



Soil and Water Conservation Commission Minutes

DATE	LOCATION	START TIME	END TIME
October 23, 2025	Wildhorse Caino 46510 Wildhorse Blvd, Pendleton OR 97801 & Virtual	12:30PM	3:00PM
CHAIR/ VICE CHAIR	COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT	ABSENT	
Barbara Boyer Tim Kerns	Tim Kerns, Al Hrynyshyn, Jerry Ward, Robin Vora, Jim Bob Collins, Bob Webb	Barbara Boyer	

ATTENDEES:

Andrea Kreiner, Oregon Association of Conservation Districts
Andrea Mann, Umatilla SWCD
Bryan Wolcott, Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board
Carolyn Sufit, Water Resources Department
Cassi Newton, Wheeler County SWCD
Eric Nusbaum, Oregon Department of Agriculture
Karin Stutzman, Oregon Department of Agriculture
Kate Harper, Jefferson County SWCD
Kevin Fenn, Oregon Department of Agriculture
Makenzie Oakes, Oregon Department of Agriculture
Marc DesJardin, Oregon Department of Forestry
Olivia Jasper, Oregon Department of Agriculture

Priya Rajarapu, Oregon State University
Rick Cowlshaw, Oregon Department of Agriculture
Robb Hibbs, Oregon Department of Agriculture
Sandi Hiatt, Oregon Department of Agriculture
Sarah Rife, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
Steve Mrazik, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality
Terry Preeg-Riggsby, Network of Oregon Watershed Councils
Tom Stragham, Umatilla SWCD
Victoria Binning, Oregon Department of Agriculture
Whitney Rohner, Baker County SWCD

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The regular quarterly meeting was called to order at 12:30PM by Vice Chair **Tim Kerns**, who presided in place of Chair **Barbara Boyer**, who was unable to attend.

APPROVAL OF AUGUST 2025 MEETING MINUTES (ATTACH A)

Tim Kerns introduced a motion to approve the August meeting minutes. **Al Hrynyshyn** moved to accept the minutes as presented, and **Jerry Ward** seconded the motion. Tim called for a vote, and all were in favor. The motion carried unanimously.

ADVISOR REPORTS

Carolyn Sufit (OWRD) reported on current Water Resources Department initiatives. She highlighted a statewide effort to improve reporting of static water level measurements for groundwater permit and certificate holders, noting that this data is critical for monitoring groundwater declines under new rules adopted last year. Notices will be sent in 2026 to non-reporting permit holders to capture more data prior to the next irrigation season. Carolyn also mentioned ongoing rulemaking efforts following the recent legislative session, including proposed fee increases for water rights transactions, streamlined processing methods, and the development of the new Deschutes Water Bank.

Robin Vora (SWCC) asked how the Water Bank will address water measurement and transfers between irrigation districts. Carolyn explained that the process is still being developed with the Deschutes River Conservancy, beginning with a small pilot in Deschutes County involving a few hundred acres through the Central Oregon Irrigation District. The program requires charter approval by the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, ODFW, and the Water Resources Commission, which meets December 11–12th, with the charter presentation expected on December 12th. Carolyn added that OWRD will reopen its Well Abandonment, Repair, and Replacement Fund (WHARF) this fall, with several million dollars available to assist landowners experiencing dry wells.

Whitney Rohner (OACD) noted OWEB plans to revise the rules for capacity grants. These changes are expected to take place during the 2029–2031 biennium, and SWCDs should remain engaged throughout the process. **Andrea Kreiner** added that it will be important to ensure the revisions do not negatively impact the districts.

Brian Wolcott (OWEB) provided an update on current grant opportunities, including Partnership Collaboration Grants due October 24, Partnership Technical Assistance Grants due November 3, and Working Lands Conservation and Easement Grants due November 13. Open solicitation grants for restoration, technical assistance, and engagement are due February 2. He also shared that rulemaking will begin in early November to update the capacity grant program and create new rules for SWCD capacity, with opportunities for input through spring 2026. The process is expected to take effect in 2029–2031 and may result in the program being renamed the Project Development Grant Program.

Marc Desjardin (ODF) provided an update noting that the appointment of a new State Forester has been delayed, with Kate Skinner continuing as Acting State Forester until the position is filled. He also shared that the Small Forestland Grant Program is now open for applications, closing in November, with projects due by June 30, 2027.

Sarah Reif (ODFW) introduced the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife’s Habitat Division, which was reestablished three years ago. She highlighted current priorities, including in-stream flow protection, cold-water stream restoration, and addressing invasive annual grasses in sagebrush habitats. She added that the Private Forest Accord Grant Program will open for applications in mid-November, and the Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund will open a new grant opportunity in mid-December.

