

MEMO TO BOARD: For May 13, 2026

Action Items

- a. **District Cost Share Requests:** Abbie will review applications for the board's consideration.
- b. **CWDG: Roadside Vegetation Contracting & Advisory Group:** These 2 items were previously tabled:
 - The Roadside Fuels Advisory Working Group Charter documents the multi-agency process used to prioritize road segments, develop prescriptions, and support transparent decision-making consistent with the CWDG grant, CWPP, and NHMP.
 - The Request for Qualified Contractors outlines the updated contracting pathway (developed with County and legal counsel) to prequalify vegetation management contractors and ensure procurement aligns with Oregon public contracting law.

These documents provide the structure needed for coordinated project prioritization and compliant contracting as the District continues implementing CWDG roadside vegetation and defensible space work.

- c. **Contracting GSI for Leon Well COBU:** This proposal from GSI Water Solutions covers preparation of the Claim of Beneficial Use (COBU) for the Leon well, the final well replacement under the Mosier Million #2 groundwater project. GSI previously assisted the District with the related water-rights transfer under a separate contract, and this COBU is the final step required to complete the transfer and move the well toward certification with OWRD.

The work includes gathering project information, completing the required site visit, documenting compliance with transfer conditions, preparing the COBU, submitting it to OWRD, and coordinating with OWRD through the review process. The proposed not-to-exceed amount is \$5,375.

District staff do not currently have the technical expertise to complete COBUs in-house, and this contract provides an opportunity for staff to learn the process while ensuring the work is completed correctly and on time. Staff recommend Board approval of the attached professional services agreement so GSI can proceed.

- d. **Updated Employee Handbook:** The updated Employee Handbook is now complete following our final review with HR Answers. All outstanding questions have been resolved, and the attached draft reflects current laws, best practices, and District procedures. HR Answers recommends that the Board review and approve the handbook at this stage, after which staff will receive the document for a transition period to read, ask questions, and prepare for implementation. We anticipate rolling it out formally to staff approximately one month after Board approval.

With this update, we no longer need a standalone policy on overtime, compensatory time, or holiday-related leave (which was tabled at a prior meeting). Those provisions have been fully integrated into the handbook, including the shift to TOIL (time off in lieu) for situations where employees work additional hours during a holiday week.

- e. **Update Financial Policy & Add A. Forrest as Signer on Bank Account:** The updated Financial Management & Internal Controls Policy was tabled at our prior meeting in the interest of time. This consolidated policy replaces all prior financial resolutions and establishes clear, modern practices for internal controls, segregation of duties, purchasing authority, reconciliation procedures, and financial oversight. It also clarifies the limited circumstances under which a designated staff member may serve as a functional backup check signer when the District Manager is unavailable.

With the policy now complete, staff recommend that the Board approve the updated policy and formally add Abbie Forrest as the designated staff check signer consistent with the roles and safeguards outlined in the document.

- f. **Meals, Branded Materials, and Employee Recognition Policy:** This policy was originally approved in October 2025. Since then, we received updated guidance confirming that gift cards (regardless of amount) do not qualify as de minimis benefits and must be processed through payroll as taxable income. The policy has been revised to reflect current state and federal requirements and now clarifies that the District will provide tangible, non-cash items for employee recognition to maintain compliance. The updated version is included for Board review and approval.
- g. **SDAO Best Practices Checklist – Public Meetings – Policy & Training Reminder:** I previously sent an email to the Board with instructions for completing the updated Public Meetings Law training required under Oregon HB 2805 and the SDAO Best Practices Program. This training must be completed by October 31, 2026, for the District to receive the 2% insurance credit associated with the Public Meetings category. At the meeting, we will briefly review our existing Public Meetings Policy to ensure it aligns with SDAO’s updated checklist requirements for the additional 2% credit. The remaining Best Practices items for this year are already complete.
- h. **Vehicle Reserve and Replacement Policy:** The revised Vehicle Reserve and Replacement Policy is included for Board consideration. This update modernizes the District’s long-term fleet planning by increasing the annual transfer to the vehicle reserve from \$10,000 to \$15,000 and raising the reserve cap from \$50,000 to \$70,000 to reflect current vehicle costs. The policy also outlines practical replacement guidelines to ensure reliability and safety, while allowing the District Manager to extend a vehicle’s service life when condition and maintenance justify doing so. As with other fiscal policies, this one will be reviewed annually during the budget process to ensure it remains aligned with operational needs and market conditions.

