



Soil and Water Conservation Commission Minutes

DATE	LOCATION	START TIME	END TIME
May 21, 2025	South Gilliam Fire Service Building 220 N Main Street, Condon, OR 97823	8:32 AM	12:30 PM
CHAIR	COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT	ABSENT	
Barbara Boyer	Jerry Ward, Tim Kerns, Al Hrynshyn, Robin Vora	Jim Bob Collins, Bob Webb	

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (ODA) STAFF PRESENT:

Kevin Fenn, Water Quality Program Manager; Sandi Hiatt, SWCD Grants Administrator; Eric Nusbaum, SWCD Operations Specialist; Karin Stutzman, SWCD Program Lead; Brent Smith, Water Quality Specialist. Via Teams - Rob Hibbs Monitoring Specialist; Nina Caldwell, Water Quality Specialist; Renita McNaughtan, Administrative Specialist (via Teams)

ADVISORS:

Andrea Kreiner, Oregon Association of Conservation Districts (OACD); Greg Becker, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS); Courtney Shaff and Brian Wolcott, Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board; Cynthia Warnock, Oregon Conservation Education Assistance Network; Carolyn Sufit, Oregon Water Resources Department; Marc DesJardin and Chris Scott, Oregon Department of Forestry, Steve Mrazik, Department of Environmental Quality.

VISITORS:

Whitney Rohner, Baker County SWCDs; Jed Arnold, Hood River SWCD; Misty Buckley, Klamath SWCD; Nickolas Peak, EPA Region 10; Jan Lee, OACD; Amanda Whitman, Sherman SWCD; Brenda Sanchez, Marion SWCD; Cassi Newton, Wheeler SWCD; Herb Winters, Gilliam SWCD; Nicholas Peak, EPA; Nicki Fisher, SDAO, Roger Lathrop, Gilliam SWCD;

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The regular quarterly meeting was called to order at 8:32 AM by Chair Barbara Boyer on May 21, 2025.

SOLICITATION FOR COMMISSIONER (REGION 7) ADVERTISED

Karin Stutzman noted that Region 7 position is open and solicited for active district board members. If interested, email an expression of interest to Karin Stutzman. Region 7 covers Wallowa, Union, Keating, Eagle Valley, Baker Valley, Burnt River.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Draft minutes of the February 18, 2025, regular quarterly meeting was presented for approval. **A motion was made by Al Hrynshyn to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Robin Vora. Motion passed unanimously.**

ADVISORS REPORTS

OACD – Andrea Kreiner – Grant Hub is up with over 100 registered users. Initiated a Google group for users from SWCDs, Watershed Councils, and Land Trusts to facilitate information sharing and project collaboration. Noted during this legislative session only a few districts were pertinent to legislation. It was not appropriate for OACD to be the main advocate for bill. Will make districts aware of legislation and create templates for districts to provide written and oral testimony. OACD will provide a letter of support of the districts, giving them a greater impact statewide. Planning annual

conference to be held in Pendleton, October 21-23. Election notice in July for OACD; three positions will be open. Staff compensation study for SWCDs.

NRCS – Greg Becker – expecting to hear about the national level for the reorg plan of our agency in a week or two. The main thing to expect is a staffing cap number and then a specific reorg plan can be put together. Went through a reduction in staff – opportunities for retirement, etc., currently at around 170 in staff. Despite a reduced staff, we are moving applications and putting contracts into obligation. Expect guidance to do IRA contracts in a few weeks. Farm Bill separate from IRA, we are on track with allocation from October.

OWEB – Courtney Shaff – board discussed 25-27 spending plan of \$8.7 million for SWCDs. Funding for organizational collaboration grants. Working through SIA restoration grant reviews. Working get the CREP TA grants offering out in June to be awarded by October. Planning a June NRCS TA grant. No more delays in receiving payments from NRCS, BLM, and NOAA. Pending insurance requirements, recommended by DAS, will be implemented in the future but will not be included the new Council or District grant agreements.

OSU – Sam Angina – report submitted read by Karin Stutzman. New permanent extension director – Dr. Chris Elliott; OSU has named a new provost – Dr. Roy Haggert. Extension faculty members received pause notices on grants from federal govt directly affecting their ability to work with stakeholders; about 60% of the grants have been reinstated. Range field day is May 29th in Prineville showcasing range science, juniper removal data for fostering rangelands, and grazing. Adding an extension technology position. All Ag extension vacancies will be held for refill until the 25-27 biennial budget from the legislature in late June.

OCEAN – Cynthia Warnock – report submitted and read by Karin Stutzman - Connect 2025 was in Florence in April with 320 registered with five tracks: administration and leadership, education and outreach, uplands, forests, water, and working lands. Reminding districts to update their directory on the OCEAN website. Poster contest – “May the Forest be With you Always” was the theme. Submitted state winners to national contest, sponsored by NACD, Elizabeth Burgess from Sherman County placed 2nd place in the grade 10-12 category. There will be a strategic planning meeting in July to help plan future endeavors and Connect in 2026.

