



**Marion Soil and Water Conservation District (MSWCD)
Board of Directors November 1, 2023, Meeting Minutes**

6:38 PM to 8:51 PM

Facilitator: Chair Olson

Recorded by: Brenda Sanchez

Directors & Record of Attendance		Associate Directors
At Large 1-Peggy Hart	Present	Angela Plowhead
At Large 2-Scott Walker	Present	
Zone 1-Vacant	Vacant	
Zone 2-Vacant	Vacant	
Zone 3-Darin Olson (Chair)	Present	
Zone 4-Dave Budeau (Secretary-Treasurer)	Present	
Zone 5-Rochelle Koch (Vice-Chair)	Present	
Staff		Guests
Chelsea Blank		Brent Stevenson
Susan Ortiz		Les Bachelor
Brenda Sanchez		Rose High Bear
		Brandin Hilbrant

Note: All documents and materials displayed or referenced are retained in the Board of Directors Meeting file at the Marion Soil and Water Conservation District (Marion SWCD or District).

A. Olson Call to Order: 6:38 PM

- Bachelor, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
- Hilbrant, North Santiam Watershed Council
- High Bear, Elderberry Wisdom Farm

B. Announcements - None

C. Agenda Additions or Changes

- Conservation Assistance Grant (CAG) Cancellation - Add
- SB 775 update - Add
- Pudding River Watershed Council Letter of support - White Oak Stakeholder Engagement - Add

1. Public Comment

Walker provides a statement for the Board in response to Koch's statement on October 4, 2023, board meeting. "In the regular October meeting of the Board another board member slandered me for vote I made in the regular September

meeting. The vote was on a federally funded project introduced very late in the meeting on a project which I was not aware of. Existing Board policy requires that members be provided information about these kinds of projects two days prior to voting. Because I believe and had announced regularly that board members and employees should serve the public, not themselves or their relatives, i voted absent on funding the complaining board member's project. My vote killed the project.

Between the September and October meeting I contacted a USDA employee and learned that the vote was not to fund the project but to approve of the conservation plan. In the October meeting I asked for a new vote and the conservation plan was approved.”

Walker adds that he was confused by Koch's statement regarding revenge. Koch states that she would like to end the matter and move forward. Walker adds that the motivation of a Director's vote is not up for questioning and that comments made after vote should be kept personal and not shared.

High Bear (moved from business agenda items to public comment) explains how she has run the Elderberry Wisdom Farm for the last four years. Training Native Americans in habitat restoration, native plant nursery management, and organic farming. She goes on to explain that she is here tonight to share that they are applying for the Marion SWCD Special Projects Grant. The farm is looking to extend their services throughout the North and South Santiam Watershed. They use indigenous practices and want to help Native Americans through an Agriculture Accelerator to train individuals in their own conservation business.

2. District Snapshot

- October First Friday was on Woody Weed ID and control; Next FF- 11/3 Soil Health by Cesar Zamora.
- October 10 Strategic Planning Kickoff! 11/3 Start working with Stork Consulting for Strategic Plan development.
- October 16-18- 1 Board & 1 staff attended the OACD Conference in Redmond.
- Salmon Watch; 17 field trips between October 2 and 18. 18 schools; 21 volunteers.
- First Ever Native Bulb Sale at the Pollinator Symposium October 21; over 200 attendees with bulb sales over \$3,500/ \$1,400 profit.
- The Little Habitat Project, formerly known as the Backyard Habitat Improvement Program, successfully had a soft launch at the Pollinator Symposium!!! 35 individuals signed up to be a part of the Pilot Project.
- Salem Outdoor School October 24-27; 3 schools.

- Three staff attended the Oregon Water Law Conference.
- Aquatic Invasive Species Symposium October 24; Partner event with 97 registrants and a focus on water primrose control.
- FY 22-23 Audit scheduled for November 9.
- Cycle 2 CAG-12 applications.
- 3 staff attended Small Farm School and tended a booth.
- Partner Grant Foundant Platform drafted and grant agreement under development.
- ADA Entrance contract signed and paid half; will be scheduled for construction soon.

3. Treasurers Report September 2023

Budeau starts by stating report represents the first 25 percent of the fiscal year and only have spent around 9 percent of the budget, which has us in good shape. Income has been mostly from previous years levied taxes and we are ahead in collection as well as dividends which has also exceeded our projections.

Action: Koch motioned for the Board to **accept the Treasurers Report for September 2023**, 2nd by Hart. No further discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-5 [Walker, Olson, Koch, Hart, and Budeau] Opposed-0).

4. October 4, 2023, Draft Board Meeting Minutes

Budeau explained that he reviewed Draft 1 and provided Sanchez with edits. Edits were reviewed; relatively minor, nothing significant.

