



## Wheeler Soil and Water Conservation District

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Board of Directors  
Meeting Minutes  
December 19, 2024

### Directors

Jim Bob Collins  
Jason Davis  
Brent Johnson  
Ross Ryno

### Employees

Cassandra Newton  
Brooke Moore  
Kristen Neuburger

### Others Present

Alex Makic, USFS-Ochoco  
DelRae Ferguson, NRCS  
Carmen Oakes, MJDWC  
Wayne Lindquist

The board meeting was called to order by Chair Collins at 6:15 p.m. by the clock on the wall.

## 1. Agency Reports

### a. USFS-Ochoco, Alex Makic

Alex provided an update on staffing and current workload.

### b. NRCS, DelRae Ferguson

DelRae provided an update on staffing mentioning that the previous interviews did not result in an accepted offer and there is currently a hiring freeze until further notice. She reminded the Board that it is only two of them in the office handling the workload with two vacant positions.

DelRae also provided an overview of the CSP and EQIP fire recovery funding noting that the total EQIP request is significantly more than the funding available. She advised that there is potential for our local office to receive additional funding, but it is unknown at this time and the focus is on seeding and contracts will be obligated in late-March. DelRae expressed her appreciation to Brooke and Cassi for the assistance in working through the fire recovery application process.

## 2. District Reports

### a. District Manager, Cassi Newton

Cassi provided updates pertaining to the upcoming ODA-INW Symposium that her and Kristen will be attending, SDAO Risk Assessment conducted, BPA assisted purchase of a new UTV, education program, and human resource matters she has been focused on.

### b. Conservation Technician II, Brooke Moore

Brooke stated that her report is current noting that she is participating in a collaboration committee to develop a CREP Technician Guide.

### c. Conservation Technician I, Kristen Neuburger

Kristen stated that her report is current noting that she submitted two OSWB grant applications and she has been working on BLM reporting.

## 3. Monthly Business

### a. Review and approve minutes

#### i. November 21, 2024, regular minutes

Cassi advised that she did not complete the minutes for the special meetings and those will be presented for approval at the next regular board meeting.

‡**Motion** made by Director Davis to approve the board meeting minutes from November 21, 2024, Director Ryno seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

### b. Review and approve financial reports

#### i. November

**Meeting Location:** Fire Hall in Spray, Oregon

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

<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)

‡**Motion** made by Director Davis to approve the financial report as presented, Director Ryno seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**c. Review and approve Accounts Payable**

**i. November 30, 2024**

**ii. December 19, 2024**

‡**Motion** made by Director Davis to approve the check registers from November 30, 2024, and December 19, 2024, Director Johnson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**4. Upcoming Meetings & Events**

**a. Staff Meeting, every Monday**

**b. December**

**i. 19<sup>th</sup> Wheeler SWCD Board Meeting, 6pm**

**ii. 25<sup>th</sup> Wheeler SWCD Office Closed**

**iii. 26<sup>th</sup> Wheeler SWCD Office Closed**

**c. January**

**i. 1<sup>st</sup> Wheeler SWCD Office Closed**

**ii. 9<sup>th</sup> Wheeler SWCD Annual Meeting, 6pm**

**iii. 16<sup>th</sup> Wheeler SWCD Office Closed**

**iv. 22<sup>nd</sup> Oregon Soil Health Summit, Corvallis**

**5. Upcoming Deadlines**

**a. December**

**i. 31<sup>st</sup> Annual Audit and Report to ODA/SOS**

**ii. 31<sup>st</sup> Annual Accomplishments to ODA**

**b. January**

**i. 14<sup>th</sup> WaterSmart Small-Scale Efficiency**

**ii. 17<sup>th</sup> Farmer/Rancher Disaster Resilience**

**iii. 30<sup>th</sup> FSA Programs Deadline**

**6. District Management**

**a. Staffing**

Cassi presented the Programs Assistant Position Description explaining that this position would primarily focus on the new RCPP workload but will assist Brooke with all USDA programs. Cassi reviewed with the Board the Conservation Technician/GIS Lead and Office Assistant Position Descriptions. She also presented the advertisement created to fly the positions.

‡**Motion** made by Director Ryno to approve and adopt the position description for the Programs Assistant position as presented and approve advertising of the opening, Director Davis seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Cassi advised that her and Brooke will be without childcare beginning in March explaining that despite searching for nearly the past month that neither have had any success in securing childcare. Cassi further explained that it may require some additional teleworking time and that she will continue to provide the Board with updates on the situation.

