



*Coos Soil & Water Conservation District
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Coos Soil and Water Conservation District
Regular Meeting Minutes-
January 23rd, 2014
(Approved February 27, 2014)

Regular monthly meeting was called to order at 7:03 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: Barbara Grant (Curry SWCD, CREP), Beth Pietrzak (ODA), Amy Wilson (NRCS), John Fandel (Coquille Valley Accounting)

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.

7:03 PM-7:04 PM Regular Minutes:

Charlie asked if anyone had any corrections or changes to make to the November or December draft minutes. Other than a space holder on the December Meeting Minutes indicating the need for a name to be entered, there were no corrections. **Steve moved to approve the November and December monthly meeting minutes. Dan Pierce seconded the motion. All approved, motioned passed.**

7:00 PM-7:07 PM Treasury Report: - John Fandel once again mentioned the fact that the District still has a large amount of ODA funds remaining, and we are already half way through the year. He also brought up the issue of the transfer of District money from The Oregon State Treasury to a local bank. He said there are 6 or 7 banks which are qualified to take government money, and Umpqua Bank is one of those qualified banks. John also pointed out that the State Treasury account pays about a half of a percent interest rate, but has a \$10 monthly fee. Before transferring the funds to a different bank, inquiries should be made about the fees and interest rates. With that in mind, Charlie entertained a motion to investigate the interest rates and fees, and also that the transfer must be authorized through the accountant and the Treasurer. Steve pointed out that since the board had already passed a motion to move the funds that motion would need to be amended or rescinded so that a new motion could be made in its place. **Ernie moved to rescind the November 21st Motion that had been passed regarding the transfer of Coos SWCD funds to Umpqua Bank. Dan seconded the motion; all in favor, the motion passed.** Then, **Ernie moved that the board authorize that the State Treasury Account funds be transferred to Umpqua Bank, with all of the appropriate forms being filled out, and also upon investigation and consideration of favorable interest and maintenance fees. These funds will only be transferred with the signature powers of the District Accountant, and the District Treasurer, and authorized through a board motion. Beau seconded the motion; all in favor, the motion passed.**

Agency Reports:

(7:15-7:25 PM) **NRCS** - Amy Wilson (see attached report handout)

Amy announced that NRCS would be holding its Annual Local Work Group Meeting on February 13th and an agenda for the meeting was provided on the back of her report. The goal of the Work Group Meeting is to identify natural resource concerns. Once a natural resource concern is identified, NRCS can then develop a strategy to address the concern. With a strategy, they can then ask for funding, as opposed to receiving funding first and then planning projects to meet their target funding. Amy pointed out that as there is still no farm bill in effect, many things are still up in the air regarding their funding for this year. In the meantime NRCS is still working with landowners, accepting applications, and running the EQUIP program and what most people think

of as the K-line Strategy (it's actually a strategy for livestock and water management). They just reviewed and ranked three applications from landowners for K-line. NRCS shares the same focus area with Coos SWCD (the Myrtle Creek watershed). She also brought up a new program; the Energy Initiative, which might have some potential for dairy farmers; and the Conservation Stewardship Program, which will have more stringent requirements than the CSP program, which is now coming to a close with only 9 more payments left to go. Beth Pietrzak asked a question about what sort of assistance NRCS is offering in the Myrtle Creek area, and Amy clarified that the Coquille Tribe has taken over some forestry lands from BLM and has already signed on with NRCS for a certain amount of work. NRCS has been holding back on landowner outreach until they know what kind of funding they are going to have. Tribal forestry lands are their primary focus in that area, and projects with landowners on non-Tribal lands will depend on the amount of funding allotted to that focus area and adjoining lands.

(7:25 PM-7:40 PM) **CREP**- Barbara Grant (see attached report and handouts, and letter)

Barbara provided an explanation in the provided handout packets of what CREP is, as well as where the CREP funding comes from. She explained that CREP (Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program) is a rental program, based off of the Conservation Reserve Program, under which a landowner chooses to give up a section of land for contracts of 10-15 years, during which time they fence off the land and allow for restoration practices such as riparian plantings. Often this is land that would be less productive as pasture or field. The landowner then receives payment in exchange for giving up the use of that land. At the end of the contract period, the landowner can return to using the land for pasture or crops, or they may be able to renew their contracts if maintenance has been kept up and there is further conservation that could be accomplished. Barbara provided an example of a typical CREP project on one of her handouts (see attached report). The minimum area of land rented in CREP contracts is 35 feet on either side of a stream, and the maximum allowable, without taking into account some special circumstances, is about 180 feet. In some cases, the minimum requirements may also be raised.

