



**Marion Soil and Water Conservation District (MSWCD)
Board of Directors Wednesday, April 1st, 2026
Minutes - Monthly Meeting**

6:35 PM to 08:08 PM

Facilitator: Vice-Chair Darin Olson

Recorded by: Brenda Sanchez

Approved Date: 05-06-2026

Directors Record of Attendance		Associate Directors
At Large 1-Peggy Hart (Secretary-Treasurer)	Present	
At Large 2-Vacant	Vacant	
Zone 1-Noah Justice	Present	
Zone 2-Nik Ovchinnikov	Absent	
Zone 3-Darin Olson (Vice-Chair)	Present	
Zone 4-Angela Plowhead (Chair)	Absent	
Zone 5-Rochelle Koch	Present	
Staff		Guests
Brenda Sanchez		Michael
Susan Ortiz		Kailyn Klotz - Sustainable Northwest
Chelsea Blank		

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).

Minutes

Vice-Chair Olson Call to Order: 6:35 PM

- A. Agenda additions were made.
 - 1. Olson added the Annual Meeting Resolution to the agenda.
- B. Public Comment - No public comments.
- C. Announcements were made.
 - 1. Sanchez provided a handout on ethics rules updates, noting that the annual gift limit from vendors increased to \$100 and clarified that food and beverages from public bodies are exempt.
 - 2. The next Administrative Committee meeting will be in April, and the date and time will be announced soon.
 - 3. Sanchez asked whether the Board was interested in reviewing the City of Hubbard's development plans. Olson explained that some districts comment on development and zoning matters, which prompted the inquiry.

4. Sanchez distributed Board Management Training information from the Small Districts Association of Oregon (SDAO).
5. Sanchez encouraged Justice to make sure and take the State-required online ethics training.

1. District Snapshot for March 2026

- A. Sanchez reviewed the following from the District Manager's Monthly Report
 1. Created a Strategic Team of internal staff, composed of the specialists that meets monthly to improve communication between programs, lead projects, mentor staff, discuss challenges and success, and work to sync all work to the Strategic Plan.
 2. Moved to quarterly meetings with each employee instead of monthly.
 3. Conducted our Conservation Planning Program Kickoff to engage Conservation Planners, Education Specialist, and Outreach Specialist in prioritizing conservation planning services.
 4. Vehicle Fleet has had annual maintenance completed, and thanked Chappelle.
 5. Met with Ortiz to review Partner Grant recommendations and Committee items for discussion that will return to the Board in the next months with final recommendations on the Partner Grant as an annual grant program.
 6. Working with OACD and SWCDs to provide guidance and examples of District operations to Oregon's SWCDs.
 7. Windows and carpets have been cleaned.

2. Meeting Minutes: March 4, 2026 Board Budget Work Session and Monthly Board meeting; March 12, 2026 Partner Grant Pilot Program Review

Hart stated she reviewed the minutes and submitted edits. Sanchez displayed the drafted meeting minutes. Hart explained there are three sets of minutes to approve:

- A. Board's Work Session: Budget (Fiscal Year 2026-27) Minutes
- B. Board's March Monthly Meeting Minutes
- C. Board's Partner Grant Pilot Program Review Minutes

Action: Koch motioned for the Board to **approve the March 4, 2026, Board FY 2026-2027 Budget Work Session Minutes; the March 4, 2026 Board Meeting Minutes; and the March 12, 2026, Board Partner Grant Pilot Program Review Minutes, as edited, 2nd** by Justice. No further discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-4 [Olson, Justice, Koch, Hart] Opposed-0).

3. Treasurer's Monthly Report for February 2026

Hart reviewed the report and discussed the following:

- 98.2% of tax money received
- 60% of staff costs paid, and we're two-thirds into the fiscal year
- Funds were moved to the General Fund
- RCCP funds are coming in again
- The grant percentage is low, because that's the amount that's been spent, not the amount that's been awarded

Action: Hart motioned that the Board **accept as presented the February 2026 Treasurers Report**, 2nd by Koch. No further discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-4 [Olson, Justice, Koch, Hart] Opposed-0).

4. United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Report

NRCS did not report.

5. Conservation Assistance Grant (CAG) Committee

a) 2025-2026 Conservation Assistance Grants – Cycle 2

Sanchez displayed the agenda item brief, 2025-2026 Conservation Assistance Grants – Cycle 2. Ortiz, Grants Specialist, and Hart, the CAG Committee Chair presented the brief, noting it was a strong round of applications and the Review Committee had good discussions. They thanked the Committees members for their time spent reviewing these applications.

