



Wasco County Soil and Water Conservation District Board Meeting Minutes – August 31, 2022

Directors: Bob Krein

Directors via Teleconference: Phil Kaser Pat Davis Ken Bailey
Shawn Sorensen Stan Shephard

Directors Absent: Bill Hammel

Associate Directors Absent: Bryce Molesworth

Staff: Shilah Olson Abbie Forrest Jennifer Sampson

Staff via Teleconference: Drake Gilbert Ryan Bessette Josh Thompson
Samantha Filbin

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

Guests via Teleconference:
Wy'East: Robert Wallace, Executive Director
Public: Emily Stranz, DS Consulting Facilitator
Dan Hazel

1:00 PM Call to Order

Bob called the meeting to order and asked if there were any additions to the agenda. Shilah noted she may move website hosting down to the update section, but no other changes are needed.

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

Treasurer's Report: Shilah reviewed the June Treasurer's Report, noting income, expenses, account and fund balances. She noted this is the last month we'll be receiving space rent from Pacific Fisheries as they are moving out as of the end of July. There was one transfer in June to close out the tree sale. Shilah reviewed the July Treasurer's Report, noting income, expenses, account and fund balances. She reported the District purchased a 2022 Chevrolet Silverado 1500 per the approved budget. She also shared the District purchased a UTV from Wy'East RC&D for field work, which was paid for by grant funds for ODA weed control and the BPA CREP project.

Ken reported that OWEB announced they were going to give districts approximately \$20,000 more capacity dollars, but that number is not yet confirmed. Shilah confirmed she had also received notice of this and will discuss how to spend the funds once they have the agreement in hand. *Ken moved to receive the June and July Treasurer's Reports; Phil seconded. Motion carried unanimously.*

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

Fifteenmile Managed Underground Storage Project Update

Emily Stranz presented an update on the Fifteenmile Managed Underground Storage Project and led a board discussion on the next steps to take. In December 2021, a stakeholder group was established to look at project cost, legal liabilities, scope of work, governance, and administration. The stakeholder group recommended to have Wasco SWCD as the owner and operator of the facility, with a desire to leverage local partnerships with local/federal/tribal agencies. Emily and Shilah are collaborating on an implementation road map to present to the board at a later date. Discussion ensued regarding the next steps and what the board needs to do to move the project forward, including concerns about funding and liability. Board consensus was to have Emily and Shilah put together a workshop for the board to dig into the details on this project within the next couple of months.

Action Items

a. Cost-Share Requests – Abbie presented six cost share applications:

WHAT LTD – WHAT submitted a cost share application in June for a mainline irrigation project, but the board wanted to table it until the new fiscal year. He currently has an OWEB small grant for the project and is seeking matching funds to offset the rising cost of supplies. His application did request over the maximum amount, but he is aware the board will only award a maximum of \$7,500. If he is unable to get a district cost share agreement, he won't do the project as costs have completely overrun his original budget.

R.Archer – Abbie reported Josh worked with the landowner to develop this project which will install buried irrigation mainline out of their diversion on Ross Road. They are requesting the maximum of \$7,500.

S.Olson – This is a project for a manure composting facility. This was originally going to be included in an OWEB small grant and DCS project she implemented 2 years ago, but she decided to phase the project. The majority of the work will be done by the landowners, and Shilah declared a conflict-of-interest as it is her application. There is also a conflict-of-interest letter included in the application packet. She is asking for \$4,000.

Windhorse – This is an application for a haul road. Scott surveyed the site, and Windhorse has done haul roads with us in the past. They are requesting \$2,500.

Rancho Paz – Abbie looked at the site, this application is for a cover crop project. He wants to cover crop his drive rows to prevent erosion. He has also done an orchard chipping cost share project in the past. Abbie reported that she doesn't think the board has done this kind of project

before, but she did note the rows are pretty steep. He plans to rent a seed drill and will get his cover crop mix from Mid-Columbia. He is requesting \$2,750.

Dodge Trust – This application came in today just a few hours before the board meeting. It is for developing a spring that has rotted pipe. They will need to run pipe to 2 separate troughs, including installing a rock pad under the troughs to prevent ponding. They originally wanted funding for a catch pond, but the District doesn't fund ponds. So, after removing that, they are requesting \$7,500.

Pat moved to approve all six district cost share applications; Shawn seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

b. Website Hosting Services – Shilah reported that the District had web hosting services, but with conflict and confusion on invoicing that has been cut off and the website is down. Discussion ensued on other options and services available, including Microsoft 365 and Streamline. Streamline would cost \$100 per month, but they would keep the District website ADA and law compliant. Board consensus was do whatever option would work best for staff and keep the District in compliance.

c. FY 2021/2022 Annual Report – Shilah reported she emailed the draft Annual Report to the board and had handouts in person. Abbie put the draft together with assistance from staff. We changed the format to be similar to the newsletter so we can mail it out to our distribution list. Staff are also moving forward with email distribution for the Annual Report and newsletters. The Annual Report will include an insert of the Watershed Council Annual Report. Please send any suggestions or comments to Shilah by the end of next week.

