



Wasco County Soil and Water Conservation District  
Board Meeting, Budget Hearing & Annual Meeting Minutes – June 5, 2024

**Directors:** Bill Hammel Phil Kaser Bob Krein  
Stan Shephard Ken Bailey Larry Powell

**Directors Absent:** Shawn Sorensen

**Staff:** Josh Thompson Jennifer Sampson Abbie Forrest  
Drake Gilbert

**Staff via Teleconference:** Ryan Bessette

**Guests:**

NRCS: Emily Huth, District Conservationist  
Jacob Czarnecki, Pathways Intern  
FSA: Lissa Biehn, County Executive Director  
Wasco SWCD: Pat Davis, Director Emeritus  
Wy'East RC&D: Robert Wallace, Executive Director

**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 May regular board meeting minutes or the May Budget Committee meeting minutes. None were made. *Ken moved to approve the May regular meeting minutes and the budget committee meeting minutes as presented; Stan seconded. Motion carried.*

**Treasurer's Report:** Josh reviewed the April & May Treasurer's Reports, noting income, expenses, account and fund balances. Jennifer apologized for the late notice on the May Treasurer's Report and acknowledged the board could table it until the July board meeting if they wanted more time to review it. *Ken moved to receive the April & May Treasurer's Reports; Bob seconded. Motion carried.*

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

**Action Items**

**a. District Cost Share Program Policy Update –** Abbie reported the only change that has been made since the last time the policies were presented to the board was to add a "print name" line on the application in addition to the signature line. And Exhibit E has been updated to reflect the approved 2024-25 reimbursement rates. Abbie intends this to be a living document that can be

updated as needed. *Bob moved to approve the District Cost Share Program Policy as presented; Stan seconded. Motion carried.*

**b. Presentation of FY 2022-23 Annual Report & Audit** – Josh presented the annual report and audit so they can officially be presented to the public as part of the annual meeting. *Stan moved to approve the 2022-23 Audit and Annual Report; Bob seconded. Motion carried.*

**c. FY 2024-25 Annual Plan of Work** – Josh requested the 2024-25 Annual Plan of Work be tabled until the July board meeting. The plan of work is a requirement of ODA and will be submitted to them after it is complete and approved by the board. *Bob moved to table the Annual Plan of Work until July; Phil seconded. Motion carried.*

**d. Succession Planning with the SWCD Board (NACD grant requirement)** – Josh reported succession planning is a requirement of our new NACD grant. The project budget includes \$18,750 for DEI focus, which is less than \$50,000 so the board can direct appoint the contract. The SWCD has previously worked with Emily Stranz on the 15MUS project and staff request approval to negotiate a scope of work and the fee schedule with Emily. *Larry moved to authorize SWCD staff to negotiate the scope of work and fee schedule with Emily Stranz for board succession planning; Bob seconded. Motion carried.*

**e. Discussion on Regular Meeting Dates – 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday vs 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of the Month** – Josh led a discussion on whether the board would prefer to change their regular meeting day from the first Wednesday of the month to the second Wednesday as it is difficult for staff to have financial reports ready in a timely fashion for the board. Discussion ensued. Three board members have another meeting that usually happens on the second Wednesday of the month, so they will check in with their meeting group to see if that could be moved to the first Wednesday instead. The decision to move meeting days was tabled until those board members can report back.

#### **Convene Budget Hearing & Budget Discussion**

Bill convened the budget hearing at 1:17pm. Josh reviewed the budget, noting changes that have been made since the budget committee approved the draft budget. Discussion ensued regarding the changes in the budget and the uncertainties surrounding grant funding.

**Public Comment on Budget (5min. limit/person)** – None at this time.

#### **Close Budget Hearing**

**a. Resolution: Adopting the Budget, Making Appropriations, Imposing the Tax, and Categorizing the Tax** – Bill closed the budget hearing at 1:36pm and called for a motion on Resolution 240605-BGT: adopting the budget, making appropriations, imposing the tax, and categorizing the tax. *Bob moved to approve Resolution 240605-BGT for the 2024-25 budget of \$6,359,962.00; Ken seconded. Motion carried.*

#### **Updates**

**a. Next Meeting** – The next regular meeting is scheduled for July 10, 2024, at 1:00 PM, at the USDA Service Center and via Zoom. The meeting date was approved by board consensus, due to the close proximity of the July 4<sup>th</sup> holiday.

