






**Marion Soil and Water Conservation District (MSWCD)  
Natural Resources Committee Meeting  
Wednesday, February 12, 2025, 9:00 am to 10:30 am**


HB2560 requires that all Oregon public meetings held by a governing body of a public body, excluding executive sessions, must provide to members of the public an opportunity to access and attend the meeting by telephone, video or other electronic or virtual means. This meeting will be held by video conference and by telephone.

-  **Link to Video Conference:** [Zoom Link Here](#)
-  **Meeting Call in Number:** 1 253 215 8782
- Meeting ID:** | **Passcode:** 838 1782 7407 | 507254
-  **Staff Contact:** Cesar Zamora, [cesar.zamora@marionswcd.net](mailto:cesar.zamora@marionswcd.net)

**Agenda**

**Chair:** Call Meeting to Order, Agenda Changes & Approval

Item #	Topic	Presenter	Time
0	Approval of Minutes	Chair	5 min.
1	Updates	Staff	5 min.
2	Conservation Grants - 2025-2026 Budget	Ortiz	15 min.
3	Special Projects Grant Application for Hazelnut Cover Crop Side Discharge	Zamora / Ortiz	10 min.
4	CAG Applicant Policy	Sanchez/ Ortiz	25 min.
5	Conservation Cover Incentive Discussion	Ortiz/Pineda/ Zamora	20 min
6	OrCAN Soil Health Network	Zamora	10 min.
7	Next meeting date	All	5 min.
	<b>Meeting Adjournment</b>	Chair	

 Marion Soil and Water Conservation District complies with the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) and does not discriminate based on race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status. If special physical, language, or other accommodations are needed for this meeting, please advise the District Manager at 503-391-9927 as soon as possible, and at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting.

## Agenda Brief

Item #	Brief	Action
0	Committee Meeting Minutes for November 18 meeting	Review, approve.
1	Program updates by the staff.	No action needed
2	Conservation Grants – 2025-2026 Budget Recommend funding levels for the 2025-2026 Budget for CAG, SPG, Cover Crop, Partner Grants	Review, Discussion, Recommend
3	Special Projects Grant Application for Hazelnut Cover Crop Side Discharge Complete Evaluation of application, review and discussion, make recommendation for funding	Evaluation, Discussion, Recommend
4	CAG Applicant Policy The board of directors has asked the NR Committee to review the current CAG applicant policy and provide recommendations to ensure funds are fairly allocated and individuals are unable to exceed the 5-year maximum.	Review, Discuss, Recommend
5	Conservation Cover Incentive Discussion Discuss introducing a conservation cover incentive modelled after Cover Crop Assistance Grant	Discuss, determine next actions
6	OrCAN Soil Health Network OrCAN has asked Marion SWCD to participate in the Soil Health Network as a pilot regional hub. Cesar will present the proposed regional hub network, OrCAN's expectations for pilot hubs, and the resources OrCAN is making available for regional hubs.	Review, Discuss, determine next actions
7	Next Committee Meeting Committee determine the next date for committee meeting.	Discuss.

## Meeting Minutes Approved as of March 12, 2025

Committee Members	Attendance		
	Present/Absent	Staff	Guests
Cesar Zamora	Present	Brenda Sanchez	Scott Walker
Chelsea Blank	Present	Kassi Roosth	Peggy Hart
Nik Ovchinnikov	Absent	Sarah Hamilton	Unidentified
Lee Hardy	Present	Susan Ortiz	'Meadowlark'
Rochelle Koch	Present	Becky Pineda	

