



**Marion Soil and Water Conservation District (MSWCD)  
Natural Resources Committee Meeting Minutes June 18, 2025**

**APPROVED**

09:30 AM to 11:30 AM

Facilitator: Cesar Zamora

Recorded by: Chelsea Blank

Approved: August 13, 2025

**Committee Member Attendance**

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

**Staff**

Becky Pineda  
Sarah Hamilton  
Amy Zimmer  
Brenda Sanchez  
Susan Ortiz

**Guests**

Mackayla Fithian  
Sage Fairman

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

**Minutes**

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**Call to Order-Chair:** 09:33 AM

**Announcements** - None

**Agenda Additions or Changes** – Zamora switched item 9 and 11 in order to prioritize the action items since there are a lot of items on the agenda.

- 1. Public Comment** – No Comments
- 2. Board Updates on Committee Recommendations**  
No updates.

**3. Natural Resources Committee Meeting Minutes – April 16, 2025**

Koch noticed that agenda item number 3 needs to be updated to Natural Resources Committee with the appropriate date and time.

**Action:** Koch motioned to **accept with those stated changes for the April 16, 2025 Natural Resource Committee meeting minutes**, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Hardy. No further discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-5 [Zamora, Ovchinnikov, Koch, Hardy, and Blank], Opposed-0).

**4. SPG application Smart Apply Sprayer Upgrade, Hubbel farms  
Koch moves to approve the SPG application. Zamora seconds.**

**Discussion:**

Koch approves the concept as an appropriate project for the District to fund but wanted to hear what other's concerns and thoughts were. Zamora pointed out that Blank had the most comments on the application, to which Blank responded that she felt that it wasn't well elaborated on the 'underutilized' aspect of the equipment.

Hardy pointed out that we have not typically funded equipment purchases in the past for District grants, but this equipment will serve the resource concern. Ortiz clarified that the NR committee voted to allow equipment purchases for SPG grants with ultimate discretion to the Board. She also attended a farm tour to view this equipment in use recently and shared a photo of the efficiency of the sprayer operating as desired to avoid spraying in between the trees. This will be a powerful tool for preventing off target spray and drift.

Zamora offered for any more comments or suggestions for changes being made before taking the final vote.

**Action:** Koch moved to **recommend the Hubbel Farms SPG application for the Smart Apply Sprayer Upgrade to the Board for funding**, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Hardy. No further discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-5 [Zamora, Ovchinnikov, Koch, Hardy, and Blank], Opposed-0).

**5. SPG grant application for Olson Farms**

Koch makes a motion that we approve the Olson Farms SPG, Ovchinnikov seconds. Zamora opened up for discussion.

Zamora showed that all reviewers voted to fund on the application.

No more discussion.

Vote: all in favor none opposed. Motion passes unanimously to approve the SPG grant application.

**Action:** Koch moved to **recommend the Olson Farms SPG application for the Airblast Sprayer Upgrade to the Board for funding**, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Ovchinnikov. No further discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-5 [Zamora, Ovchinnikov, Koch, Hardy, and Blank], Opposed-0).

## **6. EAB LSR Grant Update and Contribution Approval**

Blank provided a summary of the previous committee decision to approve Marion SWCD as partner for this grant application that the Pudding River Watershed Council is applying for to address the new Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) infestation area.

Fithian provided additional information and updates to the grant budget including the total project cost estimate including all match and award funds for all 9 involved partners comes to over \$500,000. PRWC is asking for \$10k in cash from Marion SWCD and staff time for Blank and Hamilton to contribute 6 days per year for three years to help with monitoring and survey efforts in the Marion County infestation area. All together just over \$30k (for cash and staff time) is requested of Marion SWCD to contribute to the grant proposal. The 10k cash will pay for underplanting, landowner engagement, outreach, training landowners for identification of ash and EAB, management recommendations.

Fithian explained some of the deliverables of the grant proposal include 19,500 native trees and shrubs over three years in all three counties and over all 9 partners, visual surveys multiple times per year, teaching landowners and guiding management recommendations through workshops, and municipal support for tree inventory with support from other partners.