- b. FY 2023-24 Audit Update & Questionnaire Distribution** – Jennifer distributed questionnaires to board members present and requested they fill them out and return them to her as soon as they were able. The questionnaires are for the 2023-24 audit.
- c. 15Mile Managed Underground Storage (MUS)** – Josh reported there were no updates from the SWCD side of the MUS. OSU is continuing their studies on infiltration rates at the project site. SWCD staff are currently waiting to hear the results.
- d. Highline Ditch Elimination** – Josh reported the annual measuring of the wells has been completed. He hopes to complete the project this year.
- e. 2020 White River Fire & 2022 Miller Road Fire** – Josh reported they have completed the \$35,000 OWEB grant for the Miller Road Fire. They partnered with Wasco Electric Co-op to clear brush under powerlines for approximately five miles. On the White River Fire, the District has partnered with ODFW for aerial spraying and seeding, which will be combined with a project on the lower Deschutes.
- f. Mosier Million #2** – Josh reported after the District rejected the results on the mini-RFP for Mosier Million #2, they reopened the qualified driller pool and had one additional applicant. They submitted a second mini-RFP at the beginning of May to the qualified driller pool, and proposals are due this Friday. If they get an acceptable proposal from one of the two bidders, they should be able to implement the first three wells in early July. The two drillers in the driller pool are Cascade Well Drilling and Jensen Drilling. In the first Mosier Million they repaired 14 wells and with this \$900,000 they hope to repair eight wells. They need to have contracts for the \$900,000 by the end of this calendar year.
- g. USFS Fifteenmile Creek Large Wood Enhancement** – Josh reported they are working with the Forest Service to place some large wood with an OWEB grant through the District. They are in the process of developing a request for bids for helicopters to maneuver the large wood. One of the sites had a report of cultural resources from a previous survey, but when they returned to the site, they were unable to locate the cultural resources. So, the project is on hold until they can determine if it is a cultural site or not.
- h. Lower Deschutes Cooperative Weed Management Area** – Josh reported SWCD staff are working on finalizing a job description for the Lower Deschutes CWMA Coordinator. They hope to have a Coordinator onboard in July. Scott and Josh met with SDAO risk management this morning and discussed possible hazards in the Lower Deschutes area and ways to minimize risk. SDAO thought the District had everything covered, and recommended staff document everything.
- i. SDAO Best Practices Checklist – Public Meetings** – Jennifer and Josh reported that the required public meeting training has not been developed yet, but the board has until November to complete the training and still receive the discount on insurance premiums.
- j. Direct Elections Reminder** – Josh reported there are four director positions up for election this year. The first day to file your Declaration of Candidacy with ODA is July 18<sup>th</sup>. Candidate

packets are available in the SWCD office or online. Ken announced that he will not be running for re-election but is still willing to be a resource to the board if he is needed.

### **Agency Reports**

**a. NRCS** – Emily reported they received 10 CSP applications, which is lower than typical, but they've had good funding in the last couple of years, so a lot of projects were done previously. They had a little over \$1 million in estimates and she should know next week which ones will get funded. With EQIP, she did not get all the money she asked for initially, but then they gave her the rest of the funding so they will fund 45 projects for roughly \$2.7 million. They still had a few projects that did not receive funding, but those will roll over and be considered in the next funding cycle. She did not propose any new funding for CIS, but they still have funding for forestry and fish screen replacements. They have some IRA funds available for specific upgrades, but the projects need to be "climate smart" and involve energy and water savings. Emily introduced Jacob Czarnecki, an NRCS Pathways intern for June and July. He started work Monday and will be attending the crop tour and pre-harvest cherry tour. She requested the board let her know if anyone has any interesting projects he should see while he is here.

