



Wasco County Soil and Water Conservation District Board Meeting Minutes – June 1, 2022

Directors:	Bob Krein	Pat Davis	
Directors via Teleconference:	Ken Bailey	Phil Kaser	Shawn Sorensen
Directors Absent:	Bill Hammel	Stan Shephard	
Associate Directors Absent:	Bryce Molesworth		
Staff:	Shilah Olson	Samantha Filbin	Drake Gilbert
	Tammy Tripp	Josh Thompson	Jennifer Sampson
	Abbie Forrest		
Staff via Teleconference:	Ryan Bessette	Karen Lamson	

Guests:
FSA: Lissa Biehn, County Executive Director
NRCS: Emily Huth, District Conservationist

Guests via Teleconference:
Wy'East: Robert Wallace, Executive Director
Oregon Ag Trust: Alice Williamson, Farmland Program Director
AMP Insights: David Pilz, Managing Partner

12:58 PM Call to Order

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

Minutes: Bob asked if there were any additions or corrections to the May board meeting minutes or the budget committee meeting minutes. None were made. *Pat moved to approve the May board meeting minutes as presented; Phil seconded. Motion carried unanimously.* *Pat moved to approve the budget committee minutes as presented; Ken seconded. Motion carried unanimously.*

Treasurer's Report: Shilah reported the May Treasurer's Report was sent out this morning to the board, but the board requested approval of the report be tabled until they have time to review it. The May report will be approved at the July board meeting.

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

15Mile Managed Underground Storage Project Update

David Pilz with AMP Insights reported on the 15Mile Managed Underground Storage Project stakeholder meeting progress. He is one of the two facilitators on this project hired to assist with determining a governance structure for the storage project. The main concerns are 1) access to funding sources, 2) whether the organization has the capacity and/or expertise in this field, 3) to what degree locals can have influence on the control of the project, and 4) the concern of ongoing liability for ESA listed fish in 15Mile Creek. The stakeholder group have narrowed the possible governance structures down to three options: working with irrigators on 15Mile to create a water conservancy district (which would be locally controlled and funded by a variety of sources, but mainly by assessments on members); a model where the SWCD is the technical owner with the watershed council, and they operate the facility in coordination with the irrigators and other agencies; or the SWCD and watershed council play a central role and work in close process with others, but a different group is the owner. Discussion ensued on the three options and the pros and cons of each. A major concern was whether the governance structure would allow for Safe Harbor agreements or not. The next stakeholder engagement meeting will be on June 29th at the Ramsey Grange from 4-6pm, and it was suggested that there be more board involvement at the meeting so everyone will be involved in the latest discussion.

Action Items

- a. **Cost Share Policy & Reimbursement Rate Review** – Abbie reported last year the board decided to review and update reimbursement rates annually. The rates are based off of FSA rates last year, and nothing has been changed yet with the exception of minimum wage which goes up in July. New (rising) diesel prices were discussed, but the board wanted to wait to adjust that rate to see if fuel prices will level out. *Ken moved to approve the cost share rates as presented with the minimum wage increase; Pat seconded. Motion carried unanimously.*
- b. **Cost-Share Requests** – Abbie presented two cost shares for haul roads. Phil recused himself from discussion on both as he has a conflict of interest.

Columbia Brewery – Abbie reported that Scott did site visits for both of these projects. This haul road is not phased but is a pretty straight forward project. They are requesting the maximum of \$2,500.

