



Marion Soil and Water Conservation District (MSWCD)
Natural Resources Committee Meeting Minutes March 12, 2025 2:01
PM to 3:10 PM **APPROVED**
Facilitator: Cesar Zamora
Recorded by: Chelsea Blank
Approved: April 16, 2025

Committee Member Attendance

Cesar Zamora (Committee Chair) - Staff	Present
Rochelle Koch - Director	Present
Nik Ovchinnikov - Director	Present
Chelsea Blank - Staff	Present
Leland Hardy - Associate Director	Present

Staff

Guests

Sarah Hamilton
Susan Ortiz
Becky Pineda
Kassi Roosth
Brenda Sanchez

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

Minutes

Call to Order-Chair: 2:01 PM

Announcements - None

Agenda Additions or Changes - None

Public Comment - No Comments

1. Staff Updates

Blank gave an update that her and Hamilton have been attending monthly partnership meetings about the Emerald Ash Borer invasive pest and that they are planning to continue to explore options to address this resource concern issue with watershed councils. The invasive pest has been found in Marion County as of August of 2024.

Hamilton gave an update about the success of the native plant sale that concluded early this month. The sale went smoothly, and she will be following up soon with a report of the numbers from the sales to the Natural Resources Committee.

Ortiz gave an update that the third cycle of the Conservation Assistance Grant program is currently underway and in the middle of the external evaluation process. There are currently nine CAG applications submitted for funding, with the total request for this cycle at over \$92,000. The CAG review committee is planning to meet on Monday March 17 to discuss recommendations for funding these applications to the Board.

2. Elect Committee Chair

Action: Koch motioned to **elect Cesar Zamora as the Natural Resources Committee Chair**, 2nd by Ovchinnikov. No further discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-5 [Zamora, Ovchinnikov, Koch, Hardy, and Blank], Opposed-0).

3. Pesticide Stewardship Partnership (PSP) 2025-27 Grant Application

Zamora presented the Pesticide Stewardship Partnership grant application that has been drafted and ready for submission to Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (ODEQ) in April of 2025 to continue efforts of collecting water quality samples in five locations in the Molalla Pudding River subbasin. Included in the proposal are three outreach events hosted by the District to educate landowners on the best management practices for urban areas, a spray calibration workshop, and a trainer workshop.

Zamora presented an overview of the staff activities and budget, which totals \$32,676 requested. ODEQ has requested that the District collect double the amount of samples than we have previously collected, due to increased amounts of pesticides of high concern that have been found in this waterway. Sanchez, Koch, and Ovchinnikov expressed concerns about the District getting involved with this type of project that may potentially lead to compliance enforcement on landowners using the data collected by our staff. Ovchinnikov expressed the need to know how the results of the samples will be used before the Board can approve of us participating in this program. The committee discussed the time restraints on researching this in depth before it needs to be submitted to ODEQ on April 4, 2025. Koch suggested we move forward with the PSP application if we can get participation from the Pudding River Watershed Council (PRWC) to take on the sampling role, and the District can just focus on the outreach component so that we are not involved with any of the implications of the data. Zamora agreed to reach out to the PRWC to see if they are interested in this partnership before we need to submit this grant to the Board packet items on March 20th. The committee will meet briefly on March 20th to discuss if this will be recommended to the Board with the suggested changes made.

Action: Koch motioned to **work with the Pudding River Watershed Council to conduct the Pesticide Stewardship Partnership monitoring**, 2nd by Ovchinnikov. No further discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-5 [Zamora, Ovchinnikov, Koch, Hardy, and Blank], Opposed-0).

4. Oregon Climate and Agriculture Network (OrCAN): Soil Health Network

Zamora presented the background and summary of the new Soil Health network launched by OrCAN. OrCAN is searching for partners to volunteer as regional hubs for the soil health network. The focus is on providing technical assistance and connecting landowners to opportunities for soil health. The hope is to establish these pilot hubs in the Spring of 2025. OrCAN will provide training for the lead partners to learn how to be a hub. The committee discussed how this will help connect landowners to the District and how much staff time will be required. Zamora responded that OrCAN is open to being flexible on the capacity requirements based on partner needs. Ovchinnikov expressed an interest in learning more about this initiative and requested that more information be sent in an email.

