



**Marion Soil and Water Conservation District (MSWCD)
Board of Directors November 6, 2024, Monthly Minutes**

6:35 PM to 9:21 PM

Facilitator: Chair Olson

Recorded by: Brenda Sanchez

Approved: 12-04-24

Directors & Record of Attendance		Associate Directors
At Large 1-Peggy Hart	Present	Angela Plowhead
At Large 2-Scott Walker	Absent	Leland Hardy
Zone 1-Vacant	Vacant	
Zone 2-Vacant	Vacant	
Zone 3-Darin Olson (Chair)	Present	
Zone 4-Dave Budeau (Secretary-Treasurer)	Present	
Zone 5-Rochelle Koch (Vice-Chair)	Present	
Staff		Guests
Chelsea Blank		Catherine Alexander
Becky Pineda		Les Bachelor
Brenda Sanchez		Derek Godwin
Cesar Zamora		Rob Hibbs
		Olivia Jasper
		Emily Justice
		Noah Justice

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).

- 1. Olson-Call to Order:** 6:39 PM
- 2. Announcements -** None
- 3. Agenda Additions or Changes**
 11. Eliminating the Education and Education Specialist Position
 12. Partner Grant Change in Agreement Request

Minutes

1. Public Comment

Catherine Alexander presented a slideshow about the successful summer camps organized by her organization, Straub Outdoors, which aimed to educate young people about natural resources. She announced that the organization would be closing down after 22 years due to rising operating costs, but a new LLC, Red Alder Group, would continue some of the programs.

2. District Snapshot

a. **Election Update** Sanchez provided an update on the election results, with Hart winning reelection for position At Large 1 and Plowhead being the director elect for Zone 4. Write-In candidate has not been confirmed yet for Zone 2.

b. **Staff Report**

Chelsea Blank - Natural Areas Conservation Planner. Blank discussed several ongoing projects and initiatives. She mentioned the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife deferral program for wildlife habitat, which is set to restart with a deadline for new enrollments on April 1st. Blank also discussed the recent discovery of Emerald Ash Borer in the Butte Creek area and the need for collaboration with other SWCDs. She mentioned her participation in the Forestry Short Course and Pest Detection Trainings. Blank also talked about the Geographic Information System team's efforts to streamline data collection and analysis. Blank explained the slow process of signing on to the Wildfire Recovery RCPP with Sustainable Northwest. She expressed her eagerness to start site visits and contracting by winter. Blank also provided updates on the plan for the Natural Resources Committee to address catastrophic events, including recovery processes. She suggested that financial resources could be used for disaster-impacted landowners to deal with the recovery process.

3. Treasurers Report September 2024

Budeau presented the Treasurer's report for September, which showed that expenditures were under the 25% expected for the first quarter of the fiscal year. On the revenue side, you can see there's a couple of things that exceed what we expected; previous year's levy taxes received and dividends from the interest rates on our investment account.

Action: Koch motioned that the Board **accept as presented the September 2024 Treasurers Report**, 2nd by Hart. No further discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-4 [Olson, Koch, Hart, and Budeau], Opposed-0).

4. Board Meeting Minutes – October 10, 2024

Budeau stated he reviewed the minutes and returned them to Sanchez with some minor edits. Sanchez added that Budeau and I agreed on how the meeting minutes would be handled. This is Draft 1, but the goal is to include Draft 2 in the packet moving forward when time allows.

Action: Koch motioned that the Board **accept the October 10, 2024 Board meeting minutes**, 2nd by Hart. No further discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-4 [Olson, Koch, Hart, and Budeau], Opposed-0).

5. United States Department Agriculture (USDA) and Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS) Report

Bachelor begins his last report before retiring by announcing that Jarrod Seamen is leaving NRCS to take the position of state Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQUIP) lead. He also reported on the success of the EQUIP contracting program, the robust budget for the EQUIP program, and the upcoming Oregon Grass Seed Association meeting. He also mentioned the upcoming dairy convention and the need to find a replacement for his role. Lastly, he discussed the potential changes in the farm bill and the importance of technical service providers in handling contracts.

6. Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) Strategic Implementation Areas-Ag Solutions

Sanchez began with a brief history of the District's involvement with Strategic Implementation Areas (SIA), noting that the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) is introducing an opportunity to establish a new SIA. Sanchez shared that, following discussions with staff, they are prepared to take on this initiative.

Rob Hibbs, Monitoring Specialist for ODA, presented the new SIA approach to the Board, highlighting Oregon State University's (OSU) role in supporting monitoring efforts. Derek Godwin attended as OSU's representative for the area. Hibbs delivered a PowerPoint presentation titled "Willamette Mercury TMDL and Focused Ag Solutions" (TMDL: Total Maximum Daily Loads), explaining the mercury concerns in the Willamette Valley and their connection to agriculture.

