



Wasco County Soil and Water Conservation District
Board Meeting Minutes – April 9, 2025

Directors: Bill Hammel Larry Powell
Phil Kaser

Directors Absent: Bob Krein Jeff Crump Stan Shepard

Staff: Shilah Olson Dana Woods Abbie Forrest
Ryan Bessette Scott Susi

Directors via Teleconference: Shawn Sorensen

Staff via Teleconference: Karen Lamson

Guests:
NRCS: Emily Huth, District Conservationist
FSA: Lissa Biehn, County Executive Director
Wasco SWCD: Pat Davis, Director Emeritus

Guests via Teleconference:
OSU Extension: Jacob Powell, County Agent
Justin McLaughlin, ODFW/NRCS Partner Liaison

Public: none

1:00 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 March regular board meeting minutes. Phil asked for clarification regarding adding terraces to the district cost share program and if it included reshaping only and not removing. Bill confirmed reshaping only. *Larry moved to approve the March regular board meeting minutes as presented; Phil seconded. Motion carried with Larry, Phil, Shawn and Bill all voting in favor.*

Treasurer's Report: Shilah reviewed the March treasurer's report, noting beginning balance, income, expenses, account and fund balances. Total expenses for the month of \$110,655.19 were mostly routine expenses to include payroll and administration as well as payment for the tree sale and planting supplies. Total receipts in the amount of \$66,673.97 were made up of grant income, tax distribution and tree sale receipts. Phil asked about the range drill rental practice and

if the SWCD loans or rents it out. Shilah noted that the SWCD does have a rental policy, but past practice has been to loan it out. Shilah reviewed the loan report noting loans receivable and loans payable amounts. *Phil moved to receive the Treasurer's Report for March; Larry seconded. Motion carried with Larry, Phil, Shawn and Bill all voting in favor.*

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

Action Items

a. District Cost Share Requests – Abbie presented one district cost share application:

P. Davis Haul Road– This application is for approximately 750' of haul road. Abbie has verified the site and pictures were provided in the packet. Requested amount is \$1,745.

Phil moved to approve the one district cost share application as presented; Larry seconded. Motion carried with Larry, Phil, Shawn and Bill voting in favor.

b. Budget Committee Appointments – Replace Wallace with Sorensen – Because of the relationship between Wy'East and the SWCD on the ODOE C-REP Grant, Robert feels that it wouldn't be appropriate for him to continue to serve on the SWCD Budget Committee. Chris Sorensen has been an alternate in the past although there is no provision in Oregon Budget Law for alternates, and would be a good appointment to serve the remainder of the term. *Phil moved to appoint Chris Sorensen to the budget committee to complete the term of the position left vacant due to Robert's resignation; Larry seconded. Motion carried with Larry, Phil, Shawn and Bill all voting in favor.*

c. Award for Mosier Million #2 & Budget Discussion – Shilah reported that the RFP has been issued. The work outlined in the RFP is to drill two new wells and decommission the existing wells. There is \$324,245 remaining in the project and it was estimated that those funds would be sufficient to drill two more wells. The SWCD received one bid from Cascade Well Drilling who has done an extensive amount of work on this project, and it appears that there will be a funding shortfall of approximately \$27,075. Shilah made the recommendation to accept the bid from Cascade Well Drilling and have them start work after July 1st so that the funding shortfall could be built into the SWCD's fiscal year 25/26 budget. *Larry moved to accept the bid from Cascade Well Drilling and for the SWCD to cover the funding shortage of \$27,075 in the fiscal year 25/26 budget, with work on the project to start after July 1, 2025; Shawn seconded. Motion carried with Larry, Phil, Shawn and Bill all voting in favor.*

d. CWDG Agreement with Juniper Flat RFPD – The US Forest Service awarded Wasco County a \$5,945,661 grant to support ongoing collaborative efforts in wildfire planning and mitigation work across Wasco County. The SWCD is one of the partner agencies working on this project. The grant budget includes approximately \$240,000 in pass thru funds to JFRFPD over the 5-year project. Shilah provided a Draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between SWCD and Juniper Flat Rural Fire Protection District, which would allow Juniper Flat RFPD to assist SWCD in completing the designated tasks in the project. *Phil moved to approve entering into MOU with Juniper Flat RFPD; Larry seconded. Motion carried with Larry, Phil, Shawn and Bill voting in favor.*

e. CWDG Administration for Wamic RFPD – Shilah reported that in the original grant proposal, Wamic RFPD was going to do the administration of their portion of the grant. Recently, Wamic RFPD has approached the SWCD about handling the grant administration for them. Phil asked about the current workload of SWCD staff. Shilah responded that she feels that staff has the capacity along with the skillset and knowledge to assist with administration. The funds that are earmarked in the original grant for Wamic RFPD grant administration will now go to the SWCD. Pat commented that Chief Magill is easy to work with so it should be a good partnership. *Larry motioned that SWCD move forward with providing grant administration services for Wamic RFPD; Phil seconded. Motion carried with Larry, Phil, Shawn and Bill voting in favor.*

