



Wasco County Soil and Water Conservation District Board Meeting Minutes – February 2, 2022

Directors via Teleconference: Bill Hammel Bob Krein Shawn Sorensen
Stan Shephard Ken Bailey Phil Kaser
Pat Davis

Associate Directors Absent: Bryce Molesworth

Staff via Teleconference: Shilah Olson Samantha Filbin Josh Thompson
Drake Gilbert Scott Susi Jennifer Sampson
Ryan Bessette Karen Lamson

Guests via teleconference:

FSA: Lissa Biehn, County Executive Director
NRCS: Emily Huth, District Conservationist
Wheatland Ins: John Anderson, Insurance Agent

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

Treasurer’s Report: Shilah reviewed the January Treasurer’s Report, noting income, expenses, account and fund balances. She reported the deadline to submit tree sale orders has passed, and while we cannot guarantee orders at this time, if you didn’t get your order in you can talk to Scott to see what plants we have left. She also noted the NACD transfer to the general fund, sharing how we receive those funds in advance, so they are tracked a little differently. *Ken moved to approve the January Treasurer’s Report; Phil seconded. Motion carried unanimously.*

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

Action Items

a. **Policy Review – Legal/Land Use & Management, & Public Contracting** – Shilah reported last month she reviewed the legal and land use chapter. It was determined the policy needed an updated date, so an updated draft was sent to the board today. *Phil moved to approve the updated policy as presented; Pat seconded. Motion carried unanimously.*

Shilah requested to table the Management chapter as she is still going through it.

Shilah reviewed the public contracting chapter, which includes a resolution on the books from 2005 adopting the Attorney General rules for contracting. Currently the resolution specifies we'll follow the 2004 rules, and it needs to be updated stating we'll follow the most current version of the Attorney General contracting rules, so we'll stay current with the law. *Ken moved to amend the Public Contracting Policy, adopting the most current version of the Attorney General model rules as they stand at the time the SWCD is contracting; Bob seconded. Motion carried unanimously.*

b. Cost-Share Requests – Shilah presented three cost share applications and a separate funding request:

M.Mobley & R.Mobley – Shilah reported that Mark Mobley and Ron Mobley both submitted haul road applications and they are pretty straight forward. Both of them are requesting the full \$2,500 and staff recommends funding those projects. Shilah reported that there is currently \$15,000 remaining in the budget for haul roads. *Phil moved to fund both haul road applications; Bob seconded. Motion carried unanimously.*

Clausen – Shilah reported that Ryan Clausen is seeking cost share funds to do a sprinkler upgrade on the property they call the Miller Ranch. They are working with Robert Wallace on the project and estimate the total project cost to be \$4,141 and they are requesting \$2,070. She acknowledged that the general cost share project budget has been spent down, but there is currently \$10,000 remaining in the haul road cost share budget if the board would be willing to reallocate a portion of that for general cost share projects. Shilah also said there is a little room in the budget if the board does not want to take away from haul roads. Discussion ensued. Board consensus was to not take away from haul roads, but rather to look at cost share applications as they come and see if they can pull funds from somewhere else in the budget if it looks like a good project. *Ken moved to approve Clausen's cost share application for \$2,070; Bob seconded. Motion carried unanimously.*

Belozer – Shilah reported that they have received a funding request from John Belozer for predator control/feral pig hunting. Bob reported that John is looking for funding to fly in Wasco, Jefferson, and Crook Counties to survey for feral pigs. He is also requesting funding from Jefferson and Crook Counties. Bob spoke to some local landowners, and they are in favor of surveying/controlling feral pig populations, but no one is reporting any immediate problems. Shilah shared that she talked to John, and he thought there might be some pigs around Shaniko, Pine Creek, and Antelope that he wants to scout for and kill any feral pigs he may come across. She noted the SWCD hasn't spent any funds on feral pig control for some time. Discussion ensued. It was noted that John is a private contractor with each of the counties and is looking at flying expenses of approximately \$1,000 per hour, which is a discounted rate. Public contracting rules allow the board to award contracts for personal services up to \$50,000 without going out for bid. *Phil moved to approve \$1,000 for flying time for feral pig scouting and/or control, with the option to bill the SWCD if there are more expenses, not to exceed \$5,000; Shawn seconded. Bob, Shawn, Phil, Ken, and Pat voted in favor of the motion; Stan opposed the motion. Motion*

carried. The board also requested a report back from John on pig sightings in all three counties.