Weed Control Program & Discussion of Weed Board Establishment - At the April meeting, the Board reviewed and approved Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) with Wasco County, which delegates administration of the County’s noxious weed control program to the SWCD while the County retains all regulatory authority. The resolution also designates the SWCD Board as the County’s Weed Advisory Board and transfers a surplus spray truck to support program operations. As a follow-up to that discussion, this agenda item provides an opportunity for the Board to consider next steps for initiating the advisory board function, including whether to formally adopt the State’s Priority Noxious Weed List as recommended during the April meeting.

Updates

- a. **Next Regular Mtg, June 10th, 2026, 1:00 PM USDA Service Center:** The annual meeting will follow.
- b. **Director Elections – Zones 2 & 4 & At-Large 2 are up in 2026:** These positions held by Shawn Sorensen, Stan Shephard, and Phil Kaser are up for election in November 2026. The Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) oversees SWCD director elections statewide, including eligibility requirements, filing deadlines, and zone-verification rules. Candidates must file a Declaration of Candidacy or a Declaration of Intent and Request for Write-In Votes to be Tallied by the statutory deadlines, and zone-position candidates must meet landownership or residency requirements within the zone they seek to represent. Additional details, forms, and the 2026 election calendar are available on ODA’s SWCD Elections webpage: <https://www.oregon.gov/oda/natural-resources/swcd/pages/elections.aspx>. Directors and prospective candidates are encouraged to review these requirements and timelines to ensure compliance.
- c. **Long Range Planning:** The community survey postcards have now reached households, and responses are coming in steadily. I’m sharing a sneak-peek summary in the graphics pasted at the end of this document. To encourage early participation, respondents were asked to complete the survey by May 11 to be entered into the drawing for a \$50 Coastal gift card. The survey itself will remain open until early June so we can continue gathering input ahead of the Board’s June 10 meeting, when I hope we can finalize and adopt the Long-Range Plan. At the April 16 NRCS Local Working Group meeting, participants identified water use efficiency, wildfire risk & recovery, and water supply as the top three resource concerns. These results align with earlier prioritization exercises facilitated by John Runyon with the Fifteenmile and The Dalles Watershed Councils, both of which ranked water supply as their highest priority. A full survey summary will be provided once the initial response window closes, with additional updates if more input comes in before June.
- d. **Highline Ditch Elimination:** The Highline Ditch Elimination Project continues to move toward removing the diversion barrier on Tygh Creek and restoring continuous streamflow to approximately 5.2 miles of habitat. All participating properties have completed well drilling or point-of-diversion approvals, and landowners are now working toward installation, irrigation system completion, and COBU filings or extensions as needed. Design and permitting for the remaining diversion and fish-screen infrastructure are underway with ODFW, contractors, and partner agencies. Updated estimates for the combined remaining work across all properties (including pumps, power service, screening, site work, and final diversion decommissioning) are projected at just over \$300,000 as reflected in the FY26-27 budget document. Staff continue to support landowners with coordination and implementation logistics.
- e. **Bright Night Power Community Investment Plan (CIP):** Bright Night has provided a draft Community Investment Plan (CIP) and a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) outlining their proposed agricultural mitigation framework for the Deschutes Solar project. The materials describe a concept in which Bright Night would establish a Community Investment Fund to offset agricultural impacts associated with the project, with MCEDD administering the fund and the Wasco County Board of Commissioners serving as the final decision-maker on project awards. The draft CIP also identifies the SWCD as one of several potential project sponsors that could apply for funding once the program is established.

Agency Reports (NRCS, FSA, OSU Extension, WyEast RC&D) - Partner agencies will provide their regular updates on program activity, producer services, and upcoming deadlines.

