



Wasco County Soil and Water Conservation District  
Board Meeting Minutes – May 3, 2023

**Directors:** Bill Hammel Ken Bailey Bob Krein  
Larry Powell Phil Kaser

**Directors Absent:** Shawn Sorensen Stan Shephard

**Associate Directors Absent:** Bryce Molesworth

**Staff:** Shilah Olson Jennifer Sampson Josh Thompson  
Abbie Forrest Drake Gilbert Scott Susi  
Ryan Besette

**Staff via Teleconference:** Samantha Filbin

**Guests:**  
FSA: Lissa Biehn, County Executive Director  
SWCD: Pat Davis, Director Emeritus  
SDAO: Brad Eastman, Risk Management Consultant

**Guests via Teleconference:**  
NRCS: Jon Ludovico, Soil Conservationist

**1:01 PM Call to Order**

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

**Minutes:** Shilah reported there are no minutes to approve at this time due to extenuating circumstances.

**Treasurer's Report:** Shilah reviewed the March Treasurer's Report, noting income, expenses, account and fund balances. There was discussion on whether or not the board was required by the bylaws to meet on the first Wednesday of the month, given the often-short turnaround time for the Treasurer's Report. Board consensus was to leave the meeting date as-is, and as long as the financials are presented within a month that should be satisfactory. Bob inquired about FDIC insurance on our bank accounts. Shilah shared that there is a list of institutions that will cover entities at a higher rate (including Umpqua Bank), but the LGIP does not have the FDIC guarantee. *Ken moved to receive the March Treasurer's Report; Larry seconded. Motion carried unanimously.*

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

## Action Items

**a. Wy'East Continued Advanced Precision Ag Support** – Shilah reported that action items A through D were discussed in the budget committee meeting this morning. The agreement The SWCD has with Wy'East RC&D, allows Robert to provide a lot of support for the FAST program and assist irrigators with projects throughout the year. He itemizes his time, and the SWCD receives a report annually for the \$10,000 that it is budgeted for. *Phil moved to continue the partnership agreement with Wy'East RC&D for the budgeted amount of \$10,000; Bob seconded. Motion carried unanimously.*

**b. Lower Deschutes Cooperative Weed Management Area Support** – Shilah reported the SWCD has had an agreement with the Lower Deschutes Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA) for several years for weed suppression in the lower Deschutes area. The District has been supporting the program at \$10,000 per year, but last month the board heard a presentation from the CWMA and discussed interest in increasing their support level to \$15,000 per year. *Ken moved to continue the agreement with the Lower Deschutes CWMA at a contribution rate of \$15,000 per year; Phil seconded. Motion carried unanimously.*

**c. USGS Mosier Gaging Station Cooperative Agreement** – Shilah reported the District has been partnering with USGS on an ongoing basis for several years to use the data from their Mosier Gaging Station to see how our well projects in Mosier are impacting the water table since there is a documented surface water connection. Shilah does not have a formal agreement from them yet, but she is estimated the cost to be \$15,000 for this year. The SWCD has been partnering with USGS for approximately 15 years. *Phil moved to approve continuing the partnership with USGS for \$15,000 on the Mosier Gaging Station; Ken seconded. Motion carried unanimously.*

**d. Pick Up Employee Contribution to PERS** – Shilah presented Resolution 20230503 to “pick up” the PERS IAP Account Contributions of 6% gross income for all employees. She reported the District is in a good position to do this, and it is a benefit to help retain staff. *Ken moved to approve Resolution 20230503 to have the SWCD pick up the PERS IAP account contributions for all employees; Larry seconded. Motion carried unanimously.*

**e. Annual Work Plan – Draft** – Shilah reported this is earlier than she usually presents the annual work plan to the board, but it is required to continue our current level of support from ODA as it is the end of a biennium. The annual work plan must be submitted with the grant application, which is due by the end of May, but a draft work plan is allowed. She's still working on it, but she has distributed staff hours to a 100% completion rate. Shilah did note she removed the Mosier Deep Well as that has been completed, and removed the Lindell Dam removal as that was completed. Thus far, nothing new has been added to the work plan from last year. *Phil moved to approve the draft annual work plan; Larry seconded. Motion carried unanimously.*

