



Wheeler Soil and Water Conservation District

40535 Highway 19, Fossil, OR 97830
(P) 541.468.2990 • (F) 541.468.2991
administration@wheelerswcd.org

Board of Directors
Meeting Minutes
June 29, 2023

Directors

James Collins
Zach Bruce
Anna Thomas
Brent Johnson
Dave Hunt

Assoc. Directors/Emeritus

Employees

Cassandra Newton
Brooke Moore
Kristen Neuburger

Others Present

DelRae Ferguson, NRCS
Garry Sanders, US-FS

The board meeting was called to order by Chair Collins at 6:11 p.m. by the clock on the wall.

1. Agency Reports

a. Natural Resource Conservation Service, DelRae Ferguson

DelRae advised that Jonathon's last day with the Gilliam-Wheeler NRCS will be August 11th and Jessica will be returning to the office from leave part-time through September before returning full-time. She also stated that they received a lot more CSP applications than she's seen the previous years and she has the list of pre-approved CSP applications. DelRae stated that the CRP general applications are in process right now.

b. US Forest Service – Ochoco National Forest (NF), Garry Sanders

Garry introduced himself and advised that he manages the Lookout Mountain and westside area of the Ochoco NF. He stated that he previously worked for Crook County Watershed Council. He thanked the District for involving him in the West Branch Assessment Project and stated that the Ochoco NF will be providing match dollars for the next phase of the West Branch Bridge Creek project. Garry advised that there are some forest projects in the works within Wheeler County that he will keep us updated as the plans are developed.

2. District Reports

a. District Manager, Cassi Newton

Cassi stated that it is a busy time for projects. She advised that she will be writing the completion report the AgWQ grant, as well as helping Kristen with the noxious weed grants since all three are closing June 30th. Cassi advised that funding was awarded from the LJDWG for capacity to continue participation from the District. She stated that she is working to close out the fiscal year and prepare for audit. Cassi stated that all other items in her report will be discussed later in the agenda.

b. Conservation Technician II, Brooke Moore

Brooke stated that her report is current and that her focus has been to get CREP contracts and applications prepared before her leave of absence so Cassi can complete the submissions.

c. Conservation Technician I, Kristen Neuburger

Kristen stated her report is current.

3. Monthly Business

a. Review and approve minutes

- May 25, 2023 minutes

‡Motion made by Director Hunt to approve the board meeting minutes from May 25, 2023,
Vice-Chair Thomas seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

b. Review and approve financial reports

Cassi advised that she didn't get a financial report completed for the month of June due to end of the fiscal year tasks and being in the field with staff for OWEB site tours. Cassi provided a copy of

Meeting Location: The Rock 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)

the fiscal year balance sheet and profit/loss reports from QuickBooks and presented a verbal overview of the year.

c. Review and approve Accounts Payable

- May 16, 2023
- May 25, 2023

‡**Motion** made by Vice-Chair Thomas to approve the check registers from May 16, 2023 and May 25, 2023 as presented, Director Hunt seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Upcoming Meetings & Events

- Staff Meeting, every Monday
- **June**
29th SWCD board meeting, 6pm
29th Memorial Day - SWCD office closed
30th Tree School East (Baker), 8:30am-4:30pm
- **July**
4th Independence Day, office closed
25th-26th OWEB Meeting, Sisters
NO SWCD BOARD MEETING
- **August**
5th BMLT Phipps Meadow Tour, Prairie City 12pm
9th-13th Wheeler County Fair
9th-10th SWCC meeting, Harney SWCD
15th LJDWG meeting, 10am
24th SWCD board meeting, 6pm

5. Upcoming Deadlines

- **June**
Annual Work Plan
Annual Budget
- **July**
Files to auditor
- **August**
31st FIP Pre-proposals

6. District Management

a. 2023-2024 Annual Budget

Cassi presented the final draft of the 2023-2024 budget and highlighted the three requested changes that were made per the May meeting.

‡**Motion** made by Director Hunt to approve the 2023-2024 Annual Budget, Director Johnson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

b. Fee Schedule

Cassi presented the fee schedule.

‡**Motion** made by Director Hunt to approve the fee schedule, Director Bruce seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

c. Staffing – Conservation Manager

Cassi advised that Ayla Morehouse accepted the offer for the Conservation Manager position and has agreed to start on August 7th.

d. Employee Evaluations

Cassi asked that this discussion be tabled since the Personnel Chair was not present.

7. Legislation

a. Waters of the United States (Business Not Listed)

Cassi stated that Director Emeritus Molinari shared an article with her regarding the Supreme Court WOTUS ruling in favor of landowner rights in the Sackett versus EPA ruling over the scope

of EPA's regulatory authority of what waters constitute a "Waters of the United States." She advised that she included the article in the packet.

8. Projects/Programs

a. BLM

Cassi stated that she completed the BLM/OWEB application for the Priest Hole Restoration project and it was funded, but since it is over the threshold, it has to be reviewed by Department of Justice before the grant agreement will be executed. She provided an overview of the project objectives and budget.

b. ODA AgWQ

Cassi advised that an application that was submitted for monitoring on Butte Creek as a continuation of the work that Gilliam County SWCD has been conducting in the Thirtymile Watershed was not funded.

c. Wood Innovation Grant (Business Not Listed)

Cassi advised that the Wood Innovation Grant was awarded and that she participated in the Civil Rights interview that is the required first step of the grant agreement process. She stated that she is unsure of the full process but was told to expect an executed grant agreement sometime around September. Cassi reminded the Board of the partners involved in the project and the anticipated timeline of objectives. She advised that a contract was signed with University of Oregon for the in-kind research included in the project, but a letter of intent needs to be signed for LEVER Architecture to allow them to gather the sub-consultants and initiate planning. Cassi requested the Board review and approve the letter of intent.

‡**Motion** made by Director Hunt to approve the letter of intent for LEVER Architecture, Vice-Chair Thomas seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Collins advised that he has heard from various persons that it has become more difficult to get newly constructed homes insured. He asked Cassi to contact the District's insurance agent to discuss the new facility and if/how it will affect the insurance.

9. Partners

a. Instinct (Business Not Listed)

Cassi stated that she was contacted by a newly formed business called Instinct that has wireless monitoring software and equipment. She explained that the package comes with a data collecting base and multiple dataloggers that can be set up within range of the base, but the whole system can be relocated whenever needed. Cassi provided an overview of the PowerPoint presentation she received from the rep and advised that Instinct is seeking pilot partners who could receive the packages at a reduced cost. Cassi asked the Board if they were interested in participating in the pilot. The Board advised that if it were written into a grant for a specific project, they would be interested, but not necessarily interested in just obtaining the software/equipment to utilize.

10. Business Not Listed

a. Kinzua Culvert

Cassi provided an overview of the Kinzua Culvert Design project currently open through OWEB/FIP. She explained that the full design set was received by the contractor the day before the grant ended and the District is still awaiting BPA approval. Cassi advised that the OWEB/FIP applications for implementation in partnership with ODFW is currently sitting idle and may not be eligible for application, if BPA does not approve the full design set before mid-July.

b. Spray Rodeo Booth

The Board asked Cassi how the booth went at the Spray Rodeo. Cassi advised that she helped setup and closed down the booth, but FSA staff manned it. Cassi stated that FSA was not impressed with the turnout and the rain did not help with the low turnout.

Next Meeting August 31, 2023

The board meeting was adjourned by Chair Collins at 7:28 p.m. by the clock on the wall.

Respectfully submitted by Cassandra Newton



~~James Collins, Chair~~

Anna L. Thomas -
Vice Chair



Cassandra Newton, District Manager