



**Marion Soil and Water Conservation District (MSWCD)  
Board of Directors June 5, 2024, Monthly Minutes**

6:35 PM to 7:56 PM

Facilitator: Chair Olson

Recorded by: Brenda Sanchez

Approved 07-10-24

<b>Directors &amp; Record of Attendance</b>		<b>Associate Directors</b>
At Large 1-Peggy Hart	Present	Angela Plowhead
At Large 2-Scott Walker	Present	Mark Fields
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	
<b>Staff</b>		<b>Guests</b>
Linda Lovett		Lauren Hallet
Susan Ortiz		Les Bachelor
Brenda Sanchez		
Cesar Zamora		

**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).

- 1. Olson Call to Order:** 6:35 PM
- 2. Announcements - None**
- 3. Agenda Additions or Changes - None**
  - a. New Server - approval to purchase.
  - b. Soil and Water Conservation Commission nomination for Zone 4
  - c. Move July 3 monthly Board Meeting to July 10

**Minutes**

- 1. Public Comment**

No Public Comment
- 2. District Snapshot**

Sanchez displayed a photo showing the first backyard sign certified in the Little Habitat Project.

Sanchez reported:

- “Envirothon” kicked off the month of May; Oregon Garden Topic Sustainable Energy
- Becky and Cesar helped conduct the “Hazelnut Cover Crop Tour-Conservation Club” 37 people attended; two farms with different strategies, partner presentations, and a panel discussion.
- Partnered to assist in the “Learn to Fish”-second year A Mid-Willamette Outreach group event 40 guests attended.
- North Salem High School “Forest Inquiry Field Trip”: Heath served as a student group leader for three days of field trips at Silver Falls State Park with Kassi and Chelsea. The students compared wildlife, plants, fungi and other biotic factors in plots that were more and less densely vegetated.
- Salem “Outdoor School:” Program Bins were used to deliver outdoor school lessons at Keizer Rapids Park for students from Mary Eyre (Salem) and Keizer Elementary on May 13, 14, and 16. Heath taught Nature Explorations with an emphasis on the senses and habitat elements.
- Water Festival: May 28 hosted by Mid-Willamette Outreach Group. About 100 4th and 5th grade students from Auburn Elementary attended. Kassi and Heath delivered a lesson about macroinvertebrates covering their importance and many fascinating adaptations.
- “Down By the Riverside”: The whole student body of Optimum Learning Environments Charter School attended. Heath taught water quality.
- Cesar began Sampling for the PSP and submitted draft of a Strategic PSP Plan.
- Cesar is working with Yamhill SWCD for a grant aimed at pest monitoring and beneficial insect releases.
- SIA sampling is completed for the sampling year, and we are working with DEQ to finalize the Sampling Analysis Plan that outlines the data collection requirements.
- Tom organized and formatted our P: Drive, which is where we store photos, we were submerged in photos and unable to really know what we can use. Now we have them organized, labeled for ease in searches, and information regarding the photos is now entered for when we want to use the photo and need photographer, site etc.
- Completed updated policy drafts for the admin committee to review; cap limitations, contracting, and wildfire and heat safety.
- Linda, Janice, and Brenda are working on a retention schedule policy and filing procedures. Lots of work here, we may have a draft policy in August or September.

- Sarah worked on a garlic mustard infestation, first sighting in Marion County. The District was able to get a contractor and immediately started controlling the highly invasive plant.
- On May 1, the Mid-Willamette Cooperative Weed Management Area hosted our 3rd Annual Field Tour. Each year the tour is in one of the 3 counties covered by the CWMA- Polk, Yamhill, or Marion. Partners working on invasive species within that county can share their work with a group of peers so we can learn from each other. Sarah helped lead this event.
- Janice has completed all the filing of our information resources in our information library. Lots of work and now all our printed informational material is current and organized.

### **3. Treasurers Report April 2024**

Budeau, began the discussion stating that the report represents the tenth month of the fiscal year; 83 percent of the year has passed. Budeau noted that levied taxes were \$3,428. The District has not received a considerable amount of the projected levied taxes; receiving 82 percent thus far. Budeau reviewed that approximately 62 percent of the wages and benefit budget has been used. Walker states there is no cause for concern. Hart commented on the high rate of dividends received thus far. Koch raised the question of the Treasurers Report development process. Sanchez explained the staff process for completing a Treasurer's Report. Directors discussed further the report process and amount of time spent drafting it. Olson reminds the Board they can request from the District Manager any further information they need regarding district finances and spending.

