



Draft Soil and Water Conservation Commission Minutes

DATE	LOCATION	START TIME	END TIME
October 16, 2024	Hood River Inn, 1108 East Marina Way, Hood River, OR 97031	12:59 PM	3:09 PM

CHAIR	COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT	ABSENT
Barbara Boyer (via Teams)	Jerry Ward, Bob Webb, Tim Kerns, Al Hrynyshyn, and Robin Vora (via Teams)	Jim Bob Collins

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (ODA) STAFF PRESENT:

Kevin Fenn, Water Quality Program Manager; Eric Nusbaum, SWCD Operations Specialist; Karin Stutzman, SWCD Program Lead, Sandi Hiatt, SWCD Grants Administrator; Victoria Binning, Initiatives Coordinator; and (via Teams) Renita McNaughtan, Administrative Specialist; Brent Smith, Water Quality Specialist (WQS), John Day Region; Olivia Jasper WQS, Mid Coast/S Willamette Valley Region; Amanda Robinson, Strategic Implementation Area Specialist; Nina Caldwell, WQS, Klamath Falls/Central Oregon Region; Shiloh Simrell, WQS, La Grande/NE Oregon Region; Rick Cowlishaw, WQS, N Coast/N Willamette Valley Region

ADVISORS:

Andrea Kreiner, Oregon Association of Conservation Districts; Courtney Shaff and Brian Wolcott, Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board; Carolyn Sufit, Oregon Water Resources Department

VISITORS:

Whitney Rohner, Baker Valley SWCDs; Kris Schaedel, Hood River SWCD; John Bellville, Illinois Valley SWCD; Kevin Porter, Polk SWCD; Cassi Newton, Wheeler SWCD; Scott Walker, Marion SWCD; Rhonda Black, Umpqua SWCD

MEETING PROCEEDINGS

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

THE MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER BY CHAIR BARBARA BOYER AT 12:59 PM. INTRODUCTIONS WERE MADE, RECOGNIZING MEMBERS PRESENT IN PERSON AND VIA TEAMS.

2. OATH OF OFFICE

- AL HRYNYSHYN WAS SWORN IN BY KEVIN FENN, OFFICIALLY REAPPOINTED TO REPRESENT REGION 4, WHICH INCLUDES EAST MULTNOMAH, CLACKAMAS, MARION, LINN, AND UPPER WILLAMETTE SWCDs. THIS REAPPOINTMENT REFLECTS HIS CONTINUED DEDICATION TO SUPPORTING CONSERVATION INITIATIVES WITHIN THESE REGIONS.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- THE DRAFT MINUTES FROM THE JULY 11, 2024, QUARTERLY MEETING WERE REVIEWED AND APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY AFTER A MOTION BY AL HRYNYSHYN, SECONDED BY TIM KERNs.

4. MEETING DATES FOR 2025

- DISCUSSION ON MEETING LOCATIONS AND DATES WAS POSTPONED UNTIL FEBRUARY 2025. SUGGESTED LOCATIONS INCLUDED CONDON, WHEELER, AND SALEM, WITH A PREFERENCE FOR A FEBRUARY MEETING IN THE SALEM AREA. VENUE DETAILS WILL BE DETERMINED LATER.

5. SWCD DIRECTOR ELECTIONS UPDATE

SANDI HIATT PRESENTED A DETAILED UPDATE ON THE 2024 DIRECTOR ELECTIONS. HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDED:

- 183 POSITIONS WERE OPEN, WITH 153 CANDIDATES FILING FOR ELECTION.
- MORE POSITIONS WERE AVAILABLE THAN USUAL DUE TO LEGISLATIVE CHANGES THAT REQUIRE DIRECTORS TO RESIDE AND MANAGE WITHIN THE ZONE THEY REPRESENT.
- THERE WAS A DISCUSSION ABOUT POTENTIAL LOOPHOLES IN THE RESIDENCY REQUIREMENT, SUCH AS USING A BUSINESS ADDRESS. ODA STAFF CLARIFIED THAT CANDIDATES MUST ATTEST TO THE ACCURACY OF THEIR RESIDENCY AND VOTER REGISTRATION UNDER PENALTY OF PERJURY.

