, Samantha Filbin

Guests:

Wasco SWCD:	Pat Davis, Director Emeritus
FSA:	Lissa Biehn, County Executive Director
Public:	Sean Keener
Public:	Raz Mason

Guests via Teleconference:

Wy'East RC&D:	Michael Kluz, Director of Operations
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. Abbie noted that Sean Keener was in attendance to address the Board during Public Comment and that she has an additional funding request for an approved district cost share project. Abbie would also like to add the Fall Tree Sale as an update item.

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

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

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

Public Comment (5 Min. limit/person) – Abbie introduced Sean Keener, who was in attendance to address the Board regarding the Orchard Ridge Ditch and aftermath of the Grasshopper Fire. Sean had prepared a handout detailing the damage from the fire, as well as restoration needs, which was shared with the Board prior to the meeting. Bob commented that there are programs available that Sean could look into including the District Cost Share program or other Federal programs available through NRCS EQIP and FSA . Sean noted that his ask from the Board is a letter to OWRD in support of protecting his full water rights through fire recovery over the next 5 years and collaboration on the ditch repair. Abbie suggested that Washington Water Trust may be able to assist with the water rights through in-stream leasing and that a letter from the SWCD isn't necessary for them to make that determination. Drake then provided an explanation of how the in-stream leasing process works through Washington Water Trust. Sean indicated that Bob Wood told him that he could do whatever he wanted at the headgate as long as it's within the same footprint and that he didn't divert the water. Pat commented that he believes there may already be some plans regarding the Orchard Ridge Ditch in the archives since this was a project that Josh had worked on several years ago. Phil also mentioned the Fifteenmile Watershed Council had discussed the need for repairing/piping the ditch in years past and shared some of the obstacles that were identified through previous feasibility studies and conversations with landowners. Sean thanked the Board for their time.

Raz Mason also addressed the Board during public comment. She wanted to pass on information regarding the Amaranth Symposium. Amaranth is a high protein native grain that is drought tolerant. She was curious if any producers are experimenting with it locally.

Action Items

a. District Cost Share Program: Review Applications – Abbie presented one additional funding request and three cost share applications. Each cost share application will be reviewed and approved individually due to conflicts of interest.

J. Kortge Additional Funding Request – Landowner currently has an approved haul road application. At the meeting following his application approval, the Board approved an increase in allowable haul road funding, eliminating the need for landowners to do complete haul roads in phases. This landowner completed his entire road rather than doing it in phases. His original project approval amount was $3000. He would like to request an additional $3330 for costs associated with completing the entire road, bringing his total reimbursement amount to $6330. This is below the $7500 maximum threshold. *Bob moved to approve the additional reimbursement in the amount of $3330; Jeff seconded. Motion carried with Larry, Jeff, Bob, Phil and Bill voting in favor.*

V. Ellett – This is an application for post-fire reseeding of dozer lines and riparian areas. Ryan and Karen have worked with the landowner on seed mixes and mapping of the affecting areas. The amount requested is $4000. *Bob moved to approve this reseeding district cost share application as presented; Larry seconded. Motion carried with Larry, Jeff, Bob, Phil and Bill voting in favor.*

B. Krein – Bob declared a conflict of interest. This application is for ditch piping. This project would install pipe from the open ditch to a pond which would eliminate water loss and minimize runoff onto the neighboring property. The headgate where the water is diverted would also be

repaired. The requested amount is $7500. *Phil moved to approve this district cost share application as presented; Jeff seconded. Motion carried with Larry, Jeff, Phil and Bill voting in favor. Bob abstained due to a conflict.*

P. Kaser – This application is for a spring development project. The landowner would like to redevelop a spring that provides water to cattle in a remote part of their pasture. The requested amount is $4000. *Bob moved to approve this district cost share application as presented; Larry seconded. Motion carried with Larry, Jeff, Bob and Bill voting in favor. Phil abstained due to a conflict.*

b. Opening Credit Account with Wilbur Ellis – Wilbur Ellis is the primary vendor that the District orders herbicide through. Typically, orders are paid for at the time of purchase with a District credit card. The Bakeoven Rejuvra project required a large herbicide order that was beyond the credit limit of the District credit card. Shilah was able to initiate an online payment for the purchase so the project wouldn't be delayed. Opening a credit account with Wilbur Ellis would make the large purchase process much smoother for future projects. *Bob motioned to approve opening a credit account with Wilbur Ellis for herbicide purchases; Jeff seconded. The motion carried with Jeff, Larry, Bob, Phil and Bill voting in favor.*

c. Dump Trailer Lease with Wasco County for CWDG Project – A copy of the lease agreement was provided to the Board for their review prior to the meeting. The dump trailer would be used by the CWDG crew for defensible space work being done in South County. *Jeff motioned to approve the dump trailer lease agreement with Wasco County; Larry seconded. The motion carried with Jeff, Larry, Bob, Phil and Bill voting in favor.*

d. Updated Rates for CWDG Crew – A memo from Shilah was provided for Board consideration, proposing an hourly wage increase for the CWDG Seasonal crew following a 30-day period to evaluate adherence to standard operating procedures and communication practices. *Bob made a motion to approve the updated rates for the CWDG crew; Larry seconded. The motion carried with Jeff, Larry, Bob, Phil and Bill voting in favor.*

