



*Coos Soil & Water Conservation District
371 North Adams
Coquille, OR, 97423 Phone 541-396-6879*

Coos Soil and Water Conservation District
Regular Meeting Minutes-
February 27th, 2014
(Approved March 27, 2014)

Regular monthly meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by Vice Chairman, Charlie Waterman.

Board members present: Charlie Waterman, Dan Pierce, Steve Scheer, Beau Allen, Ernie Newton

Absent board members: Empty zone 5, Chairman Mark Villers.

Staff: Caley Sowers

Guests present: Beth Pietrzak (ODA), Eric Nusbaum (ODA), John Fandel (Coquille Valley Accounting), Chris Claire (ODFW)

Introductions: All members were familiar with each other, making introductions unnecessary. A sign-in sheet was passed around and all those present signed their names.

7:00 PM-7:02 PM Regular Minutes:

Charlie asked if anyone had any corrections or changes to make to the January draft minutes. Steve had one small correction under the Weed Board Report. Staff made a note to make the edit. **Ernie then moved to approve the January monthly meeting minutes. Dan Pierce seconded the motion. All approved, the motion passed.**

7:02 PM-7:05 PM Treasury Report: - John Fandel- John Fandel said that he didn't really have anything new to report since the last meeting. Steve wanted to point out that district staff has been consistently running over-budget on the amount of time spent doing 'District Operations' tasks versus 'Scope of Work' and that this might be part of the reason why we are under-using our Scope of Work funds. The current policy is that staff devote no more than 5 hours per week to District Operations. Charlie commented that part of the reason for this has been the fact that the new employee hiring and training process, and the amount of time it takes for a new staff member to acquaint themselves with and learn the administrative aspect of the position, are all time consuming tasks that fall under District Operations. Staff has expressed concerns about this over-usage of District Operations before, but the lack of landowner projects thus far has made it difficult to fill time with Agricultural Water Quality-related work. With that said, **Steve moved to approve the February Treasury Report; Ernie seconded him. All voted in favor, the motion passed.**

Agency Reports:

NRCS - N/A

CREP- N/A

FSA- N/A

ODF&W (7:05 PM-7:10 PM) - Christopher Claire- Chris introduced himself briefly as it had been a while since he had attended any Coos SWCD meetings. He provided a report of his work in habitat conservation as a fisheries biologist for Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. Recent activities included a site visit to a logging access road that leads to a small wood lot up off of Ten-Mile Lake. Chris's role was to work with State Forestry and the landowner to help him determine what size of pipe he needs to put in, and whether the stream was a fish bearing stream or not, and what that means to the landowner as far as fish passage requirements. On the subject of wildlife and predator control, he mentioned that they had brought in 33 bobcats earlier that day, and that ODFW is still actively controlling the elk population by shooting, in order to protect pasture land, but will be curbing that practice a little later into this year as the cows become pregnant and it becomes a social concern. The fish Crew has been out sampling on Winter Lake with nets and has caught some Coho, actually

out in the fields as well as in the canal systems. They have been doing that every other week. He reported that he was also recently on Shady Creek looking for Coho, but most of them were gone; it has been a very hard year for them due to the low flows. He also added that the agency is trying to manage some federal budget cuts and so employee travel time will be slightly more limited, although Chris will still try to be available for Coos SWCD staff, should he be needed. Beau asked a question about why he never sees anyone fishing on the Middle Fork of the Coquille, but lots of people fish the South Fork and the main river. Chris explained that this is mostly because ODFW does not release hatchery fish on the Middle Fork, so it may seem that there are less fish in the river there than on the South, East, and North Forks, because there are hatchery programs on those rivers. He clarified that there are still fish in the Middle Fork, but they are all wild fish. Also, because of this the Middle Fork is catch and release only, and many fisherman like to be able to take their catch home with them.

OSU-Extension - N/A

Weed Board (7:10 PM-7:20 PM)-Steve Scheer- Steve mentioned Woody Lane's upcoming Forages and Pasture Management Class and encouraged any interested board members to attend. He expressed dismay as to why ODA would not allow the board to use ODA funds to pay for this director training, but suggested that the board use District Funds to pay for any of the Directors' tuition, should they decide to take the class, and said that the cost would be \$125 for District Staff plus an additional \$70 for each board member (Steve later called the office to clarify this error; the price is actually \$125 for District Staff as well as \$125 for each Director who wants to attend). The class is going to be very educational for everyone and especially beneficial to those looking to improve their hay and forage output, and well worth the price. **Charlie moved that the board use District Operations funds to pay the tuition for any director who wants to attend Woody Lane's class. Steve seconded the motion. All in favor, the motion passed.**

Eric Nusbaum wanted to clarify one point here. He explained that although ODA does not allow the Board of Directors to use Scope of Work funds to pay for director training, they are allowed to use the District Operations funds. Both sets of funds are from ODA. Staff added that this is an understandable mistake because of the way the District is used to commonly referring to Scope of Work funds as 'ODA funds' and the District Operations funds as either 'District Op.' or 'SWCD funds,' when both are actually ODA funds.

