



# Wheeler Soil and Water Conservation District

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Board of Directors  
Meeting Minutes  
March 28, 2024

## Directors

Jim Bob Collins  
Jason Davis  
Brent Johnson  
Dave Hunt  
Ross Ryno

## Employees

Cassandra Newton  
Ayla Morehouse  
Brooke Moore  
Kristen Neuburger  
Maria Rey

## Others Present

Maria Snodgrass, ODA  
Don Sietz  
Virginia Sietz

The board meeting was called to order by Chair Collins at 6:09 p.m. by the clock on the wall.

## 1. Agency Reports

### a. Maria Snodgrass, ODA

Maria provided a staffing update. She stated that ODA received an Ag Water Quality (AgWQ) complaint in the town of Fossil that Cassi accompanied her on a site visit and she is working with the SWCD and landowner on restoration focused solutions. She advised that 2025-2027 ODA Statement of Work reporting through the Capacity Grants will be transitioning online and adding a table to allow for reporting AgWQ activities and concerns. Maria provided an update regarding the revisions to the Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL) and funding. Maria stated that she will be attending the OCEAN CONNECT Conference and shared that Cassi will be receiving an award from ODA during the conference for her perseverance and work through a lot of change that has happened through Wheeler SWCD.

## 2. District Reports

### a. District Manager, Cassi Newton

Cassi advised she was provided the opportunity by DCI Engineers and Sustainable Northwest to attend that network session of the Mass Timber Conference. She stated that staff will be attending the CONNECT Conference, but Kristen and Maria are staying in county to conduct weed treatments and keep the office open.

Cassi advised that at the Weed Clinic hosted by the District there was one attendee who provided concerns about constructing the facility in Service Creek and was opposed to the project. She also advised of a negative survey response from the RCPP Landowner Survey sent out. The Board discussed these encounters and provided guidance to the staff.

### b. Conservation Manager, Ayla Morehouse

Ayla stated that she accompanied staff on multiple site visits throughout the month and spent a lot of time preparing grant applications that are due at the end of April. She advised that there has been great cooperation with landowners to get all conservation staff out to potential project site visits.

### c. Conservation Technician II, Brooke Moore

Brooke stated she did not have childcare for a couple weeks during March and worked from home. She advised that when she was able to be in the office, she focused on conducting site visits. Brooke stated that she is done with one spring application and is working on two others to complete before the end of April. She advised that there are

**88Meeting Location:** The Rock in Spray, Oregon

**To Join from a computer or smartphone: 8i8**

<https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/954414701> (Contact the office for meeting password)

**To dial in using a phone:**

(571) 317-3122 (Access Code: 954-414-701)

numerous training opportunities being scheduled by NRCS that she is interested in participating in.

**d. Conservation Technician I, Kristen Neuburger**

Kristen advised that she has been in the field conducting treatment site visits and getting a treatment plan developed. She stated that she submitted another small grant application and is working on a large grant for the spring cycle. Kristen advised that she is also interested in a few of the NRCS trainings that are being scheduled.

**e. Office Assistant, Maria Rey**

Maria stated that she has been working through project folders and getting familiar with the project processes. She advised that she is also working on getting the currently monitored projects uploaded onto the website and updating the open projects. Maria also advised that she obtained her ATV safety course in preparation of assisting with the field season.

**3. Monthly Business**

**a. Review and approve minutes**

**i. February 29, 2024 regular minutes**

‡Motion made by Director Davis to approve the board meeting minutes from February 29, 2024, Director Johnson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**b. Review and approve financial reports**

**i. March**

‡Motion made by Director Ryno to approve the financial report for March, Director Hunt seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**c. Review and approve Accounts Payable**

**i. March 18, 2024**

**ii. March 28, 2024**

‡Motion made by Director Davis to approve the check registers from March 18, 2024 and March 28, 2024 as presented, Director Bruce seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**4. Upcoming Meetings & Events**

**a. Staff Meeting, every Monday**

**b. April**

- i. 22<sup>nd</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> OWEB Meeting
- ii. 23<sup>rd</sup> Lower John Day Working Group, 10am
- iii. 27<sup>th</sup> Wheeler SWCD Soil Workshop, 9am
- iv. 25<sup>th</sup> Wheeler Board Meeting, 6pm

**c. May**

- i. 15<sup>th</sup> JD Basin Partnership Meeting, 9am
- ii. 27<sup>th</sup> Memorial Day – OFFICE CLOSED
- iii. 30<sup>th</sup> Wheeler SWCD Board Meeting, 6pm

**5. Upcoming Deadlines**

**a. April**

- i. 29<sup>th</sup> OWEB Applications
- ii. 30<sup>th</sup> OWEB NRCS TA Application

**b. May**

i. 21<sup>st</sup> WaterSMART Planning/Design Application

**6. District Management**

**a. Strategic Direction**

Cassi presented the Strategic Direction Renovation Plan that she developed from discussion that occurred at the Work Session in February. She asked a series of process questions regarding how to move forward. The Board requested that an OWEB Stakeholder Engagement grant application be submitted during the spring cycle to aid in public engagement and staff's efforts through the process.