Informational Reports

- a. **Internal Financial Review:** The internal financial review team members will provide their monthly update on reconciliations and oversight practices.
- b. **Facilities Status:** Staff will provide a brief update on the shop and site development project. We have been refining our internal scoping and project overview including required components, optional features, phasing, and estimated costs. We are still awaiting updated materials from AKS to support the next steps in the Site Team process. AKS indicated in April that the delay was on their end, and we are continuing to follow up so we can refine cost estimates and move the project forward. In the meantime, staff are organizing planning materials, identifying early decision points, and preparing for the multi-year development timeline.
- c. **Watershed Council Updates:** The Coordinating Board meeting will follow this meeting.

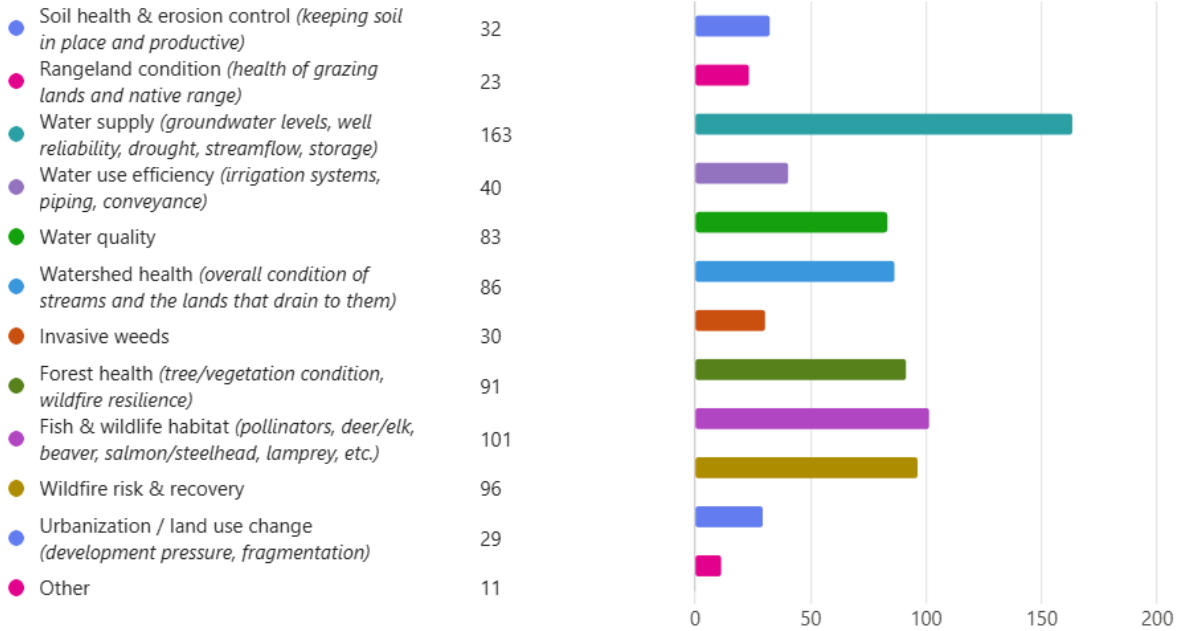
District Manager Report

- a. **Work Plan Progress & Grant Status:** A summary of current work plan implementation, active grants, and pending applications.
- b. **Activity Reports and Schedule:** A brief overview of recent activities, upcoming commitments, and staff scheduling items.

