



Wasco County Soil and Water Conservation District Board Meeting Minutes – March 1, 2023

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

Directors via Teleconference: Bob Krein

Directors Absent: Stan Shephard

Associate Directors Absent: Bryce Molesworth

Staff: Shilah Olson Jennifer Sampson Josh Thompson
Abbie Forrest Samantha Filbin

Staff via Teleconference: Karen Lamson Ryan Bessette

Guests:

NRCS: Emily Huth, District Conservationist
FSA: Lissa Biehn, County Executive Director
Wy'East RC&D: Robert Wallace, Executive Director
Michael Kluz, Rural Energy Specialist/RARE AmeriCorps Member
SWCD: Pat Davis, Director Emeritus

Guests via Teleconference:

OSU Extension: Jacob Powell, County Agent
USDA: Dave Wechsler, Chief of Physical Security, Homeland Security Division
FSA: Gail Greenman, State Executive Director
Campbell Phillips: Kristen Campbell, Attorney
Public: Dan Hazel

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. Shilah noted the meeting format is slightly different as there are no action items and the board will be going into executive session at 1:45pm.

Minutes: Bill asked if there were any additions or corrections to the February board meeting minutes. None were made. *Ken moved to approve the February 2023 board meeting minutes as presented; Shawn seconded. Motion carried unanimously.*

Treasurer's Report: Shilah reviewed the January Treasurer's Report, noting income, expenses, account and fund balances. She noted there were a few large expenses, including a

payment to the consultant for the forest collaborative, a monitoring system for the Mosier Deep Well, and a small grant payment to Dillon Ranch. She also noted several large transfers, one of which was a transfer to the LGIP account from the Savings account. At the April board meeting, Jill Amery, the Wasco County Tax Assessor, will be in attendance to give the board a forecast of the upcoming tax year. A possible weed program was discussed as well, which will be looked at closer by the budgeting committee. *Phil moved to receive the January Treasurer's Report; Larry seconded. Motion carried unanimously.*

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

Updates

a. Next Meeting - The next regular meeting is scheduled for April 5, 2023, at 1:00 PM, at the USDA Service Center and via Zoom.

b. SDAO Annual Meeting, Sunriver, OR, February 9-12, 2023 – Shawn reported that he attended board member appropriate meetings and learned a lot about board member responsibilities, and learned how to post appropriately on social media. He also thought the conference was very well attended as they had roughly 600 in-person attendees. Jennifer reported she attended several classes, but the most beneficial one was on Paid Leave Oregon. She shared the Oregon Department of Revenue is likely to raise the 1% tax in the future, and there are four bills being developed to solidify their new program rules.

c. Bull Tour Cancelled for 2023 – Shilah reported the 2023 Bull Tour has been cancelled, as they felt they weren't getting the attendance they wanted to see. They will be coming back bigger and better in 2024.

d. 15Mile Managed Underground Storage (MUS) – Josh reported that hopefully by the end of the week we'll have everything in place to turn the pilot project on. There are seven monitoring wells in the basin itself to monitor the hydraulics, WRD requires each well to be constructed under a licensed drill and a \$250 start card for each of them. The original plan for the intake has to be modified because the pool isn't deep enough for the fish screen. Josh thanked Shawn for letting them use his bridge to access the site, and they will bring him a couple of loads of gravel to bring the road back to pre-project condition. Shilah reported she is looking at many sources for funding for this project. This week she has an opportunity to submit to Wyden's office for the Congressional Discretionary Spending fund pool. She also has a request into the State of Oregon to get the project on their budget.

e. Mosier Million #2 – Well Replacement Project – Shilah reported an RFP has been issued and now we wait for responses. Shilah intends to do some personal outreach to well drillers to make sure they know it's available. RFPs are due March 22nd and will be scored by the review team and then brought to the board for a decision in April.

f. Highline Ditch Elimination – Josh had no updates to report at this time.

g. 2020 White River Fire & 2022 Miller Road Fire – Josh reported he is working on the final report for the 2020 grant for the White River Fire. The original proposal included spraying, reseeding, dead tree removal, and cleanup on private land. The only thing that was accomplished

under this grant was staff time for ECP and inventory for federal partners. However, they are going to combine efforts with ODFW to do the spraying and seeding. On the Miller Road Fire, landowners wanted to do spraying but the grant for that is only \$35,000 and they have 13,000 acres to cover.

h. Building Security Training— Shilah reported that tomorrow, the entire facility will participate in a safety/security training session. The board was invited if they wished to attend, and Shilah requested the board's permission to provide lunch at the training. The board approved SWCD sponsorship of lunch by consensus.

i. SWCD Credit Card Limit – Shilah requested the board consider increasing the District's credit card limit from the current limit of \$7,000. She shared she increased the limit to \$7,000 by accident without board permission, so now she is going through the proper channels. It was suggested that the District should seek a credit limit of no more than \$25,000 and the audit committee can monitor the charges. The board approved by consensus.

The SWCD Board Entered Executive Session Per ORS 192.660(2)(f): To consider information or records that are exempt by law from public inspection at 1:45pm.

Reconvene Regular Board Meeting at 2:24pm.