**Action:** Hart motioned that the Board **approve the April 2024 Treasurers Report**, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Walker. No further discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-5 [Walker, Olson, Koch, Hart, and Budeau], Opposed-0).

### **4. United States Department Agriculture (USDA) and Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS) Report.**

Bachelor began by sharing that they have been focused on Conservation Stewardship Partnership (CSP) and working to rank projects. The CSP program is not normally used as much in Marion County but more projects are coming in because there is more funding incentive. Bachelor goes on to say they are short staffed; their Resource Conservationist is out on contracting duty, hopefully returning soon. NRCS received prior year funding for more Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) contracts and were able to fund more EQIP projects. EQIP dollars are not going as far as they used to, irrigation cost-share is higher.

Marion County received close to one million dollars in EQIP funds. Bachelor adds that he is currently working on energy contracts through the Inflation Reduction Act interview. There are six pre-approved across the basin. Bachelor shares that NRCS has finally hired an engineer for the basin. Ioka cover crop, hazelnut tour coming soon on June 13, 2024. Walker asks how NRCS handles the impact of inflation. Bachelor replies they had to raise practice costs this year. NRCS states that the pay cap is \$450K/per landowner, per Farm Bill. Looking at possibly raising the payment limitation in the next Farm Bill. Koch asks if hemp will be added to the Farm Bill. Bachelor only knows that the Farm Bill is up for review; most likely late 2025 before we see a new Farm Bill. Walker follows up asking Bachelor about the payment caps, inquiring what are these payment caps. Bachelor explains that the Farm Bill sets payment caps for each client at \$450K; for any practices. NRCS does have special caveats for higher payment amounts but the payment cap is how costs are controlled by clients. Hart asked for more information related to the IRA energy contracts, Bachelor replies they are all irrigation projects here in Marion County but there are other IRA programs around the state. The contracts are to save energy and reduce the carbon footprint.

## **5. Natural Resources Committee**

### **a. Cover Crop Assistance Program Rate Adjustment**

Koch began by stating the Committee reviewed the Cover Crop Assistance Program (CCA) payment rates to determine if an increase in the base payment rate is justified. It was noted that the current rate is below NRCS Cost Scenarios and other similar programs, the current rates are less than the rates offered in the pilot year 2019-2020, and applicants could receive a higher payment rate by going through the CAG program which would add significantly to staff workload. Koch shared the committee recommendation of the following payment rates for the CCA to go into effect for the 2024-2025 fiscal year. Walker asks is it the cash incentive or some other reason a farmer would put in a cover crop and why would they not participate in cover cropping? Olson explained that there is high risk and a big change to how things have been done, a cash incentive can motivate a farmer to put in a cover crop. Directors contemplated further why farmers would or would not engage in cover crop practices. Walker states that he would like to see the program move toward a conservation cover objective rather than cover crops. Olson offers up what if we go ahead and approve the increases and as a caveat staff would work toward growing the CCA program toward conservation cover practices. Directors deliberated Olson's suggestion by discussing different crops, temporary versus permanent cover, and other

cover crop challenges. Directors agreed that the CCA program should move toward permanent conservation cover.

**Action:** Koch motioned that the Board **approve the increase for the Cover Crop Assistance program for 2024-25 fiscal year, 2<sup>nd</sup>** by Budeau. Discussion, Hart asked if the budget for the CCA would be able to cover the new rates? Sanchez stated yes. Walker adds that the rates are for one year and the Board could change it back next year. MOTION PASSED (Aye-5 [Walker, Olson, Koch, Hart, and Budeau], Opposed-0).

**Action:** Walker motioned that the Board **request from staff an analysis of permanent cover crop as a program, 2<sup>nd</sup>** by Hart. No further Discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-5 [Walker, Olson, Koch, Hart, and Budeau], Opposed-0).

Before moving on Olson noted that the Strategic Plan meeting the day prior went well and wanted to thank the Strategic Planning Committee for all their hard work on the Plan. Hart and Koch noted that Amy Stork did very well running the meeting.