OWRD – Carolyn Sufit – second draft of the IWRS (Integrated Water Resources Strategy) will be going to the Water Resourced Commission for review and approval on June 13th. Working through Division 512 rules with the RAC process. Reporting DEIJ plan to WRC in June; will outline priority initiatives for the period of 2025-2030. Plan is intended to serve as a roadmap to guide decision making to allocate resources effectively and align with the OWRD’s mission and vision for equity and core values. New funding opportunities available.

ODF – Marc DesJardin – in process of hiring a new state forester. Bill in legislature that would take that away from forestry and give to the governor’s office. Federal changes impacted them as well, such as the statewide agreement with NRCS, with grants being delayed. All other grant programs are still moving. The big theme this year is fire funding with bills in the legislature. Working with FSA with the Emergency Ratio program to sign up landowners for assistance. He will be taking a job rotation for four months and Scott may fill in or a written report will be sent.

DEQ – Steve Mrazik – update on the TMDL development as part of the temperature TMDL project – received an acceptance of request for extension of the timeline. Working on the Rogue and John Day TMDLs next. Snake River Hells Canyon temperature TMDL has been moved forward. Working on Willamette main stem as well as the Umpqua temperature TMDL with EPA. The EQC adopted the Willamette mainstem on May 8th. Next step is finalizing package and send to EPA. Working concurrently on Snake River temperature TMDL as well as a mercury TMDL. Team is packaging information for Coquille TMDL. There are, of course, other efforts that are ongoing around the state. Nonpoint source - submittals for CZARA and submitting to EPA and NOAA is in final stages.

WEATHER MODIFICATION IN OREGON - UPDATE

Eric Nusbaum, SWCD Operations Specialist – reviewed Oregon weather modification laws and techniques and noted other states that cloud seeding occurs. Reviewed the benefits of weather modification and noted that Oregon has no funding for cloud seeding. Two applications submitted recently, only one was approved for licensing.

Kevin Fenn – ODA Water Quality Program Update

Kevin Fenn attended the Western Source Water Protection Forum and encouraging districts to look at their source water and drinking water protection area to see if there are ways to get involved. Will start incorporating this into the Area Plan

and SIA selection process. Recruitments – LUB GWMA/IWRS Lead – new position with someone starting June 2nd. Connie Landis is new CAFO Division Director. SIAs for 2024 – Inland Rogue, Camas Creek, Salt Creek FAS (Focused Ag Solution), Hay Creek. For 2025, Tualatin and Yamhill (FAS) and two more to be announced. For the LUB GMWA, we are in the process of developing irrigated Ag Rules. We have a new AgWQ HUB for development of scopes of work to make reporting easier. TMDL Implementation Plans - Willamette Mercury annual report; Yaquina Implementation Plan; Powder Basin Community meetings. Created our Strategic Plan emphasizing compliance, partnerships, data use, and TMDLs. **Sandi Hiatt** – 2025 capacity grant for \$8.7M total with approximately \$202,000 per district. 60/40 split between scope of work and operations. New reporting HUB introduced.

CYBERSECURITY - SDAO

Nicki Fisher, SDAO Risk Management Consultant – SDAO recommends multi-factor authentication. To prevent loss – strong passwords, multi-faceted authentication, and backing up data. Establishing organizational policies will provide clear guidelines for online behavior. Provide training to staff regarding phishing; teach basic cybersecurity awareness. Secure organizational issued devices i.e., cell phones, tablets, etc. Update systems regularly. Use VPNs for remote workers, multi-faceted authentication, etc. Plan for a cyber-attack. Spot threats before they happen.

Working Lunch - SWCD Awards – Districts Involved with Wildfire Mitigation

Wheeler, Gilliam, and Monument SWCDs highlighted fire recovery efforts, virtual fencing, TA coordination, landowner outreach and mapping damaged areas. Awards were presented by Kevin Fenn for their work in this area.

SWCC MEMBERS REPORTS

Tim Kerns – he teamed up with Whitney on road trips to Wallowa, Union, and Malheur.

Al Hrynshyn – went to all his districts but one. Upper Willamette was approached by a large landowner to purchase a hazelnut orchard. Several staffing changes; conservation tech; financial administrator; and a new executive director soon.

Jerry Ward – no report

Robin Vora – Crook County SWCD secured a 3+ million-dollar sage grouse/juniper grant project

Barbara Boyer – urged public participation at OWEB. Noted FSA reporting on office staffing.

CALL FOR UPCOMING MEETING AGENDA ITEMS/NEWSLETTER CONTENT

Agenda:

- Review SWCC Strategic Plan at August meeting
- Presentation about prescribed burns
- Budget

Newsletter Content:

- Weather Modification
- Awards
- Cybersecurity
- Virtual Fencing

Next meetings at Yamhill SWCD, August 26-27, 2025; Pendleton October 23, 2025, after OACD.

Karin Stutzman expressed her appreciation of the great feedback ODA has been getting from Districts.

ADJOURNMENT: Meeting adjourned at 12:30PM.