Action: Zamora motioned to **recommend that the District become one of the regional hubs for the OrCAN Soil Health Network**, 2nd by Ovchinnikov. No further discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-5 [Zamora, Ovchinnikov, Koch, Hardy, and Blank], Opposed-0).

5. Conservation Cover Program and Adding Hedgerows

Zamora suggested we skip this item as there was no feedback from the previous Board meeting about this topic, besides the committee needs to continue to develop this program. A suggestion from Koch is that the Hedgerow practice #422 be added to the Conservation Cover program, which segues into the next agenda item.

6. Hedgerows in Conservation Cover Program

Based on Board feedback that it would be helpful to include the Hedgerow practice #422 in the Conservation Cover program, Zamora presented a slide with suggestions of how to incorporate this into the program. Zamora presented a list of discussion questions including how many payments should be offered and at what rates, and that this be based on the NRCS standards and definitions of the hedgerow practice. Zamora showed that the 2024 NRCS cost scenario lists show \$8-\$13 per foot of hedgerow as their payment rate. Koch asked if we would require the use of native plants. Ovchinnikov suggested adding a recommendation for the use of native plants but allowing the use of nonnative plants for other goals such as a drift screen. Zamora suggested adding an

incentive for the use of native plants, like the higher payment rate in the Cover Crop program for no till practices. The committee continued the discussion of what different goals would be included in the use of the hedgerow practice such as a drift screen, pollinators, and aesthetics. The implementation requirements would be different depending on each of these goals. For drift, the plant recommendations would be more evergreen species, densely planted, and taller trees. Zamora suggested that the implementation requirements for the drift screen goal would adhere to the Endangered Species Act pesticide mitigation rules that are going to be implemented soon. For pollinators, the recommendations would focus on native plants, deciduous and diversity. Zamora also suggested that this program will need to have high enough incentives to make it worth it for farmers to participate. Blank stated that Karlynn Wierer provided a higher payment rate in a separate conversation about the hedgerow practice in a question about a CAG application. The rate given by Wierer was \$13.45, which suggests that the rates have increased since the 2024 NRCS cost scenarios were published. Blank suggested working with NRCS staff to get the most updated information about the practice to be used for this program. Ovchinnikov asked what defines a small farm, to which Pineda responded that it is based on Annual Gross Income of the farm rather than acreage.

Pineda recalls the AGI maximum to be \$350,000 to be considered a small farm. Regarding how many payments are made for this program, Zamora stated that this decision will impact staff capacity to implement the program. Koch stated that she would prefer it if the staff could present options for this decision to the committee rather than brainstorming together during the meeting. Ovchinnikov suggested a structure with two payments; one upfront of 75% of the costs, then the final 25% paid at project completion. Zamora gave the example of the Cover Crop program which pays 50% before and after project implementation. Koch and Ovchinnikov both agree that the 75% and 25% payments would be more beneficial for farmers. This program development will continue in the Natural Resources committee.

7. Scheduling next Natural Resources Committee meeting

Zamora asked if this time of the week and month works for the committee to keep as the regularly scheduled timeslot. The committee all agreed that the second Wednesday of the month during the morning works. Hardy said that he prefers later morning around 9:30 or 10 am rather than 9 am if possible. The committee agreed that 9:30 am will work. Blank asked if the committee plans to meet in April. Zamora confirmed that the committee will need to meet as there is already one agenda item needed for discussion and recommendation. Blank said that additional agenda items may be needed for the April committee meeting for the watershed councils to attend and give an update on their projects. Blank stated that the next second Wednesday of April will be during the

CONNECT conference, which most of the District staff are planning to attend. The committee discussed an alternative time to meet in April, agreeing on April 16th at 9:30 am.

Adjourn: Chair Zamora adjourned the meeting at 3:10 PM



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