CONCERNS WERE RAISED ABOUT VERIFYING ELIGIBILITY. WHILE CURRENT PROCESSES RELY ON ATTESTATION, ADDITIONAL CHECKS, SUCH AS VOTER REGISTRATION CROSS-REFERENCING, COULD BE CONSIDERED IF DISPUTES ARISE.

6. BOARD OF AGRICULTURE (BOA) RESOLUTIONS

TWO BOA RESOLUTIONS WERE DISCUSSED:

1. RESOLUTION 314 – FOCUSES ON PERMITTED USES ON EXCLUSIVE FARM USE (EFU) LANDS. DUE TO ITS COMPLEXITY AND CONTROVERSIAL NATURE, FURTHER REVIEW WAS DEFERRED TO THE FEBRUARY 2025 MEETING.
2. RESOLUTION 315 – SUPPORTS WORKING LANDS CONSERVATION EASEMENTS. THE COMMISSION AGREED TO DRAFT A LETTER OF SUPPORT TO ACCOMPANY ODA'S PRESENTATION TO LEGISLATORS, EMPHASIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF MAINTAINING AGRICULTURAL VIABILITY.

THE COMMISSION RECOGNIZED THAT BOA RESOLUTIONS SERVE AS TOOLS TO DEMONSTRATE BROAD SUPPORT FOR KEY ISSUES, ENHANCING ODA'S ABILITY TO ADVOCATE EFFECTIVELY.

7. ODA AG WATER QUALITY PROGRAM UPDATES

KEVIN FENN PROVIDED A COMPREHENSIVE UPDATE ON THE AGWQ PROGRAM'S CURRENT ACTIVITIES:

- WEATHER MODIFICATION APPLICATION: ODA RECEIVED AN APPLICATION TO CONDUCT CLOUD SEEDING IN UMATILLA COUNTY, AIMED AT INCREASING PRECIPITATION IN THE BLUE MOUNTAINS. A PUBLIC HEARING IS SCHEDULED FOR OCTOBER 30 IN PENDLETON. THE COMMISSION EXPRESSED INTEREST IN THE OUTCOMES AND POTENTIAL IMPLICATIONS FOR SIMILAR PROJECTS.
- IRRIGATED AGRICULTURE RULES: RULES SPECIFIC TO THE LOWER UMATILLA BASIN GWMA WILL BE DEVELOPED IN 2025 AND IMPLEMENTED BY 2026 TO ADDRESS NITRATE CONTAMINATION.
- TMDL (TOTAL MAXIMUM DAILY LOAD) INTEGRATION: KEVIN EXPLAINED THE ROLE OF TMDLS IN WATER QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND HOW SWCDS ASSIST LANDOWNERS IN MEETING THESE TARGETS THROUGH VOLUNTARY PRACTICES.

ODA EMPHASIZED ITS DUAL ROLES AS A REGULATOR AND PARTNER, COLLABORATING WITH SWCDS TO IMPLEMENT PLANS AND PROVIDE COMPLIANCE SUPPORT.

8. STRATEGIC PLANNING UPDATE

THE STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE AGWQ PROGRAM FOCUSES ON A SINGULAR GOAL: PROTECTING WATER QUALITY. KEY WORK GROUPS INCLUDE:

- COMMUNICATION: ADDRESSING THE NEED FOR CLEARER OUTREACH ON WATER QUALITY RULES AND THE ROLES OF SWCDS.
- STAFFING CAPACITY: EVALUATING CURRENT RESOURCES AND IDENTIFYING GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES.
- DATA MANAGEMENT: IMPROVING TOOLS TO TRACK PROGRESS AND ENHANCE DECISION-MAKING.
- PERFORMANCE METRICS: ESTABLISHING MEASURABLE OUTCOMES TO MONITOR EFFECTIVENESS.