Agency Reports

a. NRCS (Conservation Plan Review/Approval) – Emily reported the general CSP application deadline is March 31st. They have two pools to fund CSP. So far, they have received 16 applications. They are proposing a range improvement CIS in south county with the proposal deadline being extended into June. She reported 36 people attended the local working group meeting yesterday, and overall she thought it went really well.

b. FSA – Lissa reported they have new programs since the last meeting. On Monday, CRP general signups began, which is to enroll in general CRP or re-enroll expiring contracts. The deadline to signup is April 7th. CRP rates are more favorable than they have been in the last couple of years. Also if you have highly erodible land (HELI), it pays at a little higher rate and it's not a competitive process. It is not retroactive, but if you can cancel your current contract, pay it all back, and then reapply and go through the process you can attempt to get in at the HELI rate. The ARC/PLC deadline is March 15th. The Pandemic Assistance Relief Program and the Emergency Relief Program Phase 2, started in January, and the deadline to apply is June 2nd. These are revenue-based programs, where you will have to compare 2020 or 2021 losses to 2018 or 2019.

c. OSU Extension – Jacob reported there is an upcoming event March 13th for pesticide training, with succession planning in the afternoon. The pesticide credit class will be from 9:30am-noon for 3 ODA credits, followed by a sponsored lunch by Farm Credit Services (FCS), then the class on succession planning runs from 1pm-4:30pm, both at CGCC. He has been working on gathering data on pesticide use and soil samples. OSU will likely host a crop tour in late May or early June, but details have not been finalized.

d. Wy'East RC&D – Robert presented new soil moisture probes he has been working to get for producers in our area. They are mainly used in potato production, but they are buried completely under the ground and work well for hay producers, so they aren't maneuvering equipment around a metal pole in their fields. He shared that these sensors monitor temperature, bruising, and more when they are used for potatoes, but they will work well for general soil moisture monitoring as well. Robert is working on getting all the older soil moisture sensors switched out for this new style. Robert shared there are setting up a Hydromet weather station in Dufur. These stations are the same style that you see at airports, and take really high-quality weather data. Weather Underground and NOAA will tie into this station for local data. Robert presented a water quality sensor that will be installed at the 15mile MUS. This sensor will measure pH, connectivity, turbidity, dissolved oxygen, and temperature and transmit the data online so it can be monitored remotely. Currently they are getting hourly readings off the stream to show what the baseline levels are. After the system cleans out a little bit from sediment, then he'll install the sensor at the project site. Robert shared that Michael is presenting this evening at an innovation talk at 5:30pm at the Gorge Wine Library on 2nd street. Robert also shared that he drove the Rivian electric truck to today's meeting if any board members want to see it.

Committee Reports

a. Audit Committee – Phil asked about the large electricity expense in February. Josh reported it was for the 15MUS and they installed two electrical poles.

b. Facilities Committee – Josh reported the facilities committee will look at improving the outdoor lighting around the building. Josh is looking for a cost estimate for leveling the back lot, along with installing power, putting in drains, etc. to put in a shop. It was suggested the District ask their federal partners for assistance with the outdoor lighting as it is a security issue and would benefit everyone working here. Discussion ensued on the shop and how large it should be to accommodate future goals that the District isn't aware of yet.

c. Watershed Council Updates – Drake is presenting at the American Fisheries conference on the FAST program. Abbie reported that the next Fifteenmile meeting will be on March 15th, and will focus on FAST signups, safe harbor agreements, and the 15mile MUS. The Dalles will be meeting on March 8th.

d. OAHP/SWCC – Ken reported OAHP will be making their first decisions on easements this month. The SWCC met and they are waiting on legislative activities. They are still discussing director eligibility statutes. They have a placeholder bill established, but there isn't anything definite included yet. The SWCC met at the Clackamas SWCD. They have approximately 17 employees and just built a new office building roughly a year ago, which includes approximately 11,800sqft of office/meeting space and a large community meeting room. They purchased a 13-acre parcel outside of Beavercreek. They're formulating plans on what to do with the rest of the land and are considering things like demonstration plots. They have also leased a forest parcel near a county park. The SWCC is scheduled to meet at the Wasco SWCD office in May. They will be offered a tour of the Orchard View facility, and maybe see the 15Mile MUS if there is time. Their meeting will be May 11th and 12th.

District Manager Report

a. Work Plan Progress & Grant Status – Shilah stated her reports were emailed out and are included in the printed packet. On the work plan progress, things are starting to get checked off the list. The Annual Meeting will be held in conjunction with the April board meeting. The Tree Sale will be on March 18th. Conservation awards aren't currently available, but it is kept as a placeholder in case they become available in the future. The Highline Ditch is behind schedule, but the grant has been extended and will continue next fiscal year. The Mosier Deep Well and the Lindell Diversion have been completed. The District currently has 31 approved grants, totaling a little over \$4 million with \$2.6 million remaining. Three grant applications have been submitted, and 10 are in the works. The SDAO best practices program is going online soon, and if the District completes the requirements, SDAO will give up to 10% off insurance costs. Some of the items this year include updating the emergency preparedness plan, creating a checklist, attending trainings, and more.

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.

Phil asked if the SWCD has been looking into doing in-stream leasing agreements. Shilah reported the District is not actively looking for those. Discussion ensued on the leasing options and funding possibilities. There was also discussion on general safety procedures. The board recommended that SWCD staff use the "buddy system" and have staff members arriving and leaving the building in pairs. Safety should be a priority for all staff, especially given the office's proximity to NORCOR.

Adjourned: 2:55 PM

Jennifer Sampson