d. Updating Travel Reimbursement Policy & Per Diem Rates – Shilah reported that she and Shawn went to Puerto Rico for the NACD Summer meeting. They spent a significant amount of time agonizing over their receipts. Upon return, they discussed switching to a flat per diem rate for travel, versus the current policy of turning in every receipt for reimbursement up to the per diem amount. *Shawn moved to have the District follow GSA per diem guidelines and pay a flat per diem rate for employees that travel for work; Phil seconded. Motion carried unanimously.*

Updates:

a. CONNECT+ Conference, Seaside Convention Center, Sept 6-8, 2022 – Shilah reported that CONNECT is next week. Several staff and Shawn are planning to attend. It is too late to sign up to attend in person, but the virtual option is still available if anyone else wants to register.

b. Next Meeting - The next regular meeting is tentatively scheduled for October 5, 2022, 1:00 PM, at the USDA Service Center (TBD) or Zoom.

c. Director Elections (Davis, Kaser, Shephard, Sorensen) – Shilah reported the deadline to file the declaration of candidacy was today, but anyone can still file as a write in candidate if they should want to.

d. Mosier Groundwater: Deep Well #2 & Mosier Million #2 – Josh reported that Deep Well #2 has been up and running for a couple of months now. They are waiting on some parts to get the

virtual monitoring installed, and Josh is writing the operations and maintenance plan and then he can close out the project. Mosier Million outreach letters have been sent out, and so far they've only received one response. Currently, Josh has four agreements for the project so he may start knocking on doors soon.

e. Tygh Valley Water Projects: Highline Ditch & Lindell Dam Removal – Josh reported the Lindell Dam removal will be taking place this month, which will close that project out. On Highline Ditch, he is designing a new infiltration gallery for the diversion and will submit to DSL for permitting. Their goal is to start construction during the next instream work period. Two wells in Tygh Valley had a collapse, so they are going to go back and put a liner in. The pump test was completed on the Wassenmiller well, and he is going to put out a request for bids for a pump.

f. 2022 White River Fire – Josh reported for the 2020 White River Fire, they have received a 2nd OWEB grant for the reseeding. Josh is assisting landowners with fence inventory as a lot of fencing burned in the 2022 Miller Road Fire. There is \$175,000 statewide available to assist with fire restoration, so Josh is working on putting together a package that might include reseeding, irrigation system repair, etc.

g. Policy Review – Personnel & Board Duties, Landowner Assistance – Shilah reported this item is on the agenda as a reminder to keep herself on task. She is continuing to work on it.

h. Updating Long Range Plan – Shilah reported she sent Emily's draft NRCS long range plan to the board, and the District's long range plan was sent back in June. She is recommending updating the District's at the same time as NRCS's plan, so they can get in sync. Both plans are updated every five years. Emily reported that most of the priority resource concerns have stayed the same over the years, which are in alignment with the SWCD's plan. She wants to update it with any new concerns so if anyone has feedback, please let her know. It was suggested that the long range plan get reviewed every year at the local working group meetings and adjust it as we move forward.

i. NACD Summer Meeting – Shilah reported Shawn, his wife Chris, and she attended the NACD Summer Meeting in July in Puerto Rico. They were able to meet with the Chief of NRCS, other political staffers, and interact on a national level. She met Connor Simons, a new NACD staffer, who was very excited to learn about the Fifteenmile MUS project. Shilah, Shawn and Chris were able to tour the national forest in Puerto Rico and toured the old town between meetings. National level priorities were discussed such as climate change, equity, and partnership. Shawn thanked the board for the wonderful opportunity and remarked that Shilah did a great job representing the SWCD. He was able to hear about the diversity and equity of small producers and was surprised with what they considered a "backyard farmer". Shawn reported that this is a large movement right now and thinks we should engage in that when possible. They are creating 17 urban FSA county committees (including one in Portland), which will be focused on urban conservation and backyard action. Shilah sat in on the District Operations Committee meeting and got to sit next to the 2nd in command for NRCS (the Northwest region) who invited her to sit in on national conservation planning phone calls.

Shilah met with the other Friends of NACD grant recipients and discussed how to manage unique initiatives in your district. Discussions included alternative funding sources and corporate sponsorships and their values. She heard some updates on the Farm Bill, with the summary being that everything depends on the mid-term elections coming up. There was a TA grantee meet up with several others with grants from around the country and they shared what they were doing with their funds. Shawn was surprised that NASA is involved in conservation and that they've been monitoring the soil moisture, weather, and other things. He also shared an anecdote from a district in North Dakota, who only has one employee. She funds the district by physically going out and doing seeding and planting projects for producers and paid her way to the NACD meeting out of pocket. This shows how well our district is doing compared to some others around the nation.

j. FY 2021/2022 Audit – Shilah reported the District has contracted with Friend and Reagan for the 2021/22 audit. Jennifer reported the audit is in process, and they already have copies of the SWCD policies, and will be getting a flash drive with all the digital files they requested very soon. At some point, they will likely want to interview the audit committee.

k. FP Mailing Solutions Collections Notice – Shilah reported this was brought to resolution just this morning. The District was contacted by a collections attorney for not paying the bills on our postage meter for a couple of years. The billing was set up so we were supposed to download the bills versus having them sent to us, so we did not receive any notification that we had anything past due. Tammy also had registered her current email address with them, and then changed her email so if they attempted to send us notices, they were never received. Shilah sent the info to our legal counsel, Kristen Campbell, who has been working with the collections attorney to resolve this matter. FP was claiming we owed over \$5,000 originally, but the collections attorney and our attorney agree we actually owe \$1,007.05 as long as we return the postage meter, and we had 72 hours to return the meter. The postage meter was sent back this morning.

