



# Wheeler Soil and Water Conservation District

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Board of Directors  
Meeting Minutes  
August 29, 2024

## Directors

Dave Hunt

Brent Johanson

Ross Ryno

Jim Bob Collins

## Employees

Cassandra Newton

Ayla Morehouse

Brooke Moore

Kristen Neuburger

Maria Rey

## Others Present

DelRae Ferguson, NRCS

David Capasso, ODF

Brandon Ferguson, ODF

Andrea Kriener, OACD

Ben Logan, Wheeler County

The board meeting was called to order by Chair Collins at 6:18 p.m. by the clock on the wall.

## 1. Agency Reports

### a. Brandon Ferguson, ODF

Brandon provided updates about programs and partnerships regarding fire recovery. He explained the partnerships with NRCS, FSA, SWCDs to work with landowners to determine the severity of effects from the fires, and determine restoration needs. Brandon directed and answered multiple questions specific to fire recovery efforts and funding.

### b. David Capasso, ODF

David introduced himself as the NRCS Field Forester for ODF. He stated that he has been in the field on the Lone Rock Fire and attending the community meetings.

### c. DelRae Ferguson, NRCS

DelRae stated that the current workload is getting CSP contracts obligated by the 15<sup>th</sup>. She advised that \$2 million was funded for post-fire in the Basin on a first come, first serve basis. DelRae explained the need for satellite imagery to map dozer lines, which has been the expressed focus for the post-fire funding at this time.

### d. Andrea Kriener, OACD

Andres introduced herself as the Executive Director for OACD. She advised that she does not have anything specific to report on, but is trying to attend meetings for all the SWCDs. Andrea advised that the OACD Annual Conference is coming up in October and provided an overview of the agenda.

## 2. District Reports

### a. District Manager, Cassi Newton

Cassi advised that due to workloads of the wildfires and other District business that she did not get a report written. She advised that the Mid John Day Watershed Annual Meeting will be 4pm on September 12<sup>th</sup> and their office. She also advised that the forestry tour that was scheduled in July was cancelled due wildfires and the staff are considering the potential to reschedule. Cassi stated that Kristen and her submitted an application for an US-Forest Service agreement for noxious weed treatments and she will be conducting a presentation to the Advisory Committee for that on September 12<sup>th</sup> in Bend. She advised that all other updates will be provided during agenda items.

### b. Conservation Manager, Ayla Morehouse

**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)

Ayla stated that her report provides details of a lot of site visits and preparing of grant applications for the upcoming fall solicitation. She advised that there is a map at the end of her report that depicts locations of projects currently on the wait list for funding.

Ayla concluded her update with advising of her resignation as the Conservation Manager effective September 13<sup>th</sup>.

**c. Conservation Technician II, Brooke Moore**

Brooke stated that her report is current. She advised that her focus has been field work for certifications and project management. Brooke stated that Ayla and Maria assisted her in completing the Mountain Creek survey. She advised that she has been working on grant applications with anticipation of five applications being submitted to OWEB this cycle.

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

Kristen stated that her report is mostly current. She advised that she travelled to Pendleton to pick up the Weed Wagon education trailer that will be hosted at the Painted Hills festival. Kristen stated that in partnership with ODA, Grant SWCD, and BLM that a treatment for Tree of Heaven began and will be finished the first week of October. She advised that she completed the Noxious Weed Guidebook that will be showcased at the Painted Hills Festival and published for Wheeler County landowners. Kristen provided an overview of the guidebook and explained that we will be mailing a postcard to advise of its availability, as well as publishing it on the website.

**e. Office Assistant, Maria Rey**

Maria stated that she has been helping the Technician with the stream survey, project management, and field work. She advised that she has continued to work on the archiving of documents and began gathering data for the West Branch Bridge Creek Assessment.

**3. Monthly Business**

**a. Review and approve minutes**

**i. June 27, 2024 regular minutes**

**ii. July 17, 2024, special meeting minutes**

‡**Motion** made by Director Hunt to approve the board meeting minutes from June 27, 2024 and July 17, 2024, Director Johnson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**b. Review and approve financial reports**

**i. 2023-2024 Summary**

**ii. July**

**iii. August**

‡**Motion** made by Director Ryno to approve the financial reports, Director Hunt seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**c. Review and approve Accounts Payable**

**i. July 17, 2024**

**ii. July 31, 2024**

**iii. August 15, 2024**

**iv. August 29, 2024**

‡**Motion** made by Director Hunt to approve the check registers from July 31, 2024, August 15, 2024, and August 29, 2024 as presented, Director Johnson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**4. Upcoming Meetings & Events**