Kaser Diamond K – This haul road is pretty straight forward as well. Scott surveyed and took photos of the project site. They are also requesting the maximum of \$2,500. *Pat moved to approve both haul road applications; Ken seconded. Phil abstained. Motion carried.*

c. **USGS Mosier Gaging Station Cooperative Agreement (\$14,310)** – Shilah tabled this last month as she hadn't heard back from the Department of the Interior. The letter included in the board packet explains costs for the coming year. The cost is \$14,310 to the SWCD and \$9,600 to USGS. *Ken moved to approve the agreement with USGS; Pat seconded. Motion carried unanimously.*

d. **GSI Mosier Well Evaluations Contract FY22/23 (\$44,900)** – Shilah reported both she and Josh have looked over the GSI Mosier Well Evaluations proposal from GSI. This has been put out to bid previously, however GSI is most familiar with the project, so the board

can award the contract directly to GSI under our special procurement policy, pursuant to ORS 279B.085. This is mainly for the Mosier Million #2 project coming down the pipeline, and they can extend the contract to GSI if the board agrees, to assist us with the design and evaluation. *Ken moved to approve the GSI contract for \$44,900; Phil seconded. Motion carried unanimously.*

Convene Budget Hearing & Budget Discussion – 1:37 PM

Bob convened the budget hearing.

Shilah reviewed the budget summary and discussed the changes that have been made since the budget committee meeting and shared the budget on zoom for those who were not present at this meeting. The budget committee approved the budget at \$5.3 million but after a few changes, the budget has decreased to \$5.2 million. There was discussion on the Oregon Paid Leave tax that is predicted to begin in January 2023, but it was tabled as more research on the tax is needed. Shilah noted that in the building reserve fund, they will need to save \$400,000 by December of 2030 to pay down the building loan.

No changes were made to the proposed budget at this time.

Public Comment on Budget

None at this time.

Close Budget Hearing – 2:00 PM

a. Resolution: Adopting the Budget, Making Appropriations, Imposing the Tax, and Categorizing the tax

Shilah reviewed the Budget Resolution 220601-BGT. It was noted there was a formula error on the budget resolution page that showed the total unappropriated and reserve amounts to be \$14,830,545 instead of \$408,788. This was corrected, and the total adopted budget is now reflected as \$5,232,423. *Pat moved to approve Resolution 220601-BGT as corrected; Ken seconded. Motion carried unanimously.*

Updates:

a. **Next Meeting** - The next regular meeting is scheduled for July 6, 2022, 1:00 PM, at the USDA Service Center (TBD) or Zoom.

b. **Mosier Groundwater: Deep Well #2 & Mosier Million #2** – Josh reported Deep Well #2 is very close to being completed. All pipe connections have been made and all electrical conduit is in place. The electrician needs to pull 2 wires and get it inspected, and then Pacific Power can energize it. In the middle of drilling deep well #2, they found a bunch of water from the Grande Ronde aquifer but sealed that off and continued to drill. Their backup irrigation well failed and went dry, so they deepened the backup well and were able to hit the Grande Ronde pocket. Draw down on the new well is less than 10ft. On Mosier Million #2, Josh has a letter prepared to send out to potential participants to gage interest and get commitment letters. Once commitment from landowners has been complete, they will finish prioritizing wells and get the project put out to bid.

c. Tygh Valley Water Projects: Highline Ditch & Lindell Dam Removal – Josh reported all four wells have been completed as of last month. He is in process of lining out a pump test for the last well. Pump proposals for the three smaller wells have been awarded, and will be installed as soon as everything comes in. The contractor submitted a bid for the pumps last year, and even though they had to wait six months for a DEQ permit, they said they would honor the price of their original bid.

d. Policy Reviews – Personnel & Board Duties, Landowner Assistance – Shilah reported she is still working on this but does not have it ready yet to bring to the board for discussion.

e. SDAO Best Practices Checklist – Ethics Law, ORS 198 & 568, Training – Shilah reported she is keeping this on our radar as an update. The District has met all the requirements, now they just need to start continued board training. The deadline is November to get things dialed in. She also reminded the board and staff that ORS 198 and 568, as well as Ethics law are something everyone needs to be aware of. She can provide copies of the law if anyone would like them.