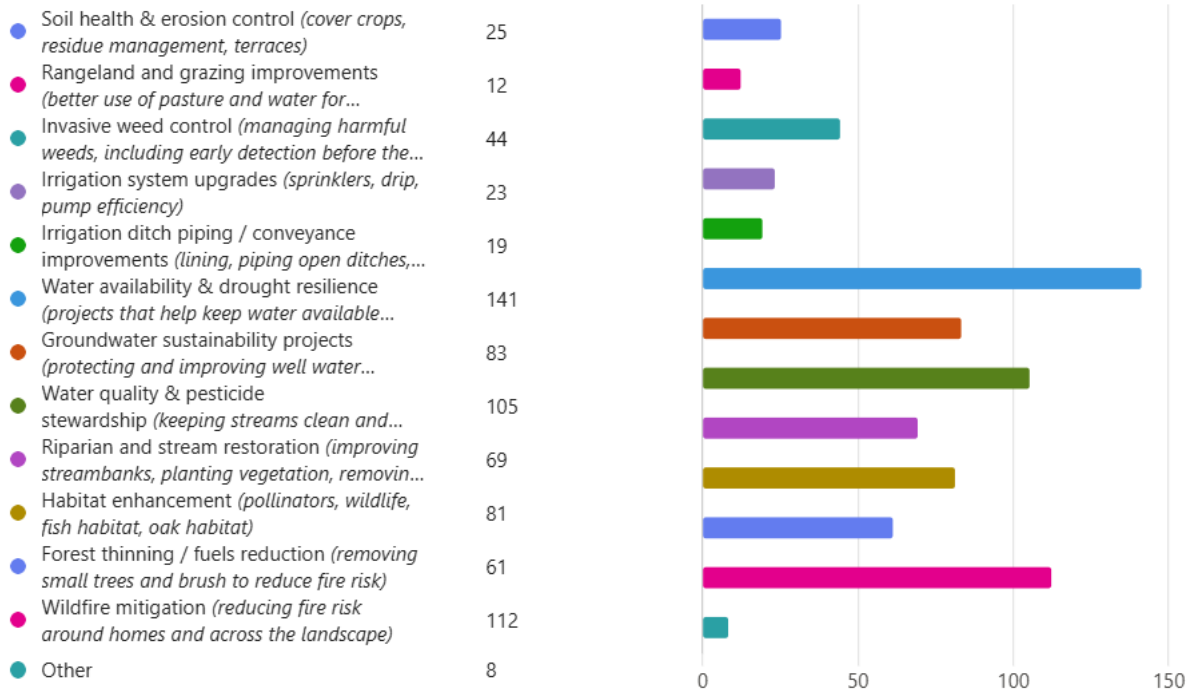
Adjourn SWCD Meeting & Convene Watershed Councils Coordinating Board: The SWCD meeting will adjourn at approximately 3:00 p.m., followed by the Coordinating Board meeting.

Preliminary survey results as of May 6, 2026:

1. What resource concerns matter most to you? This helps us understand your top priorities.

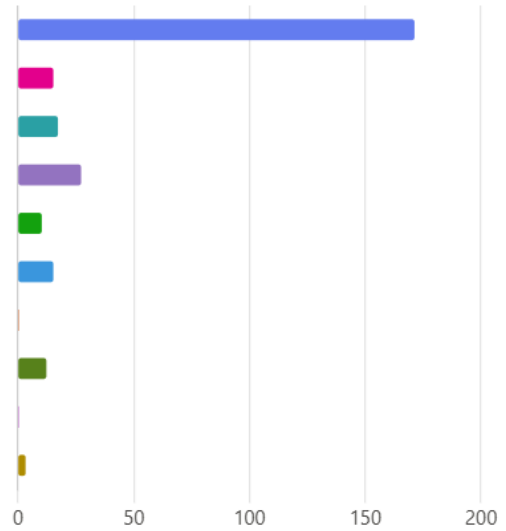


2. What types of projects should the SWCD prioritize? As above, this helps us understand your top priorities.



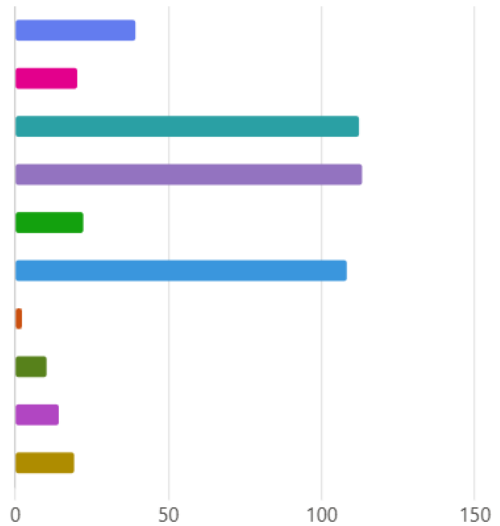
3. Where do you live or work?