Item #	Minutes	Action/ Vote Count
	<p>Meeting called to order at 9:04 am.                      Koch asked if we need to appoint a new Chair for the committee. The committee consensus was to wait until the next meeting when Nik Ovchinnikov is present to decide on a new Chair. Koch requests that Zamora act as the Chair for this meeting. Zamora agreed.</p>	<p><b>No action needed.</b></p>
0	<p><b>Approval of Minutes</b></p>	<p><b>Koch moves to approve minutes from November 18, 2024 committee meeting – Hardy seconds. All in favor, none opposed. Motion passes three to zero.</b></p>
1	<p><b>Updates –</b>                      Blank updates on the RCPP wildfire recovery project; we are starting work on this officially now. Pineda updates on ag water quality, free plant giveaway in SIA on March 7 at Coolidge McClain park in Silverton. Anyone in the district can come and receive plants.                      Ortiz – in the middle of CAG cycle. Applications are under staff review. With recommendations brought to the April board meeting.                      Hamilton – native plant online sales end this week, pick up is at the end of the month.</p>	<p><b>No action needed</b></p>
2	<p><b>Conservation Grants – 2025-2026 Budget</b>                      Ortiz presented the budget overview for the District conservation grants including the Conservation Assistance Grant at \$350k, Special Projects Grant at \$20k, Cover Crop Program at \$45k, and Partner Grant. Unallocated funds will be carried over in the</p>	<p><b>Koch moved to recommend to increase the Cover Crop Program by \$15,000 for the 2025-2026 fiscal year. Zamora seconds. All in favor, none</b></p>

budget. Anticipated allocation this fiscal year is \$250k, compared to \$259k last year. In 2022-2023, \$101k was allocated due to staff turnover, supply shortages, and financial uncertainty post-pandemic. During 2020-2021, more time for landowners due to the pandemic resulted in more project applications, allowing \$328k to be allocated by shifting funds from other programs. Discussion was had about if a majority of the CAG funds go towards small or large projects, to which Ortiz replied that the majority of these projects are small, but the large ones do tend to allow for more conservation on the ground since they often provide 100% matching funds. There was also discussion about the Cover Crop Program, which had received additional funds in this last fiscal year from the CAG budget. The payout has been increasing for this program each year, now that we have more staff capacity to do outreach on this program. This led to a deficit of available funds in this program for applicants in the 2024 cycle, which leads to the question of raising the budget for the Cover Crop Program for 2025. Hart also noted that funds were taken out of the Cover Crop Program and shifted to the CLEAR grant budget last fiscal year. There was discussion about the Special Project Grants, as to whether this program should continue or be ended. Walker (guest) is concerned that this program is too flexible, which leads to a lack of accountability in the use of District funds. Hardy noted that this program is intended to be different than the other grant programs and thus should be more flexible.

**opposed. Motion passes three to zero. Recommendation will be brought to the Board to keep CAG, SPG, and PG the same budgeted amounts for the 2025-2026 fiscal year.**

---

**Special Project Grant application for Hazelnut Cover Crop Side Discharge.**

3 Discussion: Blank said that she was the only evaluator who voted to fund only with conditions because of the need for more information on how this would work in hazelnut harvest. Hardy clarified how the harvester machines pick up the nuts in the grassed rows, and that moving the grass clippings from the harvest area to the bare soil area where the harvester doesn't pick up nuts as much will allow for easier harvest along with the soil benefits. Blank accepted this as adequate clarification to address any concerns with the application and changed her vote to fund. Hart asked if the purchase of

**Koch moves to recommend this application to the Board for funding, Hardy second, all in favor non opposed. Motion passes three to zero.**

equipment is allowed under the District grant policy, to which Blank replied that that rule doesn't apply to the Special Projects Grant. Walker (guest) had questions about the landscape of the project area, and concerns that the equipment is being used to run up and down the steep slope rather than with the contours. Zamora asked for a motion to recommend this SPG application for funding to the Board.

---

#### **CAG Applicant Policy**

Background: The Board requested discussion on the CAG applicant policy due to concerns with ownership of property, determining whether applications and funding caps should be based on individuals or entities, and the potential for inequitable funding with District dollars.

Hart asked what defines an 'entity' under our grant limitation policy, how can we ensure applicants do not exceed funding limitations, should the application language be changed to specify the status of the applicant, and should we model the application language after the NRCS policies.

