



Wheeler Soil and Water Conservation District

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Board of Directors
Meeting Minutes
April 25, 2024

<u>Directors</u>	<u>Employees</u>	<u>Others Present</u>
Jim Bob Collins	Cassandra Newton	Gabe Williams
Zach Bruce	Ayla Morehouse	Carmen Oakes
Brent Johnson	Brooke Moore	
Ross Ryno	Kristen Neuburger	
Anna Thomas	Maria Rey	

The board meeting was called to order by Chair Collins at 6:19 p.m. by the clock on the wall.

1. Agency Reports

a. Alex Makic, USFS-Ochoco

Cassi advised that Alex was unable to attend the board meeting, but provided a short update to be read:

We got the notice that the RCPP is open and will continue working with Sustainable Northwest on letters of support, GNA, or other needs as they arrive. We are also working with Sustainable Northwest trying to build up a virtual fence program with interested permittees in our priority sub watersheds, which includes the Jackson Creek HUC12 (which sits in Wheeler County).

Cassi also advised that Alex is working with Ayla and her to schedule site visits for the Mitchell drinking water project proposal.

2. District Reports

a. District Manager, Cassi Newton

Cassi advised that she agreed for the staff to provide verbal updates due to a busy month of field work and training caused conflicts with staff having office time to prepare board reports.

Cassi stated that she attended the OCEAN Connect Conference where she presented on the Conservation Community Center and the Wheeler SWCD Wheeler Weed Warriors Program. She shared about the experience of presenting and her excitement to be giving back to the conservation teams who have provided so much guidance and assistance to her the past four years. Cassi advised that she will be submitting the Stakeholder Engagement application for the strategic direction renovation, but the OWEB NRCS TA application was not submitted due it requiring the IRA funding to be secured. She stated that she is fully caught up with fiscal tracking in preparation of year-end and budget.

Cassi advised that Jerry Ellis stopped by the office and provided herbicide to conduct treatment test plots for annual grasses, Scotch thistle, and Whitetop.

b. Conservation Manager, Ayla Morehouse

Ayla stated that she attended the OCEAN Connect Conference and a NRCS forestry training in April. She advised that she has been assisting the technicians with the grants and provided a summary of the three project applications being submitted.

c. Conservation Technician II, Brooke Moore

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)

Cassi advised that Brooke was unable to attend the board meeting due to illness, but she provided an update to her to present.

Brooke completed a modification and progress report for Headwaters of Keyes Creek Project. She is continuing to be approached by landowners for new CREP enrollments and there is an extensive workload with CREP currently. Brooke also completed the RCPP T&E requests and deferments for DelRae.

d. Conservation Technician I, Kristen Neuburger

Kristen advised that she spent the majority of the month in the field conducting noxious weed treatments for BLM. She stated that she will be completing the remaining treatments for the 2023 ODA grant due the contractor not finishing the treatments and the contract being terminated. Kristen advised that she will be submitting a restoration grant application for the Kahler Creek watershed.

e. Office Assistant, Maria Rey

Maria stated that she has been digitizing archived financial documents. She advised that she has assisted Cassi with getting project files up to date.

3. Monthly Business

a. Review and approve minutes

i. March 28, 2024 regular minutes

‡**Motion** made by Director Ryno to approve the board meeting minutes from March 28, 2024, Director Bruce seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

b. Review and approve financial reports

i. April

‡**Motion** made by Director Johnson to approve the financial report for April, Vice-Chair Thomas seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

c. Review and approve Accounts Payable

i. April 15, 2024

ii. April 25, 2024

‡**Motion** made by Vice-Chair Thomas to approve the check registers from April 15, 2024 and April 25, 2024 as presented, Director Ryno seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Upcoming Meetings & Events