Hibbs detailed that mercury contamination, primarily from air deposition, enters streams via soil erosion and surface runoff. As part of the SIA initiative, ODA is prioritizing parameters like total suspended solids (TSS), with a statewide goal of reducing TSS in streams by 75%. Olson inquired whether the 75% reduction pertained to soil or fish, and Hibbs clarified it is for streams.

Hart asked whether TSS monitoring involves a focused plan or a watershed-wide approach. Hibbs explained that the approach involves establishing baselines where data gaps exist. Budeau questioned whether sampling occurs during winter storm events, and Hibbs confirmed that TMDL requires storm event data. He further emphasized that all water quality concerns, including stream temperature, must be addressed.

Hart also asked if data would be tracked in relation to improved agricultural practices. Hibbs affirmed that the goal of this approach is to evaluate the interconnected impacts of these practices. To reflect this shift in strategy, ODA has rebranded the SIA initiative as “Focused Ag Solutions” to emphasize watershed-level solutions rather than individual tax lots.

Olivia Jasper from ODA elaborated on the enforcement of Area Rules within the SIA framework, emphasizing the importance of partnerships with commodity groups and conservation agencies to leverage resources and enhance efficiency. Jasper also provided additional details about the SIA initiative.

Directors and guests discussed the presentation, during which Hibbs shared that approximately \$130,000 in SIA grant funds is available to support technical assistance, outreach, and monitoring. He noted that other Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs), such as Polk and Yamhill, have already committed to similar projects, leaving one remaining opportunity. Applications are due by April 2025.

The Board directed Sanchez to coordinate with staff to prepare an SIA proposal for presentation at a future Board meeting as schedules allow.

7. February 5, 2025, Annual Meeting Resolution

Action: Hart motioned to **adopt resolution no. 2024-11-06; a resolution for establishing the timing of the Marion SWCD’s annual meeting whereas, Oregon Revised Statute 568.582 states that by resolution of the board, by giving due notice, the board of directors shall call an annual meeting of the landowners in the district and present an annual report and audit: now therefore be it resolved that the annual meeting of the Marion Soil and Water Conservation District shall be held February 5, 2025, at the Marion Soil and Water Conservation District, 408 N 3rd Ave, OR and by video and teleconference. Be it further resolved that the Board of Directors of the Marion SWCD authorize the District Manager and staff to plan and execute all necessary tasks to plan and present the annual meeting.** 2nd by Budeau No further Discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-4 [Olson, Koch, Hart, and Budeau], Opposed-0).

8. Recommended Step Increases

Sanchez recommends that two employees, Calkins and Lovett, receive a step increase in pay. Sanchez completed their annual Performance Evaluation and after

two consecutive good performance evaluations they are each eligible for a step increase in pay.

Action: Koch motioned that the Board **approve step increases for Calkins and Lovett and take effect on their hire date, 2nd** by Budeau. No further Discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-4 [Olson, Koch, Hart, and Budeau], Opposed-0).

9. New Public Meeting Law Required Training

Sanchez shared the response from the Administration Committee regarding the required Public Meeting Law trainings. The Committee recommended that the District Manager arrange these trainings every other year following elections, either by providing opportunities internally or scheduling sessions that all Directors can attend. They further suggested that all personnel, including Associate Directors and employees, participate in the training.

Sanchez presented the updated rules, emphasizing that public entities with expenditures exceeding \$1 million are now required to ensure compliance with the training mandate. Each Director must complete the required training during their term, and the District is responsible for tracking these trainings and submitting records to the Oregon Ethics Commission (OEC).

She noted that the trainings must be approved by the OEC and highlighted the availability of a new 90-minute approved training option. Sanchez concluded by stating that she would provide additional information once the training schedule becomes available.

10. Yamhill SWCD IGA-Pesticide Stewardship Partnership (PSP) Grant

Olson voiced concerns about the pesticide stewardship project, questioning its overall effectiveness and the potential for regulatory complications. He suggested prioritizing the issue of neonicotinoids and collaborating with crop consultants to develop more effective solutions. Olson also proposed creating mini wetlands adjacent to fields to absorb chemicals and reduce pesticide levels in water.

The Directors discussed the value of engaging crop consultants to encourage better practices and ensure compliance with Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) requirements. Zamora, a Conservation Planner on staff, supported the idea of partnering with industry consultants to enhance outreach and foster stronger collaboration.