**b. Elections (business not listed)**

Cassi advised that she received the election notice from ODA and Directors Ryno, Bruce, Thomas, and Davis are all up for election.

**c. Annual Budget**

Cassi stated that she received a forecast from insurance premium increases that will aid in preparing the budget. She apologized for not having the budget draft completed and advised that she will be trying to get it drafted during April.

**d. Credit Card (business not listed)**

Cassi reminded the Board that during the Work Session in February that it was requested to look into a new credit card that includes points to be applied to balance. She advised that there were two offers recently received and she presented an overview for both.

‡**Motion** made by Director Davis to approve an application to Capital One offer, Director Ryno seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**e. SDAO Membership**

Cassi reminded the Board that the District is a member of Special Districts Association of Districts and pays annual dues. She explained that the membership includes benefits and services available to the District. Cassi stated that an outline of those services are included in the packet and reminded the Board that individual directors are able to contact SDAO directly to receive answers to questions or guidance, as needed.

**f. Property**

**i. WIG Status**

Cassi advised of the following updates pertaining to the Wood Innovation Grant and property/facility:

- Wyden Townhall and CDS funding
- Secured partnership with local ranch to mill all timber and Juniper
- Permits submitted and prepared
- Timber species
- Fire suppression in regard to water rights

**7. Legislation**

**a. None**

**8. Projects/Programs**

**a. NRCS/SNW – RCPP**

Cassi advised that the collaboration group continues to discuss details of the RCPP and is working on the budget while awaiting the application to open to start narratives.

**b. US-FS Ochoco**

Cassi stated that she reached out to the LJDWG and spoke with ODFW Habitat to bring more partners to the Mitchell Springs project with Ochoco NF. She advised that the planning is on hold for a bit until weather permits a site visit to continue planning details of the project.

**c. HB2010 Juniper Removal**

Cassi advised that the Memorandum of Agreement is fully executed with Wheeler County and she is awaiting details pertaining to monitoring. She stated that funding will likely be directed to the eastern part of the county to allow for less transportation expense for milling.

**d. BLM – Priest Hole Restoration**

Cassi stated that the 60% design was received and is currently being reviewed by BLM staff in preparation for the review meeting scheduled April 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**e. BLM – Agriculture Fields Restoration (business not listed)**

Cassi advised that Anna Smith presented her with an opportunity to manage the restoration of the retired agriculture fields in the Middle John Day. She explained that the project will entail project and contract management similar to the Priest Hole Restoration project and would be a five-year project. Cassi stated that the application is due at 10am on Monday, so she will be writing that application over the weekend.

**9. Partners**

**a. Wheeler County (business not listed)**

Cassi advised that Wheeler County approached her regarding potential for partnering through a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) to develop and manage the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Plan for Wheeler County. She explained, with assistance from Maria Snodgrass, what the TMDL Plan is and that Gilliam County and SWCD have been managing their TMDL Plan through an MOA since 2020. Cassi further explained details of how the MOA operates and advised she would be meeting with Wheeler County in the near future for negotiations.

**b. Mule Deer Foundation**

Ayla advised that the Mule Deer Foundation announce a new staff member overseeing our region and they are seeking the fostering of new partnerships. She further advised that she reached out to the new staff member to introduce Wheeler SWCD and asked about potential partnership opportunities.

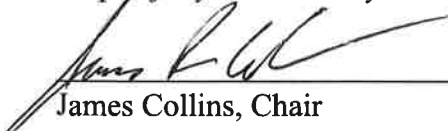
**10. Business Not Listed**

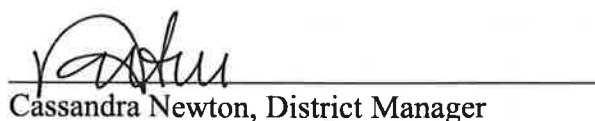
**a. Included in minutes above in order of discussion.**

**Next Meeting April 25, 2024**

The board meeting was adjourned by Vice Chair Thomas at 7:39 p.m. by the clock on the wall.

*Respectfully submitted by Cassandra Newton*

  
James Collins, Chair

  
Cassandra Newton, District Manager