● The Dalles / Chenoweth / Petersburg	171
● Mosier / Rowena / Sevenmile	15
● Dufur / Boyd / Friend	17
● Tygh Valley / Wamic / Pine Hollow / Sportsman's Park	27
● Pine Grove / Wapinitia / Juniper Flat	10
● Maupin / Bakeoven	15
● Antelope / Shaniko	0
● Rural Wasco County	12
● I own/manage land but don't live here	0
● Other	3

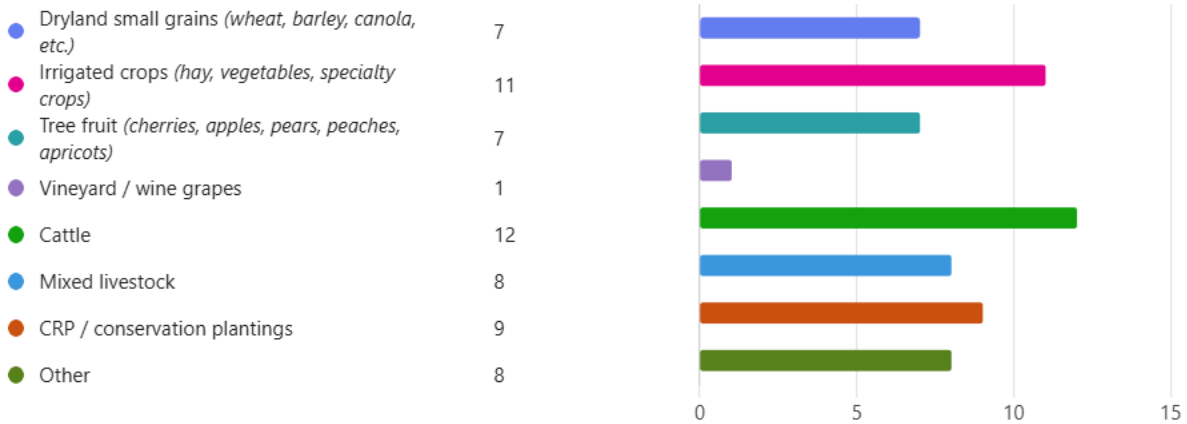


4. What is your connection to the land? (Select all that apply)

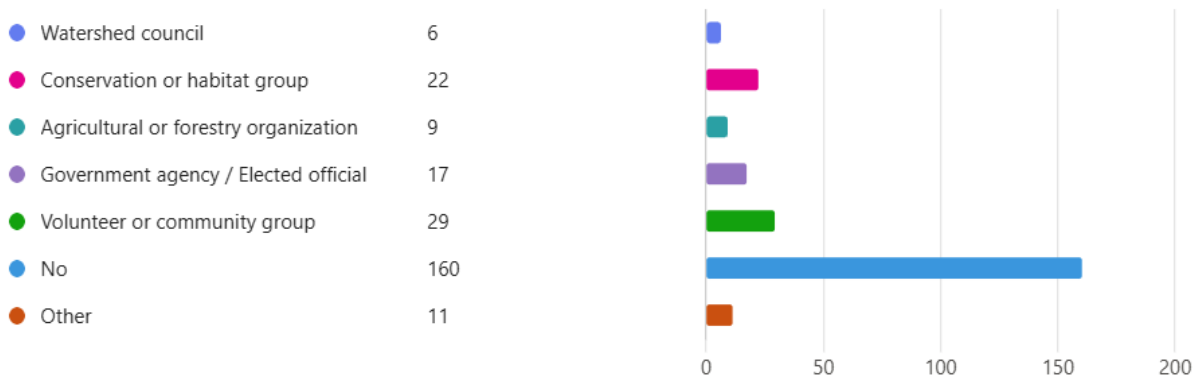
● Farmer / rancher	39
● Forest landowner	20
● Rural homeowner	112
● Urban homeowner	113
● Business owner	22
● Recreational user	108
● Tribal member / Tribal land steward	2
● Non-profit organization (e.g., conservation, habitat, watershed, or community groups)	10
● Government agency / Public land management	14
● Other	19