Charlie asked who determines the definition of adequate fencing and adequate weed control on CREP contracts. Barbara clarified that whatever plants were planted by CREP must be maintained so that they are allowed to grow, and invasive species such as blackberries should be reasonably controlled. Complete eradication of grass and weeds is not necessary, but the plantings must be preserved and protected from encroaching weeds as well as from livestock. Charlie had another question about water rights; he pointed out that landowners are required by law to have a water right covering any kind of water control. His question was whether or not CREP assists people in protecting their water rights. Barbara explained that if a landowner has an irrigation right and chooses not to irrigate that strip of land under the CREP contract, and the amount of land is significant, (50 acres or more), then the landowner may qualify for an increased rental rate, meaning they would receive more money for their land. There is also a program through OWEB which pays landowners to lease their unused water back to in-stream until such time as they want to use it again. Barbara added that before fencing off waterways under CREP, they would always want to make sure that the landowner has some other way to water his livestock; in some cases landowners may be eligible for small grants to help install off-channel watering troughs. She added that they simply wouldn't want to fence off the creek without making sure that the livestock had some way of getting water. Charlie replied that this still does not address the water master's requirement. Barbara supplied that, in her past experience, the water master's requirement has not been a big issue when the water is being used strictly for livestock watering. Charlie wanted to know if this is in writing somewhere. Beth Pietrzak added that it is in writing that livestock watering is an exempt use, and offered to look it up and provide the document.

FSA- N/A

ODF&W- N/A

OSU-Extension - N/A

Weed Board – (7:40 PM-8:00 PM)-Steve Scheer

Steve reported that the Herbicide Cost Share Program is coming up once again and will be open during all of March, and he should have the new forms ready and available before the next meeting. Wild Rivers Coastal Alliance has authorized a grant of \$15,000 to OSU for research into a substance known as wood vinegar; Frank Burris, Oregon State University faculty member and OSU Extension Service agent for southwest

Oregon, will be conducting some field trials in Bandon to determine the effectiveness of wood vinegar on gorse. Steve explained that wood vinegar is a homeopathic treatment for invasive species that has been used successfully in Asia for centuries as a natural herbicide. The substance is created through a process which involves the heating of woody plant materials in an airless container to extremely high temperatures, up to 500 degrees Celsius. If it proves successful, it could potentially create a new industry in which farmers dispose of their gorse by selling it to a wood vinegar production operation, thus offsetting the costs of gorse control on their property.

Steve also announced that the Weed Board has authorized a partnership with Coos Watershed Association. Coos Watersheds has an ongoing annual program to fight gorse, purple loosestrife, and Japanese Knotweed. They had applied for a grant and asked the board for some matching funds, of which the Weed Board agreed to provide \$4000. Their grant has not been approved yet, but they should know within the next month or so.

Steve's recent conversation with a member of F.A.N.G. brought to attention a significant problem with the accuracy of soil analysis tests. The analysis results from soil samples taken from the same site vary widely from one testing lab to the next, indicating a huge problem with test accuracy. The results of these analyses could potentially trigger regulatory responses, so it is important to be able to rely on their accuracy. F.A.N.G. leader Woody Lane has said that he could properly document the problem for a flat fee of \$2000. Steve suggested that there is likely to be multiple agencies interested in this research and wanted to know if the Coos SWCD could use ODA funds to partially sponsor his work, as it would be very beneficial to the agricultural community and relevant to water quality as well, since soil tests help farmers and ranchers determine the amount and types of fertilizer needed. Beau pointed out that anyone with a CAFO permit has already been regulated by the results of (possibly inaccurate) soil analysis, because they take soil samples to determine on which fields the landowner with the CAFO can apply manure or other fertilizers. Beth added that the problem goes much further than local labs, and may even be an issue on a nation-wide level. Barbara also added that it's an important issue because it could be causing landowners to waste significant amounts of money applying fertilizer they don't need.

CWA (8:10 PM-8:15 PM) - Ernie Newton- Ernie read the project report given to him by Kelly Miles of Coquille Watershed Association (see attached CWA report). His report included updates on all of the CWA's current projects: North Fork Restoration, Cunningham Creek, Yankee Run, Woodward Creek, China Flats, and an update on the Gorse Action Group.