Action: Hart motioned for the Board to **accept the October 4, 2023, Board Meeting minutes with Budeau's edits**, 2nd by Koch. No further discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-5 [Walker, Olson, Koch, Hart, and Budeau] Opposed-0).

5. United States Department Agriculture Services (NRCS) Report

Bachelor began by saying we hired Karlynn Wierer as the new Natural Resource Specialist, replacing Jennings. November 17, 2023, is the deadline for Environmental Quality Incentive Program applications. Farm Service Agency eligibility review for those applications is December 22, 2023. All basin meeting in November (all NRCS staff). New programs coming down with Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funds; much to learn. Grass Seed League Convention in Salem (December). Koch asks if the Farm Bill will be postponed. Bachelor explains they will work via continued resolution; concerns regarding payment limitations that could affect some clients. Budeau asked about "Climate Smart" funds; Bachelor replied that "Climate Smart" is part of the IRA funds. Could lead to more hiring to assist with these new programs. Hart asks what the timeline is; Bachelor responds until the next Farm Bill.

6. North Santiam River Bennett Dam Complex Restoration Grant Letter of Support

Stevenson begins by stating that the City of Salem and the Santiam Water Control District co-own the Bennett Dams and are applying for a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration grant to replace the two structures and rework the entire Bennett Dam complex. They are seeking letters of support in the early stages of the application process. Stevenson continues that the City of Salem has invested a lot of funds in data collection such as gravel and hydraulic models and that they will be looking to form a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) once the data is ready for review. They plan to install an adjustable weir (fish ladder will remain) and work on the Upper and Lower Bennett Dams. Stevenson adds they are looking to partners (tribes, district, and watershed councils) for a letter of support and assistance with the TAC. This will be a multi-million-dollar project; approximately \$35-75 million. The Board discussed more details of the project with Stevenson, adding that NOAA is aware of the project as it was identified in the Drought Contingency planning by local entities that noted climate change adaptations for the dams will be needed. Bachelor adds that they could potentially request IRA or other USDA funding to assist.

Action: Olson motioned for the Board to **approve the Bennett Dams project letter of support** 2nd by Koch. No further discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-5 [Walker, Olson, Koch, Hart, and Budeau] Opposed-0).

Olson asked Sanchez to determine how much time will be available for staff time on the TAC. Stevenson states that this will be for a few meetings and not a big lift. Sanchez and Koch discussed that this would be a future need, next fiscal year and Sanchez will be better able to determine then what the District workload will be for the TAC; more to come once the application is approved.

7. Potential Sponsor for Oregon Department of Forestry Small Woodlands Grant

Blank is here tonight to share with the Board a new grant opportunity for landowners and to request the District to be a sponsor of the grant. A slideshow is presented on the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) Small Forestland Grant Program (SWG). Blank explains that she has landowners who would benefit from the SWG in their fuel reduction projects. Blank explains that the ODF has prioritized small woodlands for fuel reduction and has \$3.5 million for this year's SWG, it is a competitive grant, 75 percent of the project must treat fuel on private properties and requires a sponsor for a landowner to apply, such as SWCDs and watershed councils. The landowner can apply for up to \$300,000. The sponsor can add to the project budget 10 percent as indirect for sponsor administrative costs. Sanchez explains that as a sponsor the SWCD would receive the grant

payments from ODF after the landowner has completed the project and submitted reports and receipts. The District would pay the landowner after receiving payment from ODF. It would be a very similar process and commitment to how the District sponsors Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board Small Grants Program. Directors focused discussion on indirect costs. Olson asked what exactly is needed to proceed. Sanchez explains we need the authorization from the Board to sponsor the grant and that we can use the line item in the Natural Resources Budget to use as pass through funds. Directors next discussed the SWG process. Blank states it would be good to be able to do this next year or with other grant opportunities that arise. Olson adds that the District should go ahead and approve these on a case-by-case basis.

Action: Walker motioned for the Board to **direct the staff to submit by the deadline the Oregon Department of Forestry's Small Woodland Grant and to sponsor the application and to use the designated line item for OWEB pass through funds.** 2nd by Budeau. No further discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-5 [Walker, Olson, Koch, Hart, and Budeau] Opposed-0).

8. Pudding River Watershed Council White Oak Woodland Engagement Grant Letter of Support

Blank explains that the Pudding River Watershed Council is applying for OWEB's Stakeholder Engagement Grant to work with Mt. Angel Abbey, Oregon Garden, Willamette University, and Corban University to create a long-term plan for 200 acres of oak habitat restoration and outreach at each location. The PRWC is requesting a letter of support for the project. No financial or technical assistance is requested from Marion SWCD. Directors discussed project details.

Action: Hart motioned for the Board to **offer support for the Pudding River Watershed Council White Oak Woodland Engagement Grant.** 2nd by Budeau. No further discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-5 [Walker, Olson, Koch, Hart, and Budeau] Opposed-0).