The conversation also touched on the potential tension between pesticide use and water conservation compliance. Budeau reflected on the project, expressing

support and emphasizing that it remains a voluntary, outreach-focused initiative consistent with District's Strategic Plan. Plowhead raised concerns, pointing out that the voluntary nature could be questioned if mandates are introduced. Budeau clarified that while the District's leadership of the project is voluntary, the project itself is not tied to mandates.

Olson reiterated his belief that the District could develop a stronger project by working more closely with crop consultants rather than relying solely on user groups. The Directors continued discussing ways to improve the project.

Zamora reassured the group that the project remains focused on outreach related to Integrated Pest Management (IPM). He added that Oregon State University (OSU) appears committed to partnering with Yamhill SWCD on the initiative, even as Marion SWCD opts not to participate.

Action: Budeau motioned that the **District does not participate in the intergovernmental agreement with Yamhill SWCD and Marian SWCD to implement the PSP project and instead direct staff to develop an alternative project that works with crop consultants and others**, 2nd by Hart. No further Discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-4 [Olson, Koch, Hart, and Budeau], Opposed-0).

Olson distributed a copy of a letter drafted by Sanchez, at the Board's direction, in response to an email from ODA regarding the PSP program and the District's involvement. The Board had expressed concerns about the email's tone, finding it intimidating, and felt a response was necessary to address the issue. After reviewing the letter, the Directors agreed to approve and send it.

Action: Koch motioned to **approve the letter response to ODA regarding the PSP email**, 2nd by Hart. No further Discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-4 [Olson, Koch, Hart, and Budeau], Opposed-0).

11. Partner Grant Agreement-Request to Negotiate

Portland State University, a recipient of a Partner Grant, requested amendments to the language in the grant agreement and proposed negotiating several changes. Sanchez explained that the District uses a standard boilerplate agreement for all grant recipients. When consulting with the Grants Coordinator about the agreement's history, it was noted that the agreement has been in use for some time, though its origins are unclear.

PSU specifically requested modifications to the indemnity clause, which would require legal review and approval, as well as adjustments to certain timing requirements outlined in the agreement.

The Directors discussed the merit of the request and concluded that the District should not revise its standard grant agreement, as all previous recipients have signed the agreement without requesting changes.

Action: Koch motioned to **not negotiate the agreement and offer the award as per our agreement.**, 2nd by Budeau. No further Discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-4 [Olson, Koch, Hart, and Budeau], Opposed-0).

Olson asks the Board to direct Sanchez to review our grant agreement since it has been around for a while without review. Board agrees. Sanchez will add that to the list

12. Elimination of the Communication and Education Specialist Job Description

Sanchez explained that the Board is responsible for approving all job descriptions and roles. With the current position now vacant, she proposed eliminating it and creating two new positions: Communication and Outreach Specialist and Environmental Education Specialist.

Sanchez emphasized that this change aligns with the strategies and activities outlined in the District's Strategic Plan and is necessary to meet those goals. She noted that this structure reflects how the District previously operated, with two separate positions. The roles were consolidated under former District Manager Amy Boyd, who combined them and promoted Heath Keirstead into the unified position.

Action: Hart motioned that **the Communication and Education Specialist Job Description be eliminated**, Koch 2nd by Budeau. No further Discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-4 [Olson, Koch, Hart, and Budeau], Opposed-0).

13. Conservation Assistance Grants (CAG)

- a. Completed Grants-No discussion. Report only.

14. Administrative Committee

- a. Vehicle Operation, Maintenance, and Safety Policy

Sanchez displayed the revised draft Vehicle Operation, Maintenance, and Safety Policy. The Admin Committee reviewed and recommends adoption. The policy is now fully comprehensive and provides guidelines. Sanchez reviewed the policy

revisions. Sanchez led a discussion about the district's vehicle policy, focusing on the use of personal vehicles, mileage reimbursement, and the addition of new policies. Directors agreed to prefer the use of district vehicles over personal ones but allowed for exceptions. They also discussed the need for employees to carry proof of insurance and meet state standards when using their own vehicles for district business. The policy was amended to include a lower mileage reimbursement rate for employees using their own vehicles when district vehicles are available. Directors also discussed the prohibition of weapons and firearms in district vehicles and the requirement for employees to complete defensive driving and safety training. The updated policy was approved by the team.

Action: Hart motioned that the Board **approve the proposed and amended Vehicle Operation, Maintenance, and Safety Policy, 2nd** by Budeau. No further Discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-5 [Walker, Olson, Koch, Hart, and Budeau], Opposed-0).

0. Education Committee

No Report. Next meeting November 19, 2024

0. Natural Resource Committee

No Report. Next meeting November 13, 2024

Adjourn: Chair Olson adjourned the meeting at 9:21 PM



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