The main goal of the grant proposal is a list of outcomes to increase water quality through riparian restoration.

The requested actions from Marion SWCD for this grant are approval of the partner contribution request and funding requests (staff time equal to \$20,480 and cash award of \$10,000) and a Letter of Support, which is provided in this packet. ODF has chosen the application to move forward to the next round of applications, which is a great indication that it will be awarded for funding. Fithian will then get firsthand feedback from grant reviewers before the final application is submitted.

Sanchez asked to clarify if the 10k award in general will be used for staff time, capacity, implementing projects, or anything else? Fithian responded that we can choose what the funds will go towards, but hasn't been specifically obligated to certain items yet, as the grant application hasn't required that

level of specification. The Marion SWCD funds will at least go towards funding the plants and sourcing materials for underplanting projects. Sanchez suggested that since the District will be billed for \$10k, it would be nice to have more detail on what it will be spent on.

**Action:** Koch moved to **recommend the District provide the requested funds of \$10,000 and staff time of \$20,480 and a Letter of Support to the Pudding River Watershed Council LSR Grant Application for EAB, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Ovchinnikov.**

Discussion: Koch suggested providing specific items that the District funds will be spent on for this grant project to the next Board meeting. Zamora asked if that needs to be included in the Board packet items, to which Sanchez responded that it can be provided to Blank to present to the Board during the July meeting at any time.

MOTION PASSED (Aye-5 [Zamora, Ovchinnikov, Koch, Hardy, and Blank], Opposed-0).

## **7. OrCAN Soil Health Network Memorandum of Understanding**

Zamora stated that he and Sage Fairman have drafted up this MOU to solidify the partnership between Marion SWCD and OrCAN and to establish Marion SWCD as one of the regional hubs for the Soil Health Network. Fairman attended the meeting to support the MOU and provide any additional information needed by the committee. No committee members had questions or comments.

**Action:** Blank moved to recommend the **approval of the MOU and commit to the responsibilities of a Soil Health Network Regional Hub, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Koch.** No discussion.

MOTION PASSED (Aye-5 [Zamora, Ovchinnikov, Koch, Hardy, and Blank], Opposed-0).

## **8. CAG Review Committee Structure**

Sanchez and Ortiz have been working on getting the CAG review committee structure to be more similar to other committee structures. Sanchez stated that we haven't had formal members for the CAG committee, and the member who previously occupied the committee board member position is no longer a board member.

Normal committee structure includes at least two directors and two staff members.

The CAG committee currently has no Board members assigned, it is watershed councils, public members and NRCS.

Ortiz stated that the proposed structure is one director, one associate, NRCS, Watershed Council member, and a member of public.

Sanchez and Koch discussed the director position vacancy on the CAG review committee and the need for an acting director to join the committee. Koch pointed out that there are currently six positions for the CAG review committee and we are proposing only five positions. Sanchez clarified that Dave Budeau counts as a member of the public now, so we still need an acting board director.

Sanchez stated that the staff are asking for approval of this new CAG review committee structure and the Board Chair can assign the board member for the committee at the next board meeting.

Koch asked how often the CAG review committee meets and what the expectations are. Ortiz responded that the committee only meets twice per year because there are only two cycles per year. However, it requires a good amount of time to complete the CAG application reviews and go over them during the meeting. She also mentioned that the director on the committee would represent the CAG review committee at the board meetings. Koch requests not being appointed to this committee, as she doesn't feel comfortable with the time commitment and requirements. Sanchez said she will pass on that preference to the Board Chair.

**Action:** Ovchinnikov moved to recommend the **proposed changes be made to structure the CAG review committee with an acting Board member, Associate Board member, NRCS member, Watershed council member, and a public member**, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Koch. No discussion.

MOTION PASSED (Aye-5 [Zamora, Ovchinnikov, Koch, Hardy, and Blank], Opposed-0).