**b. Website Compliance**

Cassi reminded the Board of the ADA Compliance Requirements that Department of Justice released. She advised that she worked with Streamline to implement a temporary revamping of the website for compliance. Cassi explained that she will need to learn how to make PDFs compliant for future uploads to the website. She advised that ODA has released an application for up to \$20,000 in supplemental funding through the Capacity Grant which she will be applying for.

**c. Board Succession Plan**

Cassi explained the need for a Board Succession Plan to be in compliance with the NACD grant which will be submitted with the final report. She presented the draft that she started and explained that the Board will need to review and approve the Plan prior to her submitting the final completion report.

**d. TMDL IGA w/ Wheeler County**

Chair Collins and Cassi reminded the Board of the DEQ TMDL Program. Cassi advised that Wheeler County has requested an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) for the District to manage and administer the Wheeler County TMDL Implementation Plan. She further advised that the plan is up for revisions which are due in the beginning of March. Cassi presented a draft IGA that was she submitted to Wheeler County for review. She advised that Wheeler County stated they do not have funding to execute the proposed IGA and requested that the District seek funding. Cassi stated that she, nor the staff, have capacity to seek funding for the county to execute the proposed IGA. The Board agreed that the District cannot take on the workload of seeking this funding and advised Cassi to not reduce the propose IGA cost below \$16,230 which equates to the District's staff time strictly to attend DEQ meetings, revise and manage the plan, and complete implementation reporting – does not include any additional funding for education and outreach.

**e. Annual Meeting**

Cassi provided an update the planning efforts of the Annual Meeting. The Board came to an agreement for the Partner of the Year award based on staff recommendations.

**f. OWRD and Local Ranchers (*item 5.f was discussed last*)**

The Board and attendees discussed recent correspondence with OWRD that has been shared, continued concerns of overreaching authority, and how the District should be involved moving forward to best assist landowners within the District's scope of work.

**g. January Meeting (*Business not listed*)**

The Board agreed to not host a regular Board meeting in January due to the Annual Meeting including a business meeting.

**7. Legislation**

**a. none**

**8. Projects/Programs**

**a. RCPP-Waterman**

Cassi and DelRae provided an update on the progress of negotiating the programmatic and supplemental agreements.

**b. Fire Recovery**

**i. EQIP Applications**

DelRae advised there was over \$3M in requests with only \$750k secured in funding. She advised that there is potential that we could receive an additional \$750k in funding, but that will not be known until after the initial contracts are obligated.

**ii. USFS – Comm. Wildfire Defense Grant**

Cassi advised that she is exploring the feasibility of submitting a CWDG. She explained that she has had some preliminary discussions with partners to consider some priorities and locations that could be included in the application. Cassi stated that she is unsure of the capacity to get an application completed, but is still considering the possibility.

**iii. DOI Slip-on Tanker Units**

Cassi advised that she is working with Rick Shaffer and Jeremiah Holmes to submit an application for slip-on tank units for wildfire suppression. She explained that the SWCD would be the applicant and receive one unit, but the units assigned to persons/agencies will be owned and managed by Wheeler County Fire and Rescue.

**iv. OWEB TA**

Cassi provided an overview of the fire recovery technical assistance funding opportunity administered by OWEB. She explained that the John Day Basin Partnership will be the applicant for all fires within the John Day Basin.

Cassi advised that she may consider an independent application for the Crazy Creek fire to assist with the US-FS partnered work.

**c. NOAA Passage**

Brooke provided an overview of a large NOAA passage application she is working on that includes partnerships with ODOT, ODFW, USFWS, Wheeler County, and five private landowners to open approximately 10.66 miles of the 29-mile ESH stream addressing a total of 12 barriers.

**d. AgriMet**

**e. BLM-Priest Hole Restoration**

Cassi advised that construction has continued and the contract amendment to include the irrigation portion of the project was executed upon receipt of additional funding from OWEB and direct from BLM.

**f. BLM-Ag Fields Restoration**

Cassi advised that the first year of funding through this project has been allocated to the Priest Hole Restoration.

**g. BLM-Back to Bridge Creek**

Cassi stated that there is potential funding available for riparian/stream restoration on Bridge Creek through BLM and Trout Unlimited. She explained that the funding is currently allocated in an agreement between BLM and Trout Unlimited, but the District was approached by BLM to lead the project.

**9. Partners**

a. none


**10. Business Not Listed**


a. none

**Next Meeting:** Thursday, January 9, 2025 (Annual Meeting)

The board meeting was adjourned by Chair Collins at 9:15 p.m. by the clock on the wall.

*Respectfully submitted by Cassandra Newton*

  
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James Collins, Chair

  
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Cassandra Newton, District Manager