Steve added that the Cost share program is still open, and application forms are available at the District Office. He also thought that the Weed Board would be discussing holding a class on calibration of herbicide applicators so that the people using the herbicides would be educated on how to properly apply them.

CWA (7:20 PM-7:25 PM) - Ernie Newton- Ernie read the project report given to him by Kelly Miles of Coquille Watershed Association (see attached CWA report). His report provided updates on current active projects including Yankee Run, SF China Flats, and Woodward Creek, project development, and recent news of the CWA's activities.

Staff Reports:

WTS (7:25 PM-8:30 PM-) Staff had a couple of potential projects to propose to the board as well as updates on two projects (see attached Staff Report). She reported on the results of her meeting at CWA with Kelly Miles, Dawn Weekly, Chris Claire, and Jeff Jackson concerning Johnson Creek fish passage, and that the next phase would involve a stream assessment, which would consist of walking the stream with Chris Claire to examine and record all of the fish passage barriers and water quality issues. Staff wanted to make sure that she had the board's approval to actively participate in the in-stream assessment. **Steve moved to proceed forward with the Johnson Creek Assessment. Beau seconded the motion; all in favor, the motion passed.**

Staff had a site visit scheduled for the following Saturday with landowner James Waterman in the focus area, which she hoped would lead to another potential grant project.

Ken Hershey, a landowner on Lower Four-mile who had contacted Coos SWCD the previous month to inquire about assistance on a piece of property he was leasing, had decided that he was no longer interested in assistance but would continue to keep the District in mind, should he ever need help on an agricultural water quality related issue.

Another landowner, Bret Clarno, who had worked with Coos SWCD in the past, had purchased another piece of property and was looking for assistance with some fencing and planting, and possible bridge placement/replacement. A site visit is to be scheduled.

Another potential project, the Bramble Creek Riparian Planting and Fencing Project, had been presented at a previous meeting but the board had wanted to know more information. This small grant project had been

brought to Coos SWCD by Jeff Jackson of ODFW. Jeff could not attend the meeting, so Chris Claire provided a short explanation of the project's goals and objectives. The project involves some riparian fencing and planting on a landowner's property in the Green Acres area, south of Coos Bay. Several maps and aerial photos were provided. **Beau moved to allow Coos SWCD staff to work in partnership with ODFW on the Bramble Creek small grant project. Steve seconded the motion; all in favor, the motion passed.**

Staff brought up the Soils Test Accuracy Research potential project with Woody Lane that Steve had mentioned at the January Meeting. Beth Pietrzak added that she had spoken with Heather and others at ODA and would be working to find out more information as to how the District needs to proceed forward with getting a monitoring project approved by ODA.

Staff reported on her efforts toward planning a water-quality related educational work and finding a speaker to present on a topic that would be of interest to local landowners. Details of the workshop such as location, dates, times, length, and ideas for topics were discussed.

Staff also gave an update on the status of the Decaires's Manure Management Project, and the landowner's efforts to meet with ODA's requirements. **Beau moved to approve the small grant application for submission to the small grant team, subject to Charlie's final review and approval. Dan seconded the motion; all in favor, the motion passed.**

Old Business:

8:30 PM-8:45 PM

- a) **Transfer of District Funds to Umpqua Bank-** Staff detailed several different account options available with Umpqua Bank. Based on the small benefits to be gained by transferring the funds, and the uncertainty of fees and charges that might apply in the future, the board agreed to leave the funds in the State Treasury. **Beau moved to keep the District funds in the Oregon State Treasury account. Dan seconded the motion; all in favor, the motion passed.**
- b) **ODA funds used as match to schools-** Staff had inquired about this matter in a phone call to Heather Richenbach, ODA Regional Grants Officer, and had been advised that this was not allowable per OWEB rules. Steve offered to see if something could be done through the Weed Board instead. Charlie thought that there was a misunderstanding and that it might still be possible if the idea was proposed and worded differently, to meet ODA and OWEB guidelines, and still provide funds to the schools of the winning Guerin Essay writers to educate students about water quality. Eric suggested that the District might be able to buy some water quality educational materials, or to pay for transportation of students out to a tour of a water-quality related project, rather than just handing over a lump-sum cash award. Cash awards are considered to be the same as grants, and not allowed. He thought it would be best to compose a letter about what we intend to do, and run it by Heather. Most likely, the funds will have to go towards a District program for the students, to be implemented by the school.
- c) **Employee Handbook Chapter 2 Edited Draft Approval-** Charlie asked whether staff had enrolled in a health insurance plan. Staff said that she had mailed in an application to Cover Oregon, but had not yet received a reply. Charlie wanted to make sure that staff had acknowledged that she was required to have health insurance. **Staff said that she would make note in the minutes that she acknowledges she is required to have health insurance and will enroll in a private health insurance plan before March 15th.**