Action: Koch motioned that the Board **approve funding the eleven (11) 2025-2026 Conservation Assistance Grant (CAG) Cycle 2 Applications as recommended**, 2nd by Justice. No further discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-4 [Olson, Justice, Koch, Hart] Opposed-0).

b) Limit Cost-Share on projects within their Lifespan

- Hart explained the recommendation to the Board to adopt a Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) type policy regarding cost-sharing system improvements to limit assistance to systems not previously cost-shared within the last 15 years.
- Sanchez displayed the agenda item brief and the Natural Resources Conservation Services Conservation Practice Standard Irrigation Water Management Code 449.

Drip System Funding Guidelines - The group discussed guidelines for funding drip system repairs and replacements. They debated whether to require documentation of system age and whether to base replacement decisions on the NRCS 15-year lifespan guideline. The Board agreed that for systems they previously funded, the full operational lifespan should be required before replacement, while for independently funded systems, they might consider requiring only half the operational lifespan to be potentially awarded. They also discussed the importance of water savings as a key factor in approval decisions and considered requiring farmers to have irrigation management plans if seeking district funding for new systems.

Weather-Adjusted Irrigation System Implementation - Sanchez and Olson discussed the challenges of implementing real-time weather-adjusted irrigation schedules and the difficulties in ensuring proper system maintenance. The Board debated whether additional requirements beyond the existing funding agreement were needed for system maintenance and lifespan, ultimately considering a compromise of two-thirds of the useful life for systems initially funded outside the District. They also touched on the potential for energy savings through other upgrades and discussed the need for significant water savings to justify conservation efforts.

Conservation Practice Maintenance Policies – The Board reviewed existing language in the funding agreement regarding repair and replacement responsibilities, distinguishing between damage from normal use versus catastrophic natural events where the funding-cooperator is currently not responsible for repairs. Hart provided copies of the District's existing Application and Cooperation/Funding Agreement that already include design life requirements and maintenance obligations for funded practices, as explained by Ortiz.

Ortiz clarified that the funding agreement applies to all projects, including irrigation projects, and noted past examples of projects destroyed by fire, including one case of arson involving multiple funding sources.

Irrigation Funding Policy Discussion - The Board discussed funding policies for irrigation systems, particularly regarding repairs and replacements due to natural disasters. The group discussed the maintenance and replacement policies for funded conservation practices, particularly focusing on the 15-year design life listed in NRCS files and the 20-year conveyance pipeline lifespan. Ortiz explained that current decisions are made on a case-by-case basis, considering factors like design life, maintenance history, and natural resource concerns.

Sanchez suggested amending the funding agreement language rather than creating a separate policy, with the group considering language that would exclude repairs due to catastrophic natural events while allowing case-by-case decisions for disaster-related funding.

Catastrophic Events Language Amendment Discussion - The Board discussed amending language regarding catastrophic natural events in their plan. They agreed to change the wording to state that the cooperator may or may not be responsible for repair and replacement, depending on the Board's case-by-case judgment. Ortiz suggested removing the specific sentence about catastrophic natural events entirely, but Sanchez preferred keeping it while allowing Board's discretion.

The discussion also touched on concerns about evaluating applications when there's an appearance of poor maintenance on existing systems, with the Board noting the difficulty in making judgments without proper evidence.

Funding Agreement - Sanchez led a discussion on amending the funding agreement language to address drip systems replacements and system upgrades. The group agreed to add language requiring that the replacement of systems which had not been funded by the District meet two-thirds of their expected lifespan before being upgraded or improved, and maintaining the requirement for substantial natural resource savings.

Discussion continued about a previous decision regarding funded project's meeting mission alignment.

6. Review Proposed Budget Fiscal Year 2026-27

Sanchez displayed and discussed the 2026-27 Fiscal Year (FY) Proposed Budget then provided an update, announcing increased cash on hand to \$2.5 million and a revised tax assessment total of \$1,559,927, resulting in a \$300,000 increase in income. And \$115,000 has been moved from the Multipurpose Fund to the General Fund.

Budget Review and Adjustments - The group discussed the proposed budget, which showed \$1.3 million in unappropriated funds, exceeding the target of \$1 million. Sanchez suggested restoring \$50,000 to the partner grant program, but after discussion, the Board decided to keep the budget as proposed to maintain fiscal responsibility for future years.