THE PLAN ALIGNS WITH ODA'S OVERARCHING STRATEGIC GOALS AND IS EXPECTED TO BE FINALIZED BY THE END OF 2024, WITH A DRAFT PRESENTED TO THE COMMISSION IN FEBRUARY 2025.

9. DISTRICT ROUNDTABLE TOPICS FROM OACD ANNUAL MEETING

ANDREA KREINER REPORTED ON KEY CONCERN RAISED BY DISTRICT MANAGERS:

- LIABILITY COVERAGE: MISUNDERSTANDINGS ABOUT CRIME ENDORSEMENTS IN LIABILITY POLICIES LED TO A RECOMMENDATION FOR DISTRICTS TO SEEK CLARIFICATION FROM INSURERS.
- OWEB SCOPE OF WORK CONCERN: DISTRICTS EXPRESSED CHALLENGES WITH SCOPE DEFINITIONS, AUDIT EXPENSES, AND MATCH REQUIREMENTS. THESE ISSUES WILL BE ADDRESSED THROUGH WEBINARS AND UPDATED GUIDANCE.
- FUTURE ROUNDTABLES: MANAGERS EXPRESSED INTEREST IN CONTINUING ROUNDTABLES AT CONFERENCES AND REGIONAL MEETINGS TO FOSTER COLLABORATION.

10. ADVISOR UPDATES

OWEB (COURTNEY SHAFF):

- DISCUSSED CHANGES TO GRANT PROCESSES, INCLUDING NEW METRICS FOR CULTURAL RESOURCE REVIEWS AND TRIBAL ENGAGEMENT.
- HIGHLIGHTED UPCOMING PROGRAMMATIC AGREEMENTS WITH NOAA AND INITIATIVES TO REDUCE MATCH REQUIREMENTS FOR CERTAIN GRANTS.

OWRD (CAROLYN SUFIT):

- PROVIDED UPDATES ON GROUNDWATER ALLOCATION RULES AND BASIN PLANNING EFFORTS.
- ANNOUNCED PLANS TO ENHANCE CUSTOMER SERVICE AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT.

OACD (ANDREA KREINER):

- REPORTED ON LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES, INCLUDING SPANISH-LANGUAGE PESTICIDE EDUCATION AND MEDIA OUTREACH.

11. UPCOMING AGENDA ITEMS AND NEWSLETTER CONTENT

FEBRUARY 2025 AGENDA:

- UPDATES ON CLOUD SEEDING, RESOLUTION 314, AND DISTRICT CAPACITY GRANTS.
- STRATEGIC PLAN REVIEW.

NEWSLETTER CONTENT:

- ANNOUNCEMENTS OF AL HRYNYSHYN'S REAPPOINTMENT AND HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE OACD CONFERENCE

MEETING ADJOURNMENT

THE MEETING CONCLUDED AT 3:09 PM, WITH MEMBERS EXPRESSING APPRECIATION FOR PRODUCTIVE DISCUSSIONS AND DETAILED UPDATES.

EXPANDED CONTENT HIGHLIGHTS

THE SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION COMMISSION (SWCC) MEETING COVERED A WIDE RANGE OF TOPICS, REFLECTING THE COMMISSION'S DEDICATION TO WATER QUALITY, AGRICULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY, AND LOCAL DISTRICT SUPPORT. DETAILED DISCUSSIONS EMPHASIZED THE IMPORTANCE OF CLEAR COMMUNICATION, LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY, AND COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS AMONG STAKEHOLDERS. THE INCLUSION OF ALL PARTICIPANTS' ROLES ENSURES COMPREHENSIVE RECOGNITION OF CONTRIBUTIONS AND EXPERTISE.

Meeting Recording Available Upon Request