Steve wanted to add a clarification in the minutes for the Employee Handbook section 2.4, under Leave Accruals: Vacations; since the District has a staff of only one, situations could arise in the future where projects and workload may make it difficult for the Board to grant approval for the employee to take two weeks off from work. He wanted to point out that the board recognizes this, and will work with staff so that the employee is not, for example, always forced to take vacation time in December. Eric suggested that this be added not just in the minutes, but also in the employee handbook as well. The employee handbook states that accruals will not be in excess of fifteen days of the employee's vacation leave balance, and must be used in the year accrued, or else will be forfeited. Steve wanted to modify this to state that the excess limit will be forfeited unless, due to workload constraints and prior board approval, staff obtains an extension from the board. But, he added, the leave must be used the following year. With that addition in place, **Steve moved to approve the Chapter 2 Employee Handbook edited draft. Ernie seconded the motion. All in favor, the motion passed.**

- d) Charlie brought up an issue he had raised at last month's meeting regarding water rights and stock watering. Stock watering regulations state that, "when the stock drink directly from a separate water source and there is no diversion or other modification to the source, that is an exempt use." Also, it states that "the use of water for stock watering from a permitted reservoir to a tank or trough, and under certain conditions, the use of water pipe from a surface source to an off-stream watering tank." Charlie wanted to know what the 'certain conditions' were that were mentioned in the regulations. He was concerned because of his own experiences concerning some small reservoirs on his property that been there prior to 1992. He had originally been told that the ponds were exempt, and he had been allowed to file and obtain the water rights to the ponds, which he did. He received a final order the following year stating that the water was available for use as described in the permit (livestock watering). Now, over ten years later, he has been issued a letter stating that his permit required him to complete the development of his water use by October 2002, and that his permit has been cancelled and he's no longer allowed to use that water and must pay a fine for each pond. Since then, Charlie has had difficulty getting in contact with anyone at Water Resources Department, including the Water master, who can explain the letters he received. Chris Claire looked at the letters which Charlie had brought to the meeting, and thought that this action was the result of some sort of clerical error. Beth said that she would like to have copies of the letters so that she could read and further understand the problem.

New Business:

8:45 PM-10:00 PM

- a) **ODA Beth Pietrzak and Eric Nusbaum speak with the board about ways and ideas to use SOW funds-** Beth and Eric both offered some useful ideas as to how the District can spend down their SOW funds, so as to avoid having to return a large sum of money to ODA at the end of the biennium. Some of those ideas included: allowing staff to participate in other agencies' site visits, as a way of shadowing them on the job and at the same time providing technical assistance as part of our Scope of Work; paying different rates for SOW versus District Operations work; providing a health insurance stipend to staff; and when workload permits, hiring a second part-time employee to handle the administrative work. Eric also pointed out that the SOW funds are not meant to be used for on-the-ground projects but rather should be looked at as funding for pre-implementation and project development. He also suggested that, because of our current low workload of projects, the District should take on eligible projects as they come; when there is a greater number of projects to choose from, the District can then be more selective about those which it chooses to devote staff time to. Another suggestion was to authorize staff to work some overtime. **Beau moved to allow staff to work 20 hours a month overtime, until the end of May. Steve seconded the motion; all in favor, the motion passed.**
- b) **Employee Handbook Chapter 3 Review- Ernie moved to table the review and edit of Chapter 3 of the employee handbook until next month's meeting, due to time constraints. Beau seconded the motion; all in favor, the motion passed.**
- c) **Public Comment on agenda items-** No public comments.
- d) **Safety Report-** Nothing to Report
- e) **Next Meeting:** March 27th, 2014, at 7 p.m. at the Coos County Annex/Owen Building Large Conference Room.
- f) **Additional Business to Address:** Charlie mentioned that on a letter from the WRCA, under their friends and supporters, Dawn Weekly's name had been listed with Coos SWCD and that her name can stay but the Coos SWCD needs to be removed.
Staff brought up the registration costs for the upcoming Connect 2014 Training Conference. Eric suggested that this training would be highly valuable and if ODA could require districts to send their employees to Connect, they would. **Steve moved to allow Caley to attend Connect, under the condition that she take the most relevant course track. Dan seconded the motion, all in favor, the motion passed.**
- g) **Director's Signatures Needed:** No signatures were needed.
- h) **Meeting Adjourned at 10:00 PM**

Ratified by the Board of Directors:

Signature of the Chairman

Date

Submitted by:

Caley Sowers

Date