- a. Staff Meeting, every Monday
- b. September
  - i. **2<sup>nd</sup> Labor Day, OFFICE CLOSED**
  - ii. 11<sup>th</sup> JDB Coordination Meeting, 9am
  - iii. 18<sup>th</sup> JDBP Meeting, 9am
  - iv. 24<sup>th</sup> LJDWG Meeting, 10am
  - v. **26<sup>th</sup> SWCD Board Meeting, 6pm**
- c. October
  - i. 2<sup>nd</sup> Forestry Tour (tentative), 9am
  - ii. **TBD Wheeler SWCD Board Meeting, 6pm**

**5. Upcoming Deadlines**

- a. September
  - i. 3rd WaterSMART Co-op Grant
  - ii. 10th FIP Proposals
  - iii. 15th Resilient Future (Drone) Grant
  - iv. 23rd Culvert AOP Grant
  - v. 30th NACD NRCS TA
- b. October
  - i. 16th ODA E/O Grant
  - ii. 16th Barrier Removal Grant
  - iii. 22nd FIP Application
  - iv. 28th OWEB Open Solicitation
  - v. 30th WaterSMART Water/Energy Grant

**6. District Management**

**a. Restructure**

Chair Collins explained that the Board Officers have discussed the need to restructure back to a single manager staffing model. Chair Collins explained that there is a significant need for additional project technician staff; however, the budget will not support additional staff with the current staffing model including two management level positions. He further explained that as a Chair, he does not have capacity to oversee multiple management positions. Chair Collins asked the Board to consider this recommendation. The directors discussed the proposed restructure in detail.

‡**Motion** made by Director Hunt to approve the staffing restructure as presented, Director Ryno seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**b. Position Descriptions – business not listed**

Cassi advised that Chair Collins requested the position descriptions be revised to a format that is easier to read. She explained that she worked with SDAO and HR Answers to obtain guidance on revising the position descriptions. Cassi provided highlight reviews of each position description.

‡**Motion** made by Director Ryno to adopt the revised position descriptions, Director Johnson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**c. Employment Offer**

Due to the resignation, this item was not discussed.

**d. TMDL MOU w/ County**

Cassi and Chair Collins explained the updates occurring for the John Day TMDL Plans. Cassi provided an overview of what TMDL Plans are and what the reporting entails. She advised that upon Chair Collins request, she reached out to the ODA AgWQ Program Manager to request a presentation for the Board. She advised that she will reach back out to get it scheduled for an upcoming board meeting.

**e. LAC Meeting**

Cassi explained what the Local Advisory Committee is. She advised that ODA is looking to schedule the review meeting for November. Cassi asked the directors if they had a preference of attending if it were scheduled the same day as the SWCD board meeting. The Board advised there was not a preference.

**f. October Meeting**

Cassi advised that the October meeting is on Halloween this year. She recommended the Board consider changing the date for the October meeting due to multiple staff members having young children. The Board agreed to move the October meeting to Wednesday, October 30<sup>th</sup>.

**g. Annual Meeting**

Cassi asked the Board if there were any suggestions for Annual Meeting planning. Directors provided suggestions of topics for speakers.

**h. Property**

**i. WIG Status**

Cassi provided an overview of the building permit application. The Board opted to not submit the permit at this time due to the extensive costs associated with the submission. She also provided an update on potential funding and asked the directors for input on consideration of loan programs. The Board agreed to have Cassi explore loan programs and report back.

**ii. Roundhouse Foundation**

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

**7. Legislation**

**a. none**

**8. Projects/Programs**

**a. Spring Developments**

Cassi advised that during a meeting with OWEB staff to review a grant application that was not awarded, water rights on spring developments were discussed. She explained the concerns associated with this topic and the directors engaged in discussion on how to move forward.

**b. Lone Rock Fire Recovery**

Cassi advised of the donations and efforts extended by the SWCD during the Lone Rock Fire. She, DelRae, and Brandon provided an extensive overview of the efforts put forth for recovery since the containment of the fire.

**c. OWEB Spring Cycle**

District staff provided an overview of the grant applications submitted in May and the OWEB Review Team ranking recommendations, advising that two technical assistance projects were recommended for funding.

**d. USFS- Ochoco – City of Mitchell**

Cassi advised that a site visit occurred for this project. She stated that the wildfires have held up any progression on the project planning efforts.

**e. HB2010 Juniper Removal**

Cassi stated that she received juniper milling specifications from Sustainable Northwest. She advised that she has begun to have discussions with landowners to determine project areas for this funding.

**f. BLM – Priest Hole Restoration**

Cassi advised that a contract was awarded to Greenbar Excavation for construction of the project. She explained that due to the budget not supporting the full costs, the contract was awarded for only the hardscape features and upon award of additional funding anticipated, the contract will be amended for the irrigation features. Cassi stated that due to the wildfire risk restrictions, the mobilization date has not been determined.

**9. Partners**

**a. none**

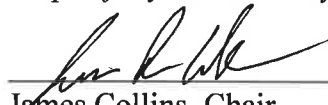
**10. Business Not Listed**


**a. none**

**Next Meeting** August 29, 2024

The board meeting was adjourned by Chair Collins at 9:00 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