Updates

a. Next Meeting – The next regular meeting is scheduled for May 14, 2025, at 1:00 PM, at the USDA Service Center and via Zoom. Budget Committee Meeting Wednesday May 14, 2025 at 10:00 AM.

b. 15mile Managed Underground Storage (MUS) & Water Budget – Drake was not in attendance but he sent his updates to Shilah prior to the meeting. Drake spoke with Bob Wood prior to the last Fifteenmile Watershed Council meeting and he said that he hoped they would have a finalized scope of work in place for the water budget study by June. Bob feels that it would be best for OWRD to come give a follow up presentation to the Fifteenmile Watershed Council in June after the scope of work has been completed. Nothing new to add for the MUS.

c. Mosier Groundwater Restoration & Mosier Million #2 – Two more wells to be drilled. Details were discussed under action items.

d. Highline Ditch Elimination – Shilah and Abbie continue to work on this project. Shilah noted that there is still one landowner decision to be made regarding irrigation system.

e. Fires: 2020 White River, CWDG Grant, 2024 Larch Creek Funding – Shilah reported that there are no new updates regarding the 2020 White River Fire. The CWDG Grant updates were discussed already during Action Items. There is an opportunity to apply for \$50,000 in funding for the 2024 Larch Creek fire. Samantha has expressed an interest in grant writing so she is working on that application.

f. FY 2023-24 Audit – The 2023-24 audit is still underway. Dana has been checking in regularly with the auditors. The requests for information are becoming more frequent so it seems like progress is being made. The most recent update from the auditor's office is that they are striving for an April 30th completion date.

g. Updating Long Range Plan & SWCD Employee Handbook – Shilah noted that she has a draft of the Long Range Plan and is working on the Employee Handbook updates as time allows. It is her thought that she could start sending pieces of the updates out to the Board for review, that way the whole Handbook update would not be so overwhelming.

h. SDAO Best Practices Checklist– The SDAO Best Practices program was designed to assist special districts with implementing best practices to mitigate risk in areas of high exposure. The checklist is an opportunity for Districts to earn up to a 10% credit on their 2026 general liability, auto liability and property insurance contributions. Currently, the District will receive a 2% credit for an affiliate organization membership, a 2% credit for attending the SDAO Conference and will receive another 2% discount for completing an online self-evaluation checklist. The goal will be to get to the full 10% which will require an update to the Paid Leave Oregon Policy and completion of an online employment practices/supervisory training by District management.

Agency Reports

a. NRCS – Emily reported that they are currently working on 10 CSP projects that have been funded. They recently had a meeting with landowners and partner agencies regarding fire breaks. This meeting was a result of interest in this topic at the Local Working Group meeting. She noted that there seemed to be a lot of interest in vegetative fire breaks so they are looking into the best vegetation options. She noted that NRCS is losing one employee who has accepted the delayed resignation offer. Statewide the NRCS has lost about 20 employees. There is potential that if enough employees accept the delayed resignation offer then the RIF (reduction in force) won't happen.

b. FSA – Lissa reported that they are working on E-CAP and have until August to complete. ARC/PLC is still going on until April 15th. She also noted that acreage reporting is due by July 15th for Spring planted crops. It is still unknown when they will have CRP sign-ups.

c. OSU Extension – Jacob reported that there is currently no farm manager for the experiment station. He's doing field research work currently looking at soil acidity levels in wheat production. The drone workshop that was held in March had a great turnout, there seems to be a lot of interest and he's working on planning another one in the fall. He also noted that he is starting to look at dates in June for crop tours. Currently, Sherman County is scheduled for June 12th.

d. Wy'East RC&D – Robert was unable to attend the meeting but he did provide Shilah with updates regarding the BEAM solar units that Wy'East acquired with funding through the C-REP grant. One unit is currently in the SWCD parking lot and the Board is invited to view the unit after the meeting. Anna Peach, one of the Wy'East RARE's will be available to answer any questions. Currently, there is one BEAM unit already in place at the Wamic Market and one will be set up in Antelope. Robert also passed on that their Federal funding is still frozen.

Committee Reports

a. Audit Committee – The audit committee had nothing to report.

b. Facilities Committee – The facilities committee did not have a meeting in the last month. Shilah recommended scheduling a meeting before the Budget Committee meeting on May 14th, possibly at either 8:00 or 9:00 am.

c. Watershed Council Updates – Updates to follow during the Coordinating Board Meeting. The next Mosier Watershed Council Meeting is April 29th, the Fifteenmile Watershed Council meeting will be in June and The Dalles Watershed Council Meeting will be September 10th.

District Manager Report

a. Work Plan Progress & Grant Status – Shilah reported that the progress on the work plan is still on track to meet the goals by the end of the current fiscal year. The District currently has 37 open and active grants which total approximately \$6.5 million in approved funding. Currently there are 5 pending grant applications.

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: 2:08 pm

Dana Woods

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