## **9. Conservation Cover and Hedgerow Program:**

Zamora opened this topic up for questions. Koch asked if there going to be plant lists provided with this program. Zamora stated that they have been using an NRCS spreadsheet for hedgerow plant recommendations to base their recommendations from. Koch stated that some plants in California hedgerows only last 4-5 years but the NRCS lifespan is listed as 15 years for the practice duration. Sanchez clarified that even if the lifespan of the practice is 15 years, it is the responsibility of the landowner to maintain the hedgerow and replace any dead plants for that duration. Koch asked a few other

questions such as if there will be compensation provided after initial planting, will there be compensation provided for long term maintenance as is done within the CREP program, and if there are minimum length requirements for the hedgerows. Zamora responded that there will be two payments for this program: 50% up front for site prep, and 50% upon completion after planting. He also noted that they were not planning to include follow up reports or monitoring for the sites and there has not been a minimum length requirement established. Sanchez responded to Koch's comment on maintenance that the landowner will need funds for maintenance. Board Chair Olson thinks we should provide funds for maintenance on projects, which may be a topic to discuss more in the future. The committee went on to discuss if and how the follow up site visits, inspections, and post project updates may be provided to track the program's success. Koch suggested requesting annual photos of the project from the landowner, and Sanchez suggested requesting this post project every 4 or so years. Sanchez suggested including the payment rates in the proposal that is brought to the Board. Zamora said that he can update the program outline to include the payment rates, post project inspections, annual photos of projects, plant list, and determine if maintenance funds can be included and bring this edited version to the Board meeting in August.

The committee discussed whether adding a minimum length requirement for the hedgerow plantings would be beneficial to this program. A few staff members spoke about preferring not to include a requirement so that this program may be available to more of the District's constituents such as small landowners. Sanchez suggested that this program be considered a pilot program that is subject to change within the first three years, similar to the Cover Crop Program process.

**Action:** Koch moved to recommend to **approve the adoption of the Conservation Cover and Hedgerow Program as a pilot program, with discussed additions** 2<sup>nd</sup> by Ovchinnikov. No discussion.

MOTION PASSED (Aye-5 [Zamora, Ovchinnikov, Koch, Hardy, and Blank], Opposed-0).

#### **10. FY 2025-2026 Plant Sale Plan Review**

Hamilton presented the plan for the upcoming plant sales for the next fiscal year as an update for the committee and looking for feedback.

Hamilton gave a summary of some of the planned changes to our plant sales, including that we now have two sales: one for bulbs and one for stems, and the timing of them will switch seasons to make it easier for folks to plant in the proper season and improve bareroot survival. Now the bareroot sale will be held sometime in November, and the bulb sale will be held in mid-March.

Ovchinnikov supported the changes and updates to the plant sales.  
Committee members discussed operations of plant sales, just logistical details.

**No action, just discussion.**

#### **11. 2024-2025 Cover Crop Program Final Report**

Otriz presented this topic as follows: this year the District had budgeted \$45k for the program. It is a flat rate program with 50% of the payment made upon crop planting, and the rest upon termination. The District accepted 8 applications and had to close early and not accept additional interest. The staff is grateful for increasing the funding for next year to meet the demand, since this is a popular program. There was a previous request from either the Natural resources committee or the Board for the staff to provide the number of acres each applicant was applying for cover crops on. Here are the results:

- i. The majority of applicants planted most of their entire acreage in cover crops.
- ii. The number of applicants who didn't apply the cover crops to the majority of their property is due to the fact that several of these landowners have conservation permanent cover established on their acreage as well.
- iii. Many Cover Crop applicants are located within the ODA focus area, SIA, and PSP areas. This shows that outreach with those programs is working in these areas.
- iv. Koch appreciates the presentation and suggests bringing it to the Board.

**No action, just update.**

#### **12. Next committee meeting date:**

Sticking to the every other month schedule, and second Wednesday of the month, then the next meeting time will be August the 13<sup>th</sup>. The second Wednesday of the month is better for Zamora and Blank in order to get the items into board packets. The afternoon that day works better for Koch and everyone else. Next meeting date will be August 13, at 1-2:30. Sanchez provided a general note to the committee that if a member can't make a meeting, they can't vote but they can submit written comments for the Chair to share during the meeting.

**Adjourn:** Chair Zamora adjourned the meeting at 10:51, AM



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