Agency Reports:

a. NRCS (Conservation Plan Review/Approval) – Emily reported the EQIP application deadline is November 18th for FY 2023. There is funding for establishing pollinator habitat, forest health funds in the Barlow district, and they will hear back on Joint Chiefs next month for another forest health funding pool. There is a food security initiative, which is a basin wide funding pool for small farms. You have to self-certify that you are producing a commodity that's being sold direct to consumers (food). Pretty much everything in EQIP is available: livestock water, seeding, high tunnels, etc. For FY 2022, 33 total contracts were funded between EQIP and CSP. For CRP grasslands, 58 offers were approved out of 72. They just had an Oregon NRCS meeting last week, with the main topic being the inflation reduction act. They anticipate this to send a large amount of money to NRCS over the next couple of years. Feel free to send her project ideas so they're ready to receive money when it comes available.

b. FSA – Lissa reported she is still covering the Central Oregon FSA office. Staff are feeling the crunch of everything. Next Friday is the deadline for CPOs for CREP re-enrollments. There is a

County committee meeting Tuesday, September 13th. ECP signup is coming, but they are waiting on a couple things before sending requests on the Miller Road Fire. Bill Markman's place was on fire yesterday, but luckily the fence didn't burn as it was built to NRCS specifications. ERP phase 1 was in June. Phase 1 part 2 was sent out at the beginning of August. And Phase 1 part 3 was just released the other day.

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

d. Wy'East RC&D – Robert reported he has hired a couple of part time employees: Pat Davis and Sara Sweetser. Pat is helping move the e-tractors around the state. Sara is from Dufur and is helping with administrative support. Wy'East will be getting a RARE AmeriCorps student, Michael Kluz from Wisconsin. He arrived in The Dalles this last weekend and will start work on September 12th. On the 12th, Robert and Michael are heading to Missoula to present for a rural electric coop out of the University of Montana. He has worked on a lot of energy efficiency projects this summer, and as that is winding down for the season, producers are looking ahead to get ready for next year. Wy'East is searching for match dollars for the Congressionally directed spending on the e-tractor project. They have confirmed approximately \$700,000 in match funds and are seeking \$800,000 more. There was discussion on other match funding sources, such as renting the e-tractors out to the public.

Committee Reports:

a. Audit Committee – No comments at this time. The audit committee did not review anything.

b. Facilities Committee (Fisheries Lease Update) – Shilah reported that Pacific Fisheries has moved out and staff have been doing a lot of cleaning and organizing. Abbie reported she met with Dan Wilson Painting this morning and toured the office. He will be submitting a quote for painting the office interior.

c. Watershed Council – Drake reported that Fifteenmile Creek had a pretty good temperature outlook coming into the summer, and then the temperature increased. There were a few FAST alert days and they may have to pay out some exceedance payments. The Fifteenmile watershed council will be meeting soon in September or October. For The Dalles watershed council, Drake completed the last sampling of e.coli last week. He also installed a stream gauge on Mill Creek last week which should be operational. He is working with the City of The Dalles to get permission to monitor under East 2nd street. The Dalles watershed council will be scheduling a meeting soon. The Mosier watershed council updates were discussed by Josh. Mosier had a meeting in July, which Drake couldn't attend due to COVID. Projects will be starting in Bakeoven soon. White River watershed council met last November, and Drake will be scheduling a meeting for this November as well.

d. OACD/OAHP/SWCC – Ken reported he is now officially off the OACD board. Although he did attend a tour of the Carver Ranch with OACD last week focused on carbon sequestration. Carvers are performing an annual check of carbon that they measure twice a year via GPS points and have recorded an increase in carbon over the first two years of the project. OAHP released applications this month and will be receiving grants this fall. The SWCC is discussing director eligibility for districts. As of two weeks ago, only half of the eligible candidates had been filed for the Wasco SWCD board.

District Manager Report:

a. Work Plan Progress and Grant Status – Shilah reported the work plan and grant status reports were emailed out to the board. The work plan doesn't have any highlights of note since we are early in the fiscal year. She made some changes to the grant status report. It still contains the same information but changed the layout a little to include remaining grant balances. There are currently 31 open grants, totaling almost \$4.4 million. The Bakeoven restoration project was recommended for funding. Technical review teams met out in Bakeoven in June and recommended the project to the OWEB board at their following meeting in July. The OWEB staff review and rank applications, but we still need final approval from the OWEB board. Since 1990, Wasco SWCD has completed 319 grants, totaling a little over \$18 million.

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: 3:03 PM

Jennifer Sampson