## **6. Conservation Assistance Grants**

### **a) CAG Applications**

Hart asked if the final design was submitted and approved by Leland Hardy? Olson replied yes. Olson led a conversation regarding the 441 Micro Irrigation practice and the idea that after a practice has reached its lifetime use, that the District would be OK with awarding funds for the 441 practice again to renew or upgrade a practice, even potentially awarding funds to maintain further the life for previously funded practices where the life span of the project has been reached. Olson also added when is an application incomplete? Where does the District draw the line, when an application is incomplete but we still consider or award it?

**Action:** Koch motioned that the Board **approve CAG 20-24-025 Lewis Drip Irrigation at \$18,401.53, 2<sup>nd</sup>** by Hart. No further Discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-5 [Walker, Olson, Koch, Hart, and Budeau], Opposed-0).

Sanchez explained the Mill Creek Bank Restoration CAG is up for award consideration because at the last meeting the Board approved a special payment to the Mill Creek project for invasive plant control from the District's invasive plant control line item of \$14,740 to accommodate this unique conservation opportunity but did not award the CAG. The provided \$14,740 is to be subtracted from the CAP application submitted budget of \$22,500, leaving \$7,760 for the remainder of the project to be awarded; native plants planting. Olson confirmed that the timeline is the same; three years? Sanchez replied yes, this consideration

is of the submitted application as it was. Budeau wanted to know if the stipulation that there is proof of the pending match funds having been awarded will also apply to the remaining \$7,760? Directors discussed further the stipulation. Discussion moved onto whether the North Santiam watershed Council administrative fee should be deducted from CAG budget or come from other District funds. It was decided that the admin fee would come out of the CAG budget.

The discussion drifted to how the invasive plant control budget should be used. Budeau states it should be used to control weeds. Olson suggests the District manager could expend funds for use on high priority weed control up to the delegated expense of \$5,000.

**Action:** Budeau motioned that the Board **approve CAG 20-24-028 Mill Creek Bank Restoration Project at the adjusted amount of \$7,760.00**, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Koch. Discussion. Directors noted that this is a onetime approval for such a project. MOTION PASSED (Aye-5 [Walker, Olson, Koch, Hart, and Budeau], Opposed-0).

#### **b) Extension and Cancellations**

No Discussion.

**Action:** Walker motioned that the Board **approve the Request for Conservation Assistance Grant Extensions for Dorene Hight and Alberto Vasquez** 2<sup>nd</sup> by Hart. No further discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-5 [Walker, Olson, Koch, Hart, and Budeau], Opposed-0).

#### **c) Grants Completed**

Directors reviewed the completed projects. No discussion.

### **7. Hallet Letter of Support**

Dr. Lauren Hallett of the University of Oregon requests a letter of support for the orchard conservation cover/soil amendment research project. Olson shares a story of a prior research project he is familiar with that is consistent with her project. Dr. Hallett explains details of the project where they will study nut grower farm systems and evaluate the benefits and tradeoffs of conservation cover and basalt amendments. Olson discussed further some ideas to consider for the research.

**Action:** Walker motioned that the Board **approve Dr. Hallets letter of support for the “Functional Orchard Understories with Native Diversity, Enhanced Resilience, and Sequestration” project**, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Hart. No further discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-5 [Walker, Olson, Koch, Hart, and Budeau], Opposed-0).

## 8. New Server

Sanchez explained that she just received the new cost estimate for a new server. The current warranty ends soon and a new server is needed. Sanchez hands out a copy of the server cost proposal. Sanchez explained that there are funds for the server budgeted and the District has used as much extended time as possible to use the server for its life span and a little more. Directors discussed server life spans, what to do with the old one, and the cost of the new server. Walker suggests that the District Manager conduct a review of other IT services and compare costs on whether to continue further with our current IT agreement.

**Action:** Hart motioned that the Board **approve the District Manager to purchase the replacement server and to have installed as quoted \$9,687 by COGENT IT and authorize signing the agreement, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Budeau.** No further discussion.  
MOTION PASSED (Aye-5 [Walker, Olson, Koch, Hart, and Budeau], Opposed-0).

## 9. New Topics

No new topics were discussed.

**Adjourn:** Chair Olson adjourned the meeting at 7:56 PM



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