**f. Crop Tour Sponsorship** – Shilah reported that Jacob was not able to attend the meeting, but he wanted to share the crop tours are coming up June 1<sup>st</sup> (Sherman County) and June 8<sup>th</sup> (Wasco County). In the past the District has provided coffee, donuts, and the porta potties. The District hasn't previously supported Sherman County, but it is a great opportunity to connect with our neighboring county. It was noted that the board schedule lists the wrong dates for the crop tours, but they are confirmed on June 1<sup>st</sup> and June 8<sup>th</sup>. *Phil moved to sponsor both the Sherman and Wasco County crop tours; Ken seconded. Motion carried unanimously.*

**g. SDAO Letter to FEMA** – Shilah reported this letter was emailed out to the board, but it did not make it into the printed meeting packet. The letter is from SDAO to FEMA to try and persuade them to slow down and engage with special districts on their proposed flood plain restrictions. If they do tighten up flood plain restrictions, it could significantly impact the work the District does. Ken mentioned that some of the new restrictions are in conflict with Oregon land use planning as well. *Ken moved to approve signing the FEMA letter, opposing their flood plain restrictions; Bob seconded. Motion carried unanimously.*

**h. Climate Resiliency Plan** – Ryan presented a Climate Resiliency Plan that was a joint project between Wasco County and The City of The Dalles. In June 2022, they formed a committee to develop this plan, which was completed last month. The goal was to identify climate issues and provide recommendations for possible solutions. Ryan served on this committee and provided information on conservation practices that can assist with climate change and carbon storage. This plan is intended to be a living document that provides general guidance and can be updated as more data on climate change is learned. This plan has been presented to The Dalles City Council and will be presented to the Wasco County Commissioners at their next meeting. The committee that built this plan met once a month for almost a year. Discussion ensued regarding the many uses of the climate resiliency plan.

### **Updates**

**a. Next Meeting** - The next regular meeting is scheduled for June 7, 2023, at 1:00 PM, at the USDA Service Center and via Zoom. The annual budget hearing will also take place at this meeting.

**b. 15Mile Managed Underground Storage (MUS)** – Josh reported the limited license expired April 30th, so Monday they shut down the MUS pilot project. Even though the project did not go as planned, they were able to collect data and have learned two ways the filtration basin will not work. The native soils have too much clay content, which sealed off and made a nice pond, but it didn't filter water. They attempted to revise the design, in order to salvage some data, by purchasing 200 yards of washed sand from Granite Construction Co. While the sand did work as a filtration medium, something in this particular sand raised the pH of the water enough to be outside of our permit conditions. Even if all the other parameters were acceptable, they would not be allowed to put that water down into a basalt aquifer. The next step is to set up a benchtop filtration system to see how different sand sources affect the water. They also ran into some issues pumping and filtering water out of the creek. The filter they used did not work with the overall design, so Josh is going to research a commercial level filter. Shilah, Abbie, and Drake completed a grant application for \$75,000 for the MUS project from OWEB. There are still many unknowns on this project, and it is likely that more funding will be needed, but this will keep the MUS moving forward. Discussion ensued.

**c. Highline Ditch Elimination** – Josh reported they have completed the three smaller wells, but those still need irrigation systems. He also needs to check on the diversion and see what needs to be done to close that project out.

**d. 2020 White River Fire & 2022 Miller Road Fire** – Josh reported they have a pending grant application for the White River Fire with OWEB for seeding with ODFW. On the Miller Road Fire, many landowners have already hired contractors to replace fencing when they thought the

reimbursement rate would be \$5 per foot. Then FSA received notice the rate would be \$3.60 per foot and contacted the State office on behalf of the landowners. The 2023 rates are now approved at \$5.69 per foot.

**e. Weed Control** – Scott led a discussion on the future of weed control at the SWCD. He reported while weeds have been a priority of the SWCD, we're not a weed district. The SWCD currently has a grant for \$18,000 from ODA for weed control. Scott has mainly been focusing on the Class A noxious weeds but is treating Class B weeds too. Class T weeds are the ones considered common weeds but are not widespread in a large region. When applying for grants, the goal is to be competitive in what the SWCD says they're going to do, but the larger concern is overall weed control in Wasco County. Discussion ensued. Board consensus was to consider partnering with Wasco County as Scott continues to develop a weed program.

**f. SDAO Best Practices Checklist – Emergency Preparedness Planning** – Shilah reported this is on the agenda as a reminder to the board that the District needs to complete the checklist in order to get 10% off liability insurance. This year's topic is emergency preparedness planning, which includes taking some trainings, updating an emergency action plan, and other items.