Steve Mrazik (DEQ) provided an update noting progress on Oregon’s Coastal Nonpoint Source Control Plan, which was submitted to EPA and NOAA this summer for approval. The plan, developed with DLCD and other partners, aims to restore federal 319 funding that supports on-the-ground water quality projects, with final approval anticipated in 2026. He also shared that DEQ has begun updating its statewide Nonpoint Source Program Plan, a five-year effort led by coordinator Ian Gardner, and highlighted ongoing TMDL development projects in the Rogue, John Day, and Snake River–Hells Canyon basins, with public review and comment expected in 2026. Additional work is underway in the Coquille watershed and the Hells Canyon mercury TMDL.

ODA WATER QUALITY PRESENTATION

Kevin Fenn (ODA) gave a presentation on ongoing work within ODA’s Water Quality Program. ODA has completed the Integrated Water Resources Strategy and agencies are now coordinating on implementation, with Nick Sirovatka serving as ODA’s point of contact.

Kevin highlighted several key initiatives, including work on source water protection by integrating drinking water source areas into Strategic Implementation Area planning. He provided an overview of the Lower Umatilla Basin Groundwater Management Area, where elevated nitrate levels have led to new rules intended to reduce groundwater nitrate concentrations below seven milligrams per liter. The rule package will be filed with the Secretary of State next week, followed by a 49-day public comment period and hearings in mid-December, with adoption targeted for early 2026. The strategy focuses on outcome-based approaches and fertilizer management plans tailored by crop type, with phased compliance requirements for larger irrigated operations.

Kevin also introduced ODA’s new Reporting Hub, which will centralize SIA and scope-of-work reporting, reduce back-and-forth data requests, and support ten-year reporting efforts with consistent statewide metrics. Kevin concluded by

outlining ODA's continued coordination with DEQ under the Nonpoint Source Memorandum of Agreement, ongoing collaboration on TMDL implementation, and upcoming SIA work scheduled through 2026 that will include new remote assessment tools to prioritize areas for outreach and conservation practices.

REVIEW THOMPSON CREEK FOREST MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR ILLINOIS VALLEY SWCD (ATTACH B)

Bob Webb (SWCC) shared background on the district's 170-acre Thompson Creek property, originally deeded to the district in 1958. He explained that the board is required to present the management plan to the Commission for comment before any activities occur. Bob noted that the district hopes to use the property as a site for youth engagement and hands-on conservation learning opportunities.

Karin Stutzman (ODA) commented that ODA can provide a copy of the meeting notes for the district's records to document that the Commission upheld its responsibility to provide comment.

AI Hrynshyn (SWCC) commented that the plan presents a strong opportunity for environmental education, noting that while Oregon has a statewide mandate for environmental education, it remains unfunded and largely depends on local schools and communities. He encouraged collaboration with local schools or forestry programs and supported the plan's inclusion of climate-resilient species as an important consideration.

Jerry Ward (SWCC) commented that he is in support of the plan.

SWCC MEMBERS REPORTS

Bob Webb (SWCC) reported that the Illinois Valley SWCD is working with a design company on website accessibility and continues to participate on the OWEB Small Grant Team for Region 6. He noted an irrigation modernization project in Spurs Flats, ongoing work on the Illinois Valley Water Quality Monitoring Program with support from the Columbia Environmental Research Center, and progress on the Thompson Creek Woodland Conservation Tract. The district is also engaged in the North Valley Strategic Implementation Area and preparing to apply for an Oregon Parks Recreational Trails Program grant.

AI Hrynshyn (SWCC) shared that he recently attended East Multnomah SWCD's 75th anniversary celebration in Portland, noting strong attendance and well-organized presentations. He highlighted an OPB article featuring East Multnomah SWCD and a magazine story recognizing collaborative restoration work in Deadwood that included positive mention of Siuslaw SWCD. The district has begun strategic planning with consultants and expects to finalize a property purchase decision at its November board meeting. He added that the Eugene Water and Electric Board committed \$1 million in funding and in-kind support for restoration projects near its main water intake.

Robin Vora (SWCC) shared that Hood River District Manager Heather Hendrickson has departed, with Jed Arnold taking her place as the district manager. He noted Jefferson and Deschutes County SWCD's involvement in recovery work following the Flat Fire and suggested using data from the Oregon Employment Department to help identify low-income neighborhoods that could benefit from fuels-reduction funding.

2026 MEETING DATES

Karin Stutzman (ODA) proposed the following 2026 meeting schedule: February 19 (12–4 p.m., virtual half-day); April at CONNECT or sometime in May; August 18–19 at Umpqua SWCD; and November 5 in Lincoln City, immediately following the OACD Conference. The Commission raised no objections to the February date, and **Tim Kerns** confirmed it as approved. The Commission will wait for ODA confirmation on April dates. **Robin Vora** noted he is unavailable in August but advised not to reschedule on his account. The November 5 meeting will be held at the Salishan Coastal Lodge in Gleneden Beach.

Next Meeting Content

Include time at each SWCC meeting to discuss SWCD Capacity Grant Rule Making Process

ADJOURNMENT: Meeting adjourned at 2:12 PM

APPROVED: 04/02/2026

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