c. Eightmile SIA Update & Project Fund Requests – Shilah reported they have been working with landowners in the area and have a couple more projects left to do. Ryan and Scott have put together cost estimates for Tyler Neal of \$2,515 and Tom May of \$785, not including labor, for tree plantings. Shilah asked for board opinion on whether the board was willing to do some sort of cost share with them on these projects. There is approximately \$10,000 in the budget for bank stabilization in the SIA that was not needed, so that could be used to pay for a cost share. Discussion ensued. It was noted that neither of these properties are in CREP. There are currently small grant funds available, but Shilah did not recommend this as it would require signature on OWEB's land use approval form through Wasco County Planning, which is unfortunately a cumbersome process and would likely delay planting beyond ideal conditions. *Ken moved to approve a cost share for both Neal and May riparian planting projects within the 8Mile SIA for 75% of the project cost; Pat seconded. Motion carried unanimously.*

d. Google SIP Agreement – Preferred Distribution Methodology – Shilah reported she sent information to the board and wants to know what the board's preferred distribution methodology is. There are two informational meetings coming up and she encouraged the board to attend. Ken explained there are three options available: the districts can opt to receive the same proportion that they currently receive of property taxes; the districts can choose to give the funds to another district; or districts can choose to give the funds to the city and county, who are requesting the funds for community projects if districts are willing. The final decision must be made by March 17th. Ken recommends using the same proportion as on the regular tax payments. Ken and Shilah are planning on attending the upcoming meetings unless they have conflicts. If they are unable to attend, they will reach out to the board and to see if anyone is available to represent the SWCD.

e. SDAO Best Practices Checklist – Board Training Required for Discount – Shilah reported she sent out a brochure about the program. There are a few requirements this year that involve a little more board action/engagement. One of these is a board self-evaluation checklist that will be issued this spring, and the other is a training requirement. All board members need to attend at least one online or in person class or can have a consultant come to one board meeting to assess the board. They also require at least two board members to take additional trainings through their Board Leadership Academy. Board consensus was to have someone from SDAO come to the board for an assessment. Shilah will get more detailed information on the Board Leadership Academy and report back.

Wheatland Insurance Renewal Update – Anderson

John Anderson presented a summary of the SWCD's insurance coverage. He noted that the majority of the SWCD's insurances are through SDIS. As the office building was purchased this last year, the largest increase in insurance is property coverage. He met with Shilah and reviewed all the coverages, as they do every year. In addition to the building, they added the pump house at the nursery. The SWCD has a pollution policy, which is a grant requirement through the Oregon Department of Agriculture for SWCDs spraying pesticides near a river. This had to be sourced through another company as SDIS

will only allow \$2,000 worth of coverage. The SWCD currently carries \$5 million in liability coverage for general and auto. There is a longevity credit from SDIS that comes up every two years. It is a credit for being a valued member, which will be a total payment of \$1,149.00 split over the next two years. There was discussion on whether the amount of liability coverage was adequate or not. John's opinion was that the \$5 million was acceptable and is the base rate that SDIS allows. An additional \$3 million can be purchased if the board desires it, but anything more would need to be sourced out to another company. John recommended not increasing our liability coverage unless it is a grant or contractual requirement. John invited the board to call him if they have more questions.

Updates:

a. Next Meeting - The next regular meeting is scheduled for March 2, 2022, 1:00 PM, at the USDA Service Center (TBD) or Zoom. Shilah shared that the staffing level in the office has been reduced to 25%.

b. Mosier Groundwater: Deep Well #2 & Mosier Million #2 – Josh reported on the Deep Well and not much has happened since the last meeting. The landowner is installing conduit, and then the electrical contractor can pull wire through, and Pacific Power can hook them up. The pump contractor is ready whenever they get the appropriate DEQ forms completed and turned back to us. They should have water pumping by the end of March. Josh has not been able to dedicate much time to Mosier Million, but it's slowly coming together. Shilah has been working with Biz Oregon, and they expect to receive a draft agreement in March or April. DEQ is being audited by the EPA, so Josh has been communicating with DEQ a lot in the last week and ensuring that all the necessary documentation has been correctly filled out and filed. He should be completed with the audit by the end of next week.

c. Tygh Valley Water Projects: Highline Ditch & Lindell Dam Removal – Josh reported that nothing has happened in the last month. They are waiting for the well drilling contractor to come back and finish the last well. Then all four pumps will be bid out as one package.

d. White River Fire Restoration – Josh reported they were unable to do seeding and spraying that they had lined up for this fall. They were able to get an extension on those funds for another year, so they are planning on seeding in the spring and then spraying later. He applied for another round of funding for herbicide application for the White River wildlife area, on the north side of the river.

e. Fifteenmile MUS Study – Shilah reported they kicked off the stakeholder engagement piece of the study, and the next stakeholder meeting will be February 17th. They are considering different options for governance structures, acquiring permits, etc. They have recently received additional funds from Google through the Tides Foundation, which were awarded to Wy'East to help facilitate this project. She'll be working on an MOU to transfer those funds to the project and the best ways to spend those funds.

f. **FY 20-21 Annual Report** – Shilah reported she is still working on this and has a couple things to finish up.

g. **Annual Meeting & Neighborhood Meetings** – Shilah reported these events have been postponed for covid purposes. Traditionally, the annual meeting would be the third Thursday in February, but last year it was held in conjunction with the June board meeting. Board consensus is to have the official annual meeting in conjunction with the April board meeting, and then if covid allows, host some sort of event later in the spring or summer. Board consensus on the neighborhood meetings is to hold off on those until covid allows us to meet with producers in person.

h. **River Democracy Act** – Shilah reported she is still working on this and is keeping an eye on it. She has found some articles about the act but noted that it is still in committee. She is currently reviewing a letter that Samantha drafted.