ODA (8:30 PM-8:45 PM) - Beth Pietrzak- Beth brought up the ODA compliance case with Heather Lane Stables, for which the Coos SWCD is currently finishing up a small grant application. Beth pointed out that the landowner still needs to give ODA a date for complete removal of the manure fill off of the hillside. Beau interjected that that project seems to have been going on a long time. Caley explained that the small grant application is more or less completed but she is waiting on some water quality information from the DEQ to support her request for grant funds, and also working with the landowner to be sure that all the fill gets removed. There has been no enforcement issued from ODA, as of yet, but the small grant will not cover any of the costs of removal; only a "solution" to help manage future manure. If an enforcement is issued, it will make the landowner ineligible for the small grant, and the work will have gone to waste. Beth added that the only reason the landowner has been allowed so much time to take care of the problem is because she has been cooperative in working with Coos SWCD to address the problem. Beau pointed out that it still seems unfair that one landowner be treated with so much leniency when others, especially those with CAFO permits like himself, are so heavily and strictly regulated by ODA.

At the mention of CAFO, Beth also brought up an upcoming opportunity for training. She was planning on riding along with Chris Anderson, the CAFO inspector, on his inspections of two dairy farms in North Bend, and wanted to invite Caley along for the experience. The board agreed that she should go.

Staff Reports:

WTS (8:15 PM-8:30 PM) Caley Sowers- Caley provided a report handout and gave a general overview of her work over the past 2 months (see staff report). Her most important news was of the possibility of a Johnson Creek Project, involving multiple landowners, and in partnership with CWA and ODFW. There are many potential hang-ups with the project involving landowners who own property and water rights, as well as a political undertone, but the project could be a very large one, involving hundreds of thousands of dollars and potentially opening up to 5 miles of stream to the ocean, reintroducing Coho salmon (Johnson Creek was historically Coho salmon habitat) and also benefitting several legacy cranberry farms in the area. While the

focus of the project is more on fish passage than water quality, and the scope of the project itself makes it more suitable for the CWA; there may be opportunities along the way for Coos SWCD to assist CWA with aspects of the project that do relate to water quality, such as riparian planting. Caley's question for the board was whether or not they wanted her to pursue the project further by meeting with CWA and ODFW to discuss their interest in the project. The board agreed that she should look into it further.

Old Business:

8:45 PM-8:50 PM

a) **Employee Handbook Chapter 1 Edited Draft Approval- Ernie moved to approve the Chapter 1 Employee Handbook edited draft. Dan seconded the motion. All in favor, the motion passed.**

b.) Steve asked whether or not Mark Villers had ever finished Dawn's final evaluation. This had been brought up at a previous meeting, but Mark had been out of town so much, staff doubted that he had done it yet. It was suggested that if he did not have time to do it himself, he could ask Charlie. Staff made a note to call and remind Mark in the morning.

New Business:

8:50 PM.-9:30 PM

a) **Employee Handbook Chapter 2 Review-** Charlie had written his edits and changes to Chapter 2 of the Employee Handbook on his board packet copy, and provided it to staff for her use in editing the chapter. Steve also had a few suggestions, such as increasing the amount of vacation time staff earns after one year of employment. Staff made note of all the changes.

b) **Relevant News Articles-** The board discussed some of the recent news articles that Charlie had asked to include in the board packets (see attached articles).

c) **Public Comment on agenda items-** No public comments.

d) **Safety Report-** Staff reported that there is an upcoming SDAO training opportunity on Jan 25th in Coos Bay. Staff was willing to go but there would be some travel inconvenience since the event is on a Saturday, and staff would have to stay on the coast over the weekend rather than going home to see her family as usual. Charlie suggested she check out some of their webinar trainings instead.

e) **Approval of printing costs of New SWCD Guidebooks-** (2 min) **Steve moved to approve the printing of 7 copies of the new SWCD guidebooks. Ernie seconded the motion. All in favor, the motion passed.**

f) **OACD and NACD membership dues, SDAO annual conference.** The board was in agreement that they wished to continue not paying the membership dues. No board members planned to attend the SDAO conference.

g) **Next Meeting:** Feb. 27th, 2014, at 7 p.m. at the Coos County Annex/Owen Building Large Conference Room.

h) **Additional Business to Address:** No additional business.

i) **Director's Signatures Needed:** No signatures were needed.

j) **Meeting Adjourned at 9:30 PM**

Ratified by the Board of Directors:

Signature of the Chairman

Date

Submitted by:

Caley Sowers

Date