



## Wheeler Soil and Water Conservation District

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Board of Directors  
Meeting Minutes  
September 26, 2024

### Directors

Dave Hunt  
Brent Johnson  
Jason Davis  
Jim Bob Collins  
Anna Thomas

### Employees

Cassandra Newton  
Brooke Moore  
Kristen Neuburger  
Maria Rey

### Others Present

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. none

#### 2. District Reports

##### a. District Manager, Cassi Newton

Cassi stated that she did not have a written report due to unexpected tasks on her workload prior to the meeting. Cassi advised that she will be presenting on wildfire response, recovery, and resiliency at the OACD conference in October. She stated that she was also asked to speak at ODA's Noxious Weed Symposium in December, which Kristen and her will both be attending. Cassi further advised that the Capital Press reached out for an interview that was included in a press release regarding Tree-of-heaven. Cassi stated that the past month was consumed with fire recovery tasks and assisting the Lower John Day Working Group in regard to municipality information and their meeting held in Mitchell.

##### b. Conservation Technician II, Brooke Moore

Brooke stated that her report was not written. Brooke advised that she has been focused on post-fire site visits for OWEB projects and planning recovery projects for USDA. She stated that she has also been busy with practice certifications for both OWEB and USDA, as well as grant applications for OWEB open solicitation.

##### c. Conservation Technician I, Kristen Neuburger

Kristen stated that her report is in the packet. Kristen highlighted that she has completed the first Tree-of-heaven treatment with BLM and Grant SWCD with the second treatment scheduled in a couple weeks. She advised that she has begun working on the fall applications for the OSWB weed grant with anticipation of two applications being submitted. Kristen further advised that she is working on an education focused grant application to the Oregon Invasive Species Council and she will be submitting another OWEB small grant in October. She provided overviews of the grant applications.

##### d. Office Assistant, Maria Rey

Maria stated that she assisted Brooke with one of the OWEB grant applications. She advised she has continued working on filing financial records and keeping track of the vehicle mileage on spreadsheets. Maria stated that she went to training for CPR and First Aid and started learning ArcGIS mapping.

**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)

### **3. Monthly Business**

#### **a. Review and approve minutes**

##### **i. August 29, 2024 regular minutes**

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

#### **b. Review and approve financial reports**

##### **i. September**

##### **ii. Quarterly Financial Report**

‡**Motion** made by Director Davis to approve the financial reports as presented, Vice Chair Thomas seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

#### **c. Review and approve Accounts Payable**

##### **i. September 17, 2024**

##### **ii. September 26, 2024**

‡**Motion** made by Director Davis to approve the check registers from September 17, 2024, September 26, 2024, Director Hunt seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

### **4. Upcoming Meetings & Events**

#### **a. Staff Meeting, every Monday**

#### **b. October**

i. 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> Private Lands Partners, Redmond

ii. 14<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> OACD Conference, Hood River

iii. 16<sup>th</sup> SWCC Meeting, 1pm

iv. **24<sup>th</sup> SWCD Board Meeting, 6pm**

#### **c. November**

i. **21<sup>st</sup> Wheeler SWCD Board Meeting, 6pm**

ii. **28<sup>th</sup> Thanksgiving, OFFICE CLOSED**

### **5. Upcoming Deadlines**

#### **a. October**

i. 16<sup>th</sup> ODA E/O Grant

ii. 16<sup>th</sup> Barrier Removal Grant

iii. 22<sup>nd</sup> FIP Application

iv. 28<sup>th</sup> OWEB Open Solicitation

v. 30<sup>th</sup> WaterSMART Water Efficiency Grant

#### **b. November**

i. 13<sup>th</sup> Private Forest Accord Applications

ii. 13<sup>th</sup> WaterSMART Water Efficiency Grant

### **6. District Management**

#### **a. Staffing**

Cassi advised that she discussed the open position with staff. She recommended that hiring be held off until late spring to eliminate disruption of the present deadlines and urgent workloads. Cassi explained the commitment required to prepare and conduct candidate selections, and onboarding new employees. She further explained that staff are in agreement that the District's workflow would be significantly strained if Cassi were to be shift focus to hiring.

The Board asked a multitude of questions and a in-depth conversation occurred pertaining to staff workloads and capacity.

**b. Annual Meeting**

Cassi advised that she has not contacted any potential speakers and asked the directors if there was specific topics or speakers they had in mind. Through discussion, it was agreed to hold the Annual Meeting on January 9<sup>th</sup> and structure the presentations around fire recovery, partner updates and the District's projects.

**c. Property**

**i. WIG Status**

Cassi advised that the project team has been in communication with Vaagen Timbers and is discussing the potential for certification of Ponderosa pine in mass timber manufacturing. She presented the ROM estimate provided by Vaagen and explained the certification process.

**ii. Roundhouse Foundation**

Cassi provided an update on purchases arranged for custom juniper furniture.

**7. Legislation**

**a. none**

**8. Projects/Programs**

**a. Fire Recovery**

Cassi advised that she was able to obtain satellite imagery for the Lone Rock Fire, Shoe Fly Fire and Service Fire. She presented the imagery using an affected OWEB project as an example of how the imagery is benefiting staff's capacity. Cassi advised that she is working with staff to draft modifications of active projects that were affected by the wildfires, which will be submitted to the funder project managers.

Cassi presented a map of all the large fires within Wheeler County and total acreages. She explained how the staff is organizing recovery efforts and communicating with landowners affected by each of the fires. Cassi walked the Board through the resources available on the web page she developed on the District's website and explained how staff is able to receive Hunt OnX tracks/points from landowners to assist with mapping out the wildfire damages.

Cassi advised that she was approached by Ochoco Nation Forest to manage the noxious weed recovery efforts on the Crazy Creek Fire. Cassi and Kristen provided an overview of what that project management would entail.

**b. US-FS Ochoco- City of Mitchell**

Cassi advised that a project site visit was held with LJDWG and the city. She provided an update on the city's planning and the drinking water project application.

**c. City of Spray (*business not listed*)**

Cassi stated that she was approached by the City of Spray seeking assistance to mitigate a hydrology issue on the southeast side of town. She provided an overview of the city's concerns and needs. Cassi advised that she is discussing with partners to determine appropriate direction and funding. She stated that she believes a feasibility study is necessary.

**d. US-FS Ochoco-Noxious Weeds**

Cassi advised that she conducted a presentation to the review team on the project needs and objectives. She stated that the project was recommend for partial funding. Kristen and Cassi explained how this project would be implemented.

**c. BLM-Priest Hole Restoration**

Cassi advised that the construction contractors will be mobilizing to the project site to begin work within the allowances of the fire restriction. Cassi provided an update on project funding and statuses.

**f. Project Workload**

Cassi presented the staff's project tracking and explained the status of open and planned projects, as well as the current waitlist of projects.

**9. Partners**

a. none


**10. Business Not Listed**

a. none

**Next Meeting \*Wednesday, October 30, 2024**

The board meeting was adjourned by Chair Collins at 7:49 p.m. by the clock on the wall.

*Respectfully submitted by Cassandra Newton*

  
James Collins, Chair

  
Cassandra Newton, District Manager