9. Admin Committee

a) Salary Administration Plan

Sanchez starts by saying she sent the new draft and the original 2002 Salary Administration Plan (SAP) in the mail. Sanchez explained that the 2023 draft SAP was started by previous managers and that she is now getting it completed. The SAP is the District's policy regarding salary and compensation for employees. It includes a description of all the compensation that the District provides from salary to annual and sick leave to health and dental insurance. The SAP outlines our staffing needs and how we determine salaries,

promotions, and raises. Sanchez explains that there is still work to be done but she really wanted to get the SAP as current as possible since the SAP should be reviewed annually and adapted as needed, particularly when the Salary Ten-Step Table is adjusted; we are currently working under the SAP from 2002. Sanchez adds that we are looking to complete a Pay Equity Study that will also shape how our SAP is adapted. Directors had some clarification questions and discussed how we handle job positions. Ortiz asked how a promotion would work if an employee were promoted and then elevated to Step 1 of the next Range, because in some cases that employee would not get a salary increase but a salary cut because Step 1 at the next range may be lower than where they are in their current Range and Step. Sanchez replies that you bring up a good point and that this should be written differently. Directors discussed the concern. Olson states that Sanchez should rewrite this section and bring it back to the Board in December.

b) Part-Time Office Coordinator Position

Sanchez displays a copy of the current Office and Facility Coordinator position description and explains that our current coordinator is retiring in the years to come and has asked to have her hours cut down to part-time. In response Sanchez is requesting that a new Part-Time Office Coordinator position be approved because of the difference in hours, the employee needs to understand the change in duties and what has been prioritized to function under new hours and should be working under a proper job description. Sanchez explains that the part-time position is focused on the office, such as ordering supplies and materials, printing assistance, customer service, etc. Sanchez adds that the already approved Office and Facility Coordinator Position would remain in the options for when retirement does happen and the District needs to fill the position again as a full-time job.

Action: Hart motioned for the Board to **approve the new part-time Office Coordinator job description.** 2nd by Koch. No further discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-5 [Walker, Olson, Koch, Hart, and Budeau] Opposed-0).

10. Natural Resources Committee

a) Partner Grant Application Review

Ortiz presented the Foundant interface for the new Partner Grant Application. Ortiz walked the Board through the grant application interface, sharing through a flow chart the application process for the different Partner Grant options such as capacity and technical assistance. Presentation on file. Ortiz next shared on the screen the Foundant grant application portal to display the user experience and demonstrate the streamlined application. Walker added

that he wanted to discuss the 501(c)(3) process and compare it to our District requirements sharing his concern that we are not including entities that would benefit from the funds by making this a requirement. Ortiz clarifies that we are not limiting entities to 501(c)(3) requirements. The terminology is “tax-exempt” which includes more than just 501(c)(3) entities as well as tribes and neighborhood associations. The discussion went further into the details of entity requirements, indirect costs rates, and grant application cycles.

11. Organize Strategic Planning Committee

Sanchez describes that the Strategic Planning consultant has requested we form an ad-hoc Strategic Planning Committee and asks the chair to convene one. Sanchez adds that Hart, Koch, Sarah Hamilton (staff), and Heath Keirstead (staff) have volunteered for the committee. Koch asked what the responsibility of the committee is. Sanchez replies that the committee would be reviewing plan components and recommending the draft plan over the course of a few meetings for Board approval in March or April of 2024. Work would include reviewing the plan and providing edits and comments etc. and engaging in the discussion of the development of the plan. Directors discussed the role and agreed to the committee of Hart, Koch, Hamilton, and Keirstead. The District Manager also attends the meetings.

12. Oregon Association of Conservation Districts (OACD Board Ballot Vote)

Directors briefly discussed the candidates on the ballot for the Oregon Association of Conservation Districts board and agreed on three candidates Hammond, Dean, and Walker. Olson signed the ballot. Sanchez will deliver to OACD by the November 30, 2023, deadline.

Action: Hart motioned for the Board to **select the three agreed upon nominations (Hammond, Dean, Walker) and submit the ballot for the OACD Board.** 2nd by Koch. No further discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-5 [Walker, Olson, Koch, Hart, and Budeau] Opposed-0).

13. Conservation Assistance Grants

a) Extensions and Cancellations

Action: Olson motioned for the **Board to approve the CAG cancellation for Sunset View Pollinator Habitat (#20-23-010),** 2nd by Budeau. No further discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-5 [Walker, Olson, Koch, Hart, and Budeau] Opposed-0).

Before adjourning Walker adds that he would like to see the Admin Committee review District policies and recommend actions. Sanchez responded that the Admin Committee is currently in the process of reviewing all polices for revisions, needs, and prioritization for work.

Adjourn: Chair Olson adjourned the meeting at 8:51 PM



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