Discussion included that Walker (guest) and Plowhead (not present) were the Board members to bring this request to the committee, as well as to the Admin committee. Walker suggested that funding should be based on individual applicants rather than entities. He also noted that staff should ensure that applicants do not exceed funding limits. Hart noted that NRCS language does differentiate between individuals and entities and Sanchez shared her screen to show the NRCS EQUIP application language as an example. Sanchez suggested focusing on the concerns of the Board and creating a solution to minimize risk without adding significant administrative workload. The goal is to better clarify applicant status to address concerns. Koch expressed concerns with applicants also being the vendors of their own projects, citing potential conflicts of interest. Hart agreed. Hart asked Ortiz for further explanation of the District grant limitation policy pertaining to this issue. Ortiz explained that the District follows the grant limitation policy, asking for taxpayer ID numbers from entities and confirming business registration during the LOI application. This ensures compliance with Board approved policy. Ortiz further explained that the application asks how the applicant is

4

**Committee discussion to defer this topic to the Admin committee.**

structured based on a list of entity types. She suggested that the issue arises when one landowner applies under multiple entities such as leasing to others. Each applicant with a unique ID number is eligible for funding, and these cases are tracked in the CATS software used by staff. Hart suggested changing the language in the application to address due diligence concerns regarding conflicts of interest. Ortiz stated that it is the Board's decision, but the application doesn't currently include a disclaimer on conflict of interest, as the District strives for equal treatment of all applicants. Sanchez, Ortiz, Hart, Koch, and Walker continued discussion on whether additional applicant information provided to the Board would help with concerns, if the evaluation committee is vetting enough of this information already, and that the grant application never guarantees funding. Hardy made a motion to table the conversation until the next meeting. Walker suggested transferring this topic to the Admin committee instead of the Natural Resources Committee, to which Koch and Sanchez agreed. Sanchez confirmed that the Admin committee will create a report of recommendations on this topic for Board approval. If the Board defers back to the committee after that, then the discussion may continue.

---

**Conservation Cover Incentive Discussion lead by Pineda.**

5 Background: the Board requested a presentation of a new program similar to the Cover Crop Program, focused on establishing permanent vegetative cover on working lands as this has been a popular practice in CAG projects, and address similar concerns as cover crops. Program goals include promoting year round soil health building, decrease sedimentation into waterways, and help landowners meet new EPA mitigation requirements. Three practices will be used for this program, including: #327 Conservation Cover, #386 Filter Strip, and #393 Field Border. Discussion: Pineda requested feedback from committee about deciding on rate and payment amounts for this program. Koch initially thought that this would be rolled under the current Cover Crop program, Pineda clarified that it would require a name change, application change, and termination requirement change if that were the case. Walker requested clarification on the difference between

**Hardy moved to recommend to add \$40,000 to budget for a new Conservation Cover Pilot program. Zamora seconded, all in favor non opposed. Motion passes three to zero.**

the field border and the filter strip, and suggested that these two practices be combined to simplify the program. Hardy explained that the field border is on the flow, while the strip is off the flow, and this requires these to be used as distinct practices. He also emphasized the importance for the District to follow NRCS standards for our policies. Zamora suggested adding incentives for landowners who use multi species and checks to ensure producers are not using program to plant crops. Koch expressed support for this program as a separate program from the Cover Crop program, and suggests that rather than increasing the Cover Crop budget, we allocate funds to this new program instead. There was further discussion among Hart, Koch, Walker, and Pineda about whether to increase the Cover Crop budget or allocate funds to this new program. Walker expressed the preference in deferring to the Board for the transfer of funds to meet program demands, rather than allocate funds in the budget. Sanchez and Hart expressed the need to allocate funds to the budget to make the approval process easier for the budget committee and for planners during the application cycles. Discussion was had over how much money to add to this new program budget, and where the funds should be moved from.

---

**OrCAN Soil Health Network –**

6	The committee ran out of time to discuss this item. It will be added to the next committee meeting agenda.	<b>No action needed, discussion</b>
---	--	-------------------------------------

---

**2025 Committee Meeting Schedule**

Regular meeting dates and times TBD  
Ideally the committee will keep their regular meeting time for the second Wednesday of the month, but there needs to be confirmation of that by the new Board appointed committee member, Ovchinnikov. Zamora will follow up with an email to get consensus from committee members about scheduling the next meeting.

---

**Meeting adjourned at 11:07 am.**

---