Agency Reports:

a. **NRCS (Conservation Plan Review/Approval)** – Emily reported they are working on writing EQIP contracts. They received 41 applications and are funding approximately one third of them and will be asking for more funds this spring to fund several more. March 18th is the CSP deadline. Previously there was a two-year cooling off period, meaning renewals that weren't funded were supposed to wait two years to apply again, but that has been waived. CRP general signups have just been announced. Their Joint Chiefs proposal did not get funded or approved for this year. Hopefully they can apply next year and get some more forest health funding. There is also no funding for the EQIP CIC program in Wasco County either. Those funds were allocated to Klamath Falls. She had no updates on staffing, except that the job announcement for a soil conservationist was advertised and closed the second week of January.

b. **FSA** – Lissa reported that general CRP signup is underway. They have 45 general contracts that are expiring on September 30th, and those who want to re-enroll need to contact Martha by March 11th. They have 16 CREP re-enrolls eligible for signing up that need to be done by summertime. Grassland signups were also announced, which is CRP you are allowed to graze. The signup period will be April 4th through May 13th. They are still making payments for drought and hay and water hauling for ELAP and the emergency livestock program. The FSA office is at a 25% staffing level, so if you want to meet with someone call the office and they'll meet people in the parking lot, otherwise they are not doing in-person meetings. Wasco FSA is co-locating with Sherman FSA so only Lissa and one other staff member are in the office at a given time. Let them know when producers have a loss on cherries or rangeland, as they will be putting NAP payments out for rangeland in the next couple of months. The ELAP signup period ended on Monday. If you contacted Tiffany before that date, then she could get you on a register. They are hoping for more precipitating weather so they don't have ELAP and LFP like this year.

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

d. **OSU Extension** – Jacob was not able to attend the meeting, so Shilah presented his update. He has a couple workshops coming up soon. A Farm First Aid Training workshop

is taking place right now via Zoom, and there will be an in-person version on February 10th at the Extension office in The Dalles. The cost is \$15. There will also be a Wildfire training on February 16th via Zoom, and February 23rd in-person from 1:00-4:00pm, also at the Extension office in The Dalles. This is a free training intended for agricultural producers and people living in rural county areas. Shilah will send this information out to the board.

Committee Reports:

a. **Audit Committee** – Phil and Shawn did not have any comments at this time. They did not get a chance to review the financial information.

b. **Facilities Committee** – Josh reported the facilities committee has not met since the last board meeting.

c. **Watershed Council** – Drake reported there is a 15mile MUS Stakeholder Engagement meeting coming up February 17th. FAST signups will be starting in March. There will probably be a 15mile Watershed Council meeting in March as well. The Dalles Watershed Council will meet in early March. A White River fire restoration grant application was submitted a couple of days ago. He will try to apply for a Bakeoven grant for the Spring OWEB cycle, likely in March or April. The Mosier Watershed Council met in January, and discussed the projects going on in Mosier, as well as a snowpack update.

d. **OACD/OAHP/SWCC** – Ken reported he is no longer on the OACD board but is still serving as treasurer. Heather Hendrickson was appointed to fill his board position. Ken suggested she see how the board operates for a couple of months before she takes an officer position. The transition will probably be this spring. Nothing new to report for OAHP. They are continuing their efforts to try and get funding. The SWCC will meet in two weeks, so he will have more to report at the March board meeting.

District Manager Report:

a. **Work Plan Progress and Grant Status** – Shilah reported the work plan progress and grant status reports were emailed to the board earlier today. The District has 28 active grants in various stages of completion, with four active OWEB Small Grants on the books, totaling over \$4 million in active grants. The District currently has eight grant applications pending, including the BPA contract renewal for five years for CREP TA, and several pending OWEB grants. The partnership TA grant with Wy'East was not recommended for funding. The Wasco County Riders Club application was also not recommended for funding. CREP TA is likely to be renewed for 2 years. The FAST application was recommended sixth out of six for funding. There are several more OWEB applications in planning, including several for the 15mile MUS project. Those will likely be submitted next year as they confirm the governance structure. Since 1990, 314 grants and just short of \$18 million dollars has been spent on the ground. Currently everything is on track with the work plan. The board set a date for annual meeting at today's meeting and will see about an in-person event later. The Tree Sale was scheduled for the second week of March but will not include an in-person sale due to covid. The local advisory meeting for ODA ag water quality area took place recently and they will be closing out the 8mile SIA initiative hopefully soon. The Highline Ditch and Lindell grants were set to expire this last December, but extensions have been approved for both of those for another year.

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: 2:37 PM
Jennifer Sampson