f. Director Elections (Davis, Kaser, Shephard, Sorensen) – Shilah reported Pat, Phil, Stan, and Shawn are up for election this year. Pat is in his second year of appointment, so he is required to run for election on the next cycle. Phil, Stan, and Shawn are on a regular four-year cycle. Filing for the election starts in July so the board has time to think about it. Those that intend to run for the board have to file their paperwork by sometime in July, or can file as a write-in candidate by October, or can be appointed by the board in January. SWCD staff will get the proper forms to the board as they become available.

g. NACD Summer Meeting – Shilah reported that she sent information to the board on this. She, Shawn, and his spouse will be attending. The costs for his spouse's travel will be reimbursed to the District.

h. FY 22/23 Annual Work Plan – Shilah reported the District is required to have a formal work plan adopted. She is in process of updating it and she will send a draft to the board in the near future so they can adopt it in July.

i. Tammy Tripp Retirement – Bob shared that Tammy started working at the SWCD in February 1996 and is retiring at the end of June 2022. Tammy commented that it has been an incredible ride, even though the early days were rough. We've come a long way and it is great to see how it's evolved over the years. The board thanked Tammy for all her hard work. Shilah announced that Tammy's retirement party will be on June 30th around noon, at Dufur City Park. It is a potluck, and staff will be granted four hours of admin leave that afternoon so they may all attend the party.

Agency Reports:

a. Oregon Ag Trust – Alice Williamson introduced herself and shared a presentation on the Oregon Ag Trust. Alice is the Farmland Program Director. They have a board of nine people and are looking for more producers to be involved. The Oregon Ag Trust was

created in 2020 and has spent the last couple of years developing all their strategic and long-range plans. They have several main areas of focus: agricultural land protection, education, advocacy, and technical assistance. While they are a statewide organization, their focus is on the North Coast, Mid-Columbia, Mid/South Willamette, and Southeast Oregon. The primary tool they use to support existing land use is a conservation easement, in which the landowner voluntarily sells or donates certain rights to a land trust, while retaining the underlying rights to sell the property. This permanently limits the use of the land to protect specific conservation values while keeping the land in ag use.

b. NRCS (Conservation Plan Review/Approval) – Emily reported that they did not get the latest CIS approved for their funding proposal for the South part of the County, so she will spend the next year tweaking it to reapply. However, they did get \$9 million for the state for CSP, so they'll have a lot of CSP dollars to work with. She hopes to find out next week how many contracts were funded. Next year, they'll have the Barlow fund pool (for forest health) and a pollinator fund pool. She is also suggesting Joint Chiefs funding for forest health and wildfire risk reduction. Last week, she did offer an employee a position here, but has not heard back yet on whether they accepted the position or not.

c. FSA – Lissa reported the program they've been waiting on is here: the emergency relief program to help offset the loss of production and/or loss of income over the 2020 and 2021 crop years due to massive natural disasters (wildfires, hurricanes, floods, derecho, excessive heat, freezing, smoke exposure, drought, and related conditions). This is for if you had losses in 2020 and 2021 for natural disasters then, and maybe 2022 crops as well. The first phase covers producers who had federal crop insurance and federal crop insurance indemnities. If they were paid in 2020 or 2021, they have already received an application from the federal level. Phase 1-B is for NAP participants who received payments in 2020 or 2021, and applications will be mailed directly to producers. This does not cover livestock grazing crops (only cherries, wheat hay, etc). Rangeland grazing crops were already paid through the emergency livestock grazing relief program. Payment came automatically if individuals had LFP. This is only going to primary policy holders. If you get a payment, you will be required to purchase crop insurance coverage for the next two years following receipt of payment, or you will have to pay the money back. 2026 is the final year. Phase Two won't come for another month or two for all producers who did not have federal crop insurance coverage. If you have questions, FSA had nothing to do with this program as it came directly from Risk Insurance data, so talk to your crop insurance provider. They still have LFP as we're in an ongoing drought. ELAP is still available for water hauling, hay hauling to cattle, or cattle hauling to hay. If you have burned up pastures, let FSA know. If you have a loss event, you only have 30 days to report those events. County Committee elections start today with the election nomination period. South Wasco County (Tygh Ridge south) is up for election for our county. Tim Morelli is our current representative and he is eligible for another term, but you can nominate someone else. Acreage reporting is due by July 15th for spring planted crops, CRP, or rangeland. July 15th is also the deadline for signing CRP plans for 2022. Lissa is still going to central Oregon to help as they are short staffed, which is not likely to change in the near future. She will be there at least once a week.