The group also agreed to add an appendix to the budget showing how staff time is spent on various projects beyond their regular duties, to better reflect the value of staff work in the budget.

The Board suggested no additional changes to the 2026-27 Fiscal Year (FY) Proposed Budget.

7. Grants Programs

A. Restore Grant from Zero Foodprint

Sanchez explained that a client of the District has asked our staff to be their Technical Assistance Provider for their Restore Grant. Zero Foodprint's Restore Grant provides funding for practices that increase carbon sequestration. Conservation Districts are listed as eligible Technical Assistance Providers. The grant requires the applicant to receive approved technical assistance. The grant would pay for the project and the technical assistance. Pre-application Technical Assistance Provider (TAP) costs will be billed to the District's Oregon Department of Agriculture's Scope of Work (SOW) funds, if available.

The board approved participating in a Zero Foodprint grant program, limiting it to one project initially, and authorized the manager to sign related agreements.

Action: Olson motions for the Board to **approve that the District Manager sign the agreement paperwork authorizing staff to serve as a Technical Assistance Provider for the Zero Foodprint "Restore Grant," with participation limited to one (1) District client pending further review**, 2nd by Justice. No further discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-4 [Olson, Justice, Koch, Hart] Opposed-0).

B. Regional Conservation Partnership Program Signing Agreement

Sanchez displayed the agenda item brief and the Landowner Agreement, which is a contract between Sustainable Northwest, participating landowners, and the District in its role serving as a technical partner. Blank explained that the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) project planning phase has been underway for approximately one year and the project is now ready to move into site-preparation phase. Blank further noted that similar agreements will be required again for the planting phase of the project. Sanchez clarified that the District does not bear financial liability within these agreements which describe Blank's Scope of Work and timeline.

Sanchez requested Board approval to sign contracts for the remainder of the project.

Action: Hart motioned for the Board to **approve the District Manager to sign the RCPP project agreements now and throughout the duration of the RCPP contract**, 2nd by Koch. No further discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-4 [Olson, Justice, Koch, Hart] Opposed-0).

C. Grant Extension Requests

Sanchez displayed the agenda item brief.

1. CAG-20-24-034 – Corban Oak Release
2. CAG-20-25-016 – Hazelnut Sub Surface Irrigation

Koch noted no objections.

Action: Koch motions for the Board to **agree and sign both (2) of the extension requests as presented: (1) January 6, 2027 on CAG-20-25-016 – Hazelnut Sub Surface Irrigation and (2) March 31, 2027 on CAG-20-24-034 – Corban Oak Release**, 2nd by Justice. No further discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-4 [Olson, Justice, Koch, Hart] Opposed-0).

D. Grants Completed

Sanchez displayed the report.

1. CAG-20-25-013 Pasture Habitat Timber Berry Restoration
2. 20-24-022 Pocius Pond Restoration

8. Staff Regular Status & Step Increase

Sanchez displayed the action form for recommendation to approve the regular status and step increase for the Office Support & Accounts Payable Assistant, Ivy Chappelle.

Hart added that Chappelle's contributions are appreciated.

Action: Hart motions for the Board to **approve Regular Status & Step Increase for Office Support & Accounts Payable Assistant, Ivy Chappelle**, 2nd by Justice. No further discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-4 [Olson, Justice, Koch, Hart] Opposed-0).

Discussion continued regarding a hypothetical scenario in which a future Board member prevented a staff member's approval to Regular Status and Step Increase. Olson initiated the discussion, and Sanchez asked what remediation would be available. Justice noted that the matter would require further discussion and a recommended path forward. Sanchez suggested that possible options could include termination or a status period extension, and that only the "nay" voter could bring the question back to the Board for reconsideration.

9. Annual Meeting Resolution

The Board needs to redo the Marion SWCD's Annual Meeting resolution because of a delay in the previous resolution's posting in local newspapers of record. Reposting the notice will incur \$500-600 in costs.

The Annual Meeting for Marion Soil and Water Conservation District (Marion SWCD) will be held on June 3, 2026, at 6:30 pm, by Resolution #2026-04-01.

Action: Justice motions for the Board to adopt Annual Meeting Resolution 2026-04-01, 2nd by Koch. No further discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-4 [Olson, Justice, Koch, Hart] Opposed-0).

Adjourn: Vice-Chair Olson adjourned the meeting at 08:08 PM



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