5. **OPTIONAL: If you selected Farmer/Rancher: What type of operation do you manage?** (Select all that apply)



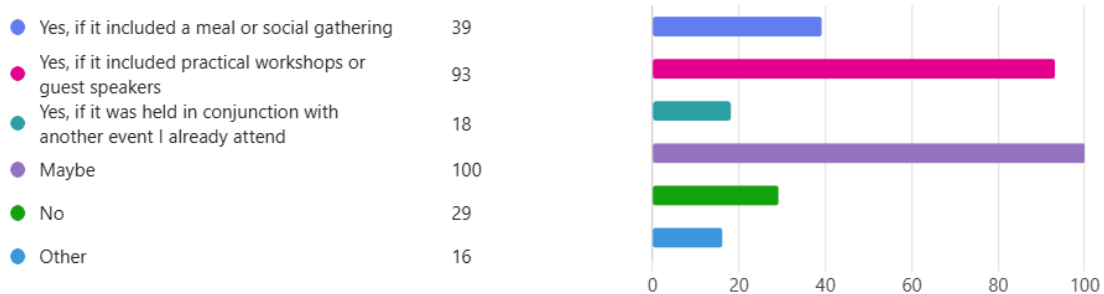
6. **OPTIONAL: Are you affiliated with any local natural resource organizations?** (Select all that apply)



7. **OPTIONAL: Is there anything else you'd like us to know about conservation needs in your area?**

Community comments overwhelmingly emphasize water (both supply and quality) as the county's most urgent and cross-cutting concern. Many respondents expressed anxiety about declining groundwater levels, drought, and competition for limited water resources, with repeated references to Google/data center water use, irrigation system losses, and the need for stronger conservation education. Wildfire risk was the second dominant theme: residents asked for more mitigation support, defensible-space assistance, education, and hands-on workshops, especially for neighborhoods in the WUI. Respondents also highlighted the need to address invasive weeds, forest health, and rangeland degradation, noting that these issues directly affect fire behavior, watershed function, and agricultural viability. Many comments called for more outreach, including practical workshops, volunteer opportunities, youth engagement, and communication about SWCD activities and available resources. Several respondents raised concerns about land use change, particularly large-scale energy development and lack of enforcement around trash, junk, and burn practices – issues that we will communicate to the proper lead entities, such as Wasco County or local fire departments. Across all geographies, people expressed a desire for healthy ecosystems, transparent water management, and support for landowners - from small urban gardeners to large agricultural operations - to steward land and water more effectively.

8. OPTIONAL: Would you be interested in attending an annual community conservation meeting hosted by the SWCD?



Based on this feedback, I recommend inviting speakers to our Annual Meeting on the themes that rose to the top: Fire and Water. I've contacted two speaking candidates, and Abbie drafted an invitation. Before we go further, I'd like the Board's guidance on proceeding with the Bargeway booking for June 10 (which we've already advertised) and adding light refreshments. Estimated cost is ~\$2,500, depending on RSVP & menu.

You're Invited to the
WASCO COUNTY SWCD
 ANNUAL MEETING
 WEDNESDAY, JUNE 10TH
 BARGEWAY PUB
 3:30-5:30PM

Featured Speakers:

Melissa Napoli - Wasco County Community Wildfire Defense Coordinator
 An overview of the Community Wildfire Defense Program, Firewise communities, local partnerships, and practical steps for wildfire preparedness.

David Pilz - Managing Partner with Fluent Freshwater Insights
 A look at the current state of water in our region—including drought conditions, growing demands on natural resources, and opportunities for conservation.

DISTRICT HIGHLIGHTS

- Presentation of the Wasco County SWCD Annual Report & Audit
- A "State of the District" video featuring accomplishments from the past year

PLANNING TO ATTEND?
 PLEASE RSVP TO DANA WOODS AT
 DANA.WOODS@WASCOSWCD.ORG
 OR CALL (541)705-3639