**b. FSA** – Lissa reported there was a rain event this week, and they have received a few notices of loss for splitting cherries. She wanted to remind everyone that losses must be reported within 72 hours of being apparent. County elections are coming up for Central Wasco County. The incumbent is Mike H Kelly, but everyone is welcome to nominate someone. Nomination forms will be available in a couple of weeks. Acreage reporting for spring planted crops, including rangeland, is due by July 15<sup>th</sup>. They are still running the Emergency Relief Program and are almost finished with ECP for the Miller Road Fire. They still have some TAP claims for dead trees, especially in Hood River County. The Grasslands CRP signup started yesterday, and the deadline is June 28<sup>th</sup>. This Friday is the deadline for the next batch of CRP signups for the HELI and SAFE initiatives. The next batch will be in a month. General CRP signup results were announced last Monday. Everyone except for two tracts received a bid. Stan inquired if the grasslands program was the same as the grasslands reserve program. Lissa explained that they are calling it a grasslands initiative and the rates are approximately \$13 per acre, which is less than last year. Sherman County and Hood River County's rate is \$22 per acre. The rates depend on the soil in your tract, but general CRP can vary anywhere from \$40-\$80 per acre or beyond that.

**c. OSU Extension** – Jacob was unable to attend the board meeting. Jennifer shared the Wasco Crop Tour flyer that was included in the meeting packet.

**d. Wy'East RC&D** – Robert reported Wy'East will be doing a demo of the Monarch e-tractor in autonomous mode on the Pre-Harvest Cherry Tour. They have been working with Mike Omeg to set the demonstration up, and currently Monarch technicians are making all the final adjustments. At 10:45am on the tour, they will be at Orchard View and have several e-vehicles/equipment on display. They also plan to participate in the Wasco Crop Tour on June 13<sup>th</sup>. Currently one e-tractor is located in Cove, and two of them are in Medford. They have recently applied for two grants: the C-REP grant for a little less than \$1 million and an Oregon Department of Human Services grant for \$1.9 million. The SWCD will be the fiscal agent on the C-REP grant. The Human Services grant will fund two RARE students next year. Lanier, the current RARE student, will be leaving for graduate school. Robert shared he attended a conference in Las Vegas regarding hydrogen technology and heavy-duty trucks. Tesla,

Freightliner, and Cummins are just a few of the companies developing hydrogen engines. He will keep the SWCD board informed should any of those heavy-duty trucks appear in The Dalles for test-drives. He hosted a ride and drive event with The Dalles Chamber of Commerce in May and reported there were approximately 100 attendees. Wy'East is trying to recruit new board members as several of the current board members are looking to retire. Contact Robert if you know anyone interested. This year is Wy'East RC&D's 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary. They are planning a social event in the summer to celebrate. More details to be announced later.

### **Committee Reports**

**a. Audit Committee** – Phil inquired about the payment to Andrew Spaeth, the forest collaborative facilitator and noted it was over \$7,000. Ryan explained that amount was for three months. His fees usually range between \$2,000-\$3,000 per month for both the Wasco and Hood River Counties.

**b. Facilities Committee** – Bill reported the facilities committee had a meeting and discussed plans for a shop and expansion of the property. They will likely need to include e-vehicle charging stations as well as additional storage space for equipment (for example quads, spray rafts, etc). Josh previously distributed a draft layout of the shop and requested feedback. The draft shop plans will be sent to engineer architects for review. Bill expressed some concern about the wetland area next door to the property. Josh explained the wetland belongs to The Port of The Dalles and there is nothing planned for that area at the moment as it is the receptacle for water runoff in the area. Josh reported he accepted a bid for \$9,600 to seal cracks in the parking lot, seal coat it, and then repaint the parking lines. Sam has been cleaning out the storage shed, including removing all the old insulation as mice have gotten into it. They are going to seal the cracks in the building, re-insulate, and paint it in an effort to eliminate the mice.

**c. Watershed Council Updates** – Drake reported the Fifteenmile Watershed Council met last night and The Dalles will meet tonight at 5pm. He will be scheduling a Mosier Council meeting soon, but the date has not been confirmed yet. The District has some remaining funds in the large Bakeoven grant from OWEB. Once Abbie and Shilah meet with Greg to discuss adding projects and shifting funds for staff time, he will schedule a Bakeoven and White River Watershed Council meeting.

### **District Manager Report**

**a. Work Plan Progress & Grant Status** – Josh reported the work plan progress and grant status reports are included in the meeting packet. The District currently has 36 active grants and seven pending applications. As of today, the District can cross the Annual Meeting and Adopting the Budget off the work plan.

**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.

The board was reminded immediately following the meeting, there will be a no-host social next door at the Bargeway Pub. Everyone is welcome.

**Adjourned: 2:26pm**

Jennifer Sampson