a. Staff Meeting, every Monday

b. April

i. 27th Wheeler SWCD Soil Workshop, 9am

ii. 25th Wheeler Board Meeting, 6pm

c. May

i. 15th JD Basin Partnership Meeting, 9am

ii. 27th Memorial Day – OFFICE CLOSED

iii. 30th Wheeler SWCD Board Meeting, 6pm

d. June

i. 5th JDB Coordination Meeting, 9am

ii. 27th Wheeler SWCD Board Meeting, 6pm

5. Upcoming Deadlines

a. April

- i. 29th OWEB Applications
- ii. 30th OWEB NRCS TA Application

b. May

- i. 21st WaterSMART Planning/Design Application

c. June

- i. 30th Annual Budget
- ii. 30th Annual Work Plan

6. District Management

a. Non-profit (business not listed)

Cassi advised that she learned of a couple Oregon SWCDs that formed non-profits for various reasons. She proposed the District exploring the idea of organizing a non-profit to assist with the Wheeler SWCD Conservation Community Center project. The Board suggested inviting someone from an SWCD who has been successful with organizing a non-profit to attend the May board meeting.

b. Annual Budget

Cassi presented a draft of the 2024-2025 budget. The Board reviewed the budget and provided a few edits to be prepared for the May meeting.

c. Property

i. WIG Status

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

- Presentation at OCEAN Connect Conference
- CDS funding update
- Meeting with Rep. Smith
- Wheeler Co. Planning Committee public hearing for Condition Use Permit
- ODOT Permit update
- Quarterly report submitted

7. Legislation

a. House Rule 7525

Cassi advised that the Special District Grant Accessibility Act (HR7525) is a bill the National Special Districts Coalition has been working on to establish a formal definition of “special district” in federal law, as well as require the Office of Management and Budget to issue guidance to federal agencies requiring special districts to be recognized as local governments for the purpose of federal financial assistance determinations. She stated that the bill was approved by the Federal House Oversight and Accountability Committee.

8. Projects/Programs

a. 3WP

Cassi advised that no applications were received during the first round of solicitation and that the landowners who have reached out to inquire about the program have majority been large landowners. She proposed removing the 320 acre or less limitation and including it in the ranking prioritization to allow larger landowners to apply, but priority still being given to smaller landowners.

The Board agreed that the program was structured to assist smaller landowners and business in the county and should keep that focus. They requested the staff advertise the program in multiple facets during the next year and re-evaluate response during the 2025 cycles.

‡**Motion** made by Director Johnson to approve allowing larger landowners to be awarded 3WP funding during the May 2024 only, Vice-Chair Thomas seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

b. NRCS/SNW – RCPP

Cassi advised that the Notice of Funding Opportunity was released and the application is being collaboratively drafted.

Gabe Williams provided information pertaining to biochar and requested that NRCS Practice 336 – Biochar Application be included in the RCPP project. The Board and Gabe conversed about the biochar processes and benefits. Cassi advised that she does not believe it will be feasible, but she will reach out to DelRae and Jordan about biochar being included in the RCPP project.

c. AgriMet

Cassi advised that she assisted Bureau of Reclamation with installing the AgriMet station outside of Fossil. She stated that the station is owned by OSU and should be live online already.

d. US-FS Ochoco

Cassi advised that she will be working with Ayla to schedule the site visits to the Mitchell springs. She reminded the Board that the funding application is not due until December.

e. HB2010 Juniper Removal

Cassi stated that there is no update at this time for the HB2010 funding.

f. BLM – Priest Hole Restoration

Cassi stated that the 60% design review meeting was held at the beginning of April at the Prineville BLM office and a site visit was held the next day. She advised that the BLM team made some significant changes to the design – specifically to the road, which led to the engineers needing to extend the timeline for final design to June 10th.

9. Partners

a. none

10. Business Not Listed

a. Included in minutes above in order of discussion.

Next Meeting May 30, 2024

The board meeting was adjourned by Chair Collins at 7:48 p.m. by the clock on the wall.

Respectfully submitted by Cassandra Newton



James Collins, Chair

Anna Thomas, Vice-Chair



Cassandra Newton, District Manager