### **Agency Reports**

**a. NRCS (Civil Rights Review)** – Emily was not able to attend the meeting.

**b. FSA** – Lissa reported the PARP deadline is June 2<sup>nd</sup>. PARP is revenue-based and is for a loss in excess of 15% in 2020 as compared to 2018 or 2019. If anyone is having difficulties filling out the online tool, FSA would be happy to walk them through it. The Emergency Relief Program phase 2 deadline is also June 2<sup>nd</sup>. This one is for losses tied to some sort of weather event in 2020 or 2021 as compared to 2018 or 2019. This program also has an online tool, but FSA can walk you through that as well. June 2<sup>nd</sup> is the deadline for NAP signup for those who are certified as socially disadvantaged or beginning farmer/rancher. This is not just for cherries, but you can count hay crops, rangeland, etc, as long as at least 50% of the operation is female. July 15<sup>th</sup> is the next deadline for acreage reporting for all spring planted crops, all rangeland if not in NAP, all hay crops, and all CRP. Currently they are working on grassland signup for CRP. Lissa thanked the SWCD and NRCS teams for all their assistance on grassland assessments. The rate is \$13 per acre. Last year, she thought they had 73 bids for it and they had 70 of them approved. The next closest county only had 20 bids.

**c. OSU Extension** – Jacob was not able to attend the meeting.

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

### **Committee Reports**

**a. Audit Committee** – Phil reported he didn't have any questions.

**b. Facilities Committee** – Josh reported they held a facilities meeting just before the board meeting today. The interior painting was just completed on the building. Josh thanked Abbie and Jennifer for organizing the painting. Josh is continuing to work on previously discussed security upgrades. The paint on the roof has peeled off but the primer is still holding. Josh will have a roofing company inspect it.

**c. Watershed Council Updates** – Drake reported that Josh hit a lot of the watershed council highlights in his updates. Water quality monitoring for The Dalles and Mill Creek will start up again soon. Drake is going to train Samantha to do the monitoring so he can focus on FAST and other water quality tasks. Fish tagging in Fifteenmile is starting up again. They had trouble keeping the traps open due to logs plugging it, but that has hopefully been resolved. A driller has been selected for Mosier Million project. Fifteenmile and Bakeoven watershed councils will be meeting in June. Abbie is working on a grant application for updating the watershed council action plans.

**d. OAHP/SWCC** – Ken reported OAHP has finalized recommendation of funding for seven easements and two management plans, and they have been recommended for funding by OWEB. He thinks with the program up and running, the first \$5 million have already been spent, so they will be asking for \$10 million in the next round. The SWCC will meet here next week, and they will be doing an afternoon session on May 10<sup>th</sup> and a morning session on May 11<sup>th</sup>. The afternoon session is a tour of Orchard View and everyone attending will meet at 1pm at the Holiday Inn. Josh will give a presentation of projects and activities of the SWCD. Orchard View will give a presentation, celebrating their 100-year anniversary of operations and give a tour of the packing facility and probably the orchard facilities. Anyone interested is welcome to join the tour. The presentations will also be streamed via MS Teams if anyone wants to listen in. The morning session begins at 8:30am and will also be on MS Teams for anyone to join.

#### **District Manager Report**

**a. Work Plan Progress & Grant Status** – Shilah reported the work plan progress and grant status reports were emailed and are included in the meeting packet. Items are starting to be checked off the work plan as we're approaching the end of the fiscal year. The budget hearing will be in June. The cost share program was highlighted as completed as the budget has been used up. And the Tree Sale is finished. The MUS is continuing on rather than wrapping up, so that will remain on the work plan. The Lindell Dam project is completed, as is the Mosier Deep Well. The Highline Ditch project has been extended. The District currently has 30 active grants, with five of them closing out soon. There is a little over \$2 million remaining. Five grant applications have been submitted, totaling over \$4.3 million in pending applications. Since 1990, the District has completed 325 grants for a little over \$19 million on the ground work. Phil inquired about The Riders Club. Shilah explained they have a concern about an eroding stream bank working its way towards their clubhouse, but they don't have a lot of capital or capacity to take the project on. They previously submitted an application to OWEB, but it wasn't funded.

**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.

**The Board entered EXECUTIVE SESSION PER ORS 192.660(2)(f) To consider information or records that are exempt by law from public inspection at 2:37pm.**

**Reconvened Regular Board Meeting at 3:00pm.**

**Adjourned: 3:01 PM**

Jennifer Sampson