d. OSU Extension – Jacob was not in attendance but sent flyers for the Wasco and Sherman County crop tours that are included in the meeting packet.

e. Wy'East RC&D – Robert reported there was a nice feature article in the Capital Press on the E-tractor project. This has led to several inquiries since then about the tractors. He has two E-tractors right now, one in Hood River and one in Dufur. They will be traveling around over the next couple of months, including the OSU Crop tour in a couple weeks. Working with Senator Merkley, they have access to \$1.5 million funneled through the US Department of Energy and the plan is to purchase 10 more units in the next year. He is also looking at soil probes for FAST as they had some landowner changes within the last year. He is also working on irrigation efficiency projects. Wy'East is looking to hire a couple of positions including an admin/energy support assistant and a part time E-tractor assistant.

Committee Reports:

- a. Audit Committee** – Phil reported that everything looked good.
- b. Facilities Committee** – Josh reported the facilities committee met last month and discussed options for building a shop. Josh is going to discuss this with contractors to see if building a shop is feasible with the money we have. Dusty has been continuing work at the nursery.
- c. Watershed Council** – Drake reported for The Dalles Watershed Council, he has been assisting with fish tagging out of Mill Creek for the last couple of months, and while he is done assisting, ODFW intends to continue tagging. Last week they were catching 250 fish a day, most of them Coho, which don't need to be tagged but it's still good to see. He is starting E.coli monitoring in Mill Creek tomorrow. He and Scott are still working on Chenoweth Creek and Scott has also treated Ravenna Grass in the areas. For the Mosier Watershed Council updates, they are planning on having a social get-together on July 19th. They might also have a short council meeting, but it shouldn't be longer than half an hour. In the Fifteenmile Watershed, the next MUS Stakeholder meeting is July 29th at Ramsey Grange from 4-6pm. Drake mentioned he has also been fish tagging in Fifteenmile Creek. That trap is catching approximately 20 steelhead per day. It's possible that the steelhead are coming up a little later this year due to the high water. FAST monitoring will likely be starting next week. The Bakeoven Watershed has an OWEB review meeting on Friday at 10am for the restoration grant. They will meet at Maupin city park and will include a tour of proposed project areas and lunch. The White River Watershed projects were discussed earlier with the Tygh Valley Wells and the Highline Ditch projects.
- d. OACD/OAHP/SWCC** – Ken reported OACD has not met this month and postponed everything until June. OAHP hasn't met but are moving forward to get applications out for grants for easements. They currently have \$5 million in funding approved by legislature, and if they are successful, they hope to receive more funding in future years. The SWCC met a couple of weeks ago. ODA has been dealing with staff changes. Karen Stutzman will be heading up the SWCD Program. Director elections were discussed, and they are discussing possible changes in scope for directors.

District Manager Report:

- a. Work Plan Progress and Grant Status** – Shilah reported the work plan progress is on track. Hopefully by the next board meeting we'll be able to say we accomplished

everything we wanted to. With the exception of conservation awards as those are not currently available. On the grant tracking spreadsheet, the District has 33 active grants for over \$4.4 million. Since 1990, the District has completed 315 grants and over \$318 million. She and staff are currently working on a project comparing the growth of the district over time. Ken suggested she also put together a list of board members and their board service dates as well.

b. Activity Reports and Schedules – No activity reports were emailed however they are available for review upon request. The schedule was distributed with the agenda.

Adjourned: 3:04 PM

Jennifer Sampson