Convene Weed Board – Approve Wasco County Noxious Weed List: 1:53 pm

Scott compiled a proposed noxious weed list that was sent out prior to the meeting, along with the previously approved Wasco County weed list and classifications from the prior Weed Board. Scott indicated that the A-listed weeds will be targeted and prioritized, and that having an approved noxious weed list opens up opportunities for additional funding. Bob asked if other weeds become apparent, could they be added to the list later? Scott indicated that yes, they could. Scott also indicated that he plans to talk with The City of The Dalles this winter to come up with ideas on how to work together for weed control. Bill asked if the District had looked into doing anything with spray drones. Scott noted that there is definitely a need for it and drones may be good for larger projects but he hasn't looked into it for projects the District is currently working on. Jeff noted that the previous weed list contained four weeds that are not on the current proposed list. Scott responded that those four weeds are not prevalent in this area. *Phil made a motion to approve the proposed Wasco SWCD Weed List and Classifications; Bob seconded. The motion carried with Jeff, Larry, Bob, Phil and Bill voting in favor.*

The Weed Board meeting was adjourned at 2:15 pm.

Updates

a. Next Meeting – The next regular meeting is scheduled for November 11, 2026, at 1:00 PM, which is a staff holiday and the office will be closed. Abbie asked for Board input on rescheduling the meeting. Board consensus was to move the meeting to November 18.

b. OACD Meeting & Conference – Gleneden Beach, Nov 3-5, 2026 – If anyone is interested in attending the OACD Conference, please let Dana know.

c. 15mile Managed Underground Storage & Water Budget & FAST – Drake submitted a WaterSMART MUS grant on October 7.

d. 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).

e. Highline Ditch Elimination – The project tasks for the highline project are making significant progress. The SWCD has ordered the Riverscreens and GSI continues to work on the COBU's.

f. Fires: 2026 Fires, 2024 Larch Creek, CWDG Grant (R2 & R4) – Abbie noted that the 2024 Larch Creek Fire grant is on track to close out by the end of the year and we are still waiting on an official funding announcement for a R4 CWDG.

g. ECOP FIP Projects – Stockton Oak, CRGNSA – The RFP for the Stockton Oak project is ready to go. An approved contractor list will be compiled and mini-RFP's will be issued for the different project area sections and treatment types.

h. Lower Deschutes Aerial Rejuvra Spraying Project with ODFW – This project has been completed. Allie shared some pictures that she took of the project in progress.

i. NW Natural Financial Contribution for Lower Chenoweth Restoration – The District has received the contribution check. Drake and Abbie are working on a scope of work.

j. FY 25-26 Audit – Dana reported that the audit is well underway. The auditors were in the office on September 17 to complete their field work. A Draft copy of the audit is expected by the end of October or the first part of November.

k. Director Elections – Zones 2 & 4 & At-Large 2 are up in 2026 – The Zone 2 and the at-large 2 positions both had candidates file to be on the ballot. The deadline to file write-in candidate forms with ODA for the Zone 4 position is October 20.

l. SDAO Best Practices Checklist – Public Meetings Training Reminder – Dana noted that at last check, there was still one Board member who needed to complete the training.

m. Fall Tree Sale – Abbie shared information about the Fall Tree Sale to be held Saturday November 7. The District is not taking pre-orders for this sale, it will be a one-day sale and all trees and shrubs will be sold in 1 gallon pots.

Agency Reports

a. NRCS – no update.

b. FSA – Lissa reported that ARC-PLC program for wheat and feed grain is going on right now. The deadline is December 11th and as a reminder all partners on the property have to sign by the deadline. If producers do not submit their election by the deadline, they will be ineligible for payments for the 2026 program year. She reported that almost all of the CRP's have been paid. Producers must submit their livestock inventory numbers by March 1st for the Livestock Forage Disaster Program. Acreage reporting is due before December 15. Lissa also reported that emergency grazing is still available as we are still in drought. ECP will probably be coming in the beginning of November for fencing losses due to fires and will have a 60 day sign up.

c. OSU Extension – no update.

d. Wy'East RC&D – Michael Kluz, Director of Operations, reported that USDA Rural Development released the new rules for the REAP program. Some of the big changes are that project funding will now be post-installation rather than pre-installation and there will be an online application platform. He also reported that the E-Farms program is coming to a close and Wy'East is still working through the C-REP project.

Informational Reports

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

b. Facilities Status – AKS applied for the site plan review for the proposed shop. The site plan review meeting is scheduled for October 22nd, sometime after 2 pm.

c. Watershed Council Updates – Drake noted that the Mosier Watershed Council met last week. The Dalles Watershed Council will be meeting on October 14 and he is working on getting a 15 Mile meeting set up within the next couple of weeks.

District Manager Report

a. Work Plan Progress & Grant Status – The updated grant status report was sent out in the meeting packet. Abbie noted the addition of the OWEB Three Canyon Grant for blackberry removal and the OCF funding in the amount of $25,000 for Grasshopper Fire Recovery. The District currently has 35 active grants. The OWEB 15Mile Fish Monitoring grant that was submitted in August was not recommended for funding.

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 2:55 pm

Dana Woods