



*Coos Soil & Water Conservation District
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Coos Soil and Water Conservation District
Regular Meeting Minutes-
March 27th, 2014
(Approved April 24, 2014)

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

Board members present: Charlie Waterman, Steve Scheer, Beau Allen, Ernie Newton, (Dan Pierce arrived 1 hour late)

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

Staff: Caley Sowers

Guests present: Manette Simpson (ODA), John Fandel (Coquille Valley Accounting), Jeff Jackson (ODFW), Barbara Grant (CREP), Amy Wilson (NRCS)

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 (Amy and Dan both arrived later in the meeting).

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

Charlie asked if anyone had any corrections or changes to make to the February draft minutes. Steve had one small correction of a type error. Staff made a note to make the edit. **Beau then moved to approve the February monthly meeting minutes with the correction. Ernie seconded the motion. All approved, the motion passed.**

7:02 PM-7:25 PM Treasury Report: - John Fandel- John Fandel provided a spreadsheet handout with an example of some possible changes that would help the Coos SWCD to spend down its entire budget in one fiscal year. He emphasized that the spreadsheet represented only an example, and not a proposal. He pointed out that the example supplied would spend down all of the remaining funds but would not leave room for overtime, hiring a second employee, or if employee insurance rates go up. John also brought up the current remaining ODA funds, in the amount of approximately \$20,000, which the District needs to spend down by the end of this fiscal year (June 30th, 2014). He projected that at the current rate, the District would most likely only spend around \$7000 of those funds, leaving an excess of \$14,000 for the second year of the biennium. This would most likely result in the District not receiving the 4th Quarterly Payment of \$12,500 from ODA. John suggested that the District combine several of the suggestions that had been made at the February meeting by Beth Pietrzak and Eric Nusbaum, such as increasing staff's rate of pay, adding a health insurance stipend, hiring a second person, or authorizing more overtime.

Steve asked Manette what was the limit on the amount of remaining funds left over at the end of the first half of the biennium, before ODA would withhold the 4th Quarter payment. Manette did not know the answer for certain, but staff recalled having been told that if a District has too many remaining funds at the end of the third quarter, that District will not receive the next payment because ODA expects them to spend down the money they already have before sending more. At the end of the biennium, all remaining funds must be returned to ODA.

Steve also pointed out that the difference in terminology used by ODA and the Coos SWCD to refer to the two pools of money can cause confusion. The two pools of money being ODA funds (which are referred to by ODA as Scope of Work funds) and District Operations funds. He suggested that in the future, ODA funds should be referred to simply as Scope of Work funds, in keeping with the terminology used by ODA. John Fandel said this could easily be changed.

Charlie wanted to bring the board's attention back to the matter of spending down the budget and asked if the board wanted to approve an increase in staff's pay. Staff mentioned that as she had now been employed for

six months, her probationary period was now up. Steve then suggested providing a stipend for health insurance. The matter was discussed for several minutes. **Steve moved that the board approve a healthcare stipend of \$250, to be added onto Staff's paycheck each month, retroactively applicable to Jan 1st, 2014. Beau seconded the motion; all in favor, the motion passed.**

Returning to the matter of an hourly pay rate increase and end of their employee's probationary period, the board discussed how the situation should be handled. Steve pointed out that the board needed to decide whether to keep or replace her prior to approving any increases in pay, and this decision should be preceded by an evaluation. However, since the board members were all in general agreement to keep their current staff, and no employee performance evaluation forms had been brought to the meeting, it was decided to complete the evaluation later. **Charlie entertained a motion to increase staff's pay to \$16.50 retroactive to February 2014, subject to a favorable performance evaluation.** Steve suggested that the board make the decision *now* to keep current staff, or not, and to follow with an evaluation at the end of one year instead. Ernie agreed with this. With that amendment, **Steve moved to end the 6 month probationary period and increase staff's pay rate by \$1.50 an hour, to \$16.50, starting on April 1st. Ernie seconded the motion; All in favor, the motion passed.**

Steve asked about providing a retirement fund or allowance, or possibly an end-of-year bonus, but it was generally agreed that enough increases had been made for one evening and the board did not want to allot too much money in one sitting, due to the potential future need to hire a secondary staff person. Charlie suggested that the board leave any more changes for a future meeting. John agreed, saying that they should re-examine the budget in April and May to see where things stand, and make more changes as they become necessary. **Beau moved to approve the Treasure's Report. Ernie seconded the motion; all in favor, the motion passed.**

Agency Reports:

NRCS (7:25-7:30) Amy Wilson (see attached report handout) - Amy passed out a handout, but said that NRCS is really still in a state of limbo. Congress has made a decision on the farm bill and the new farm bill has been signed, but there is a time gap between when they approve and decide on something in the conference room, and when agencies like NRCS are handed down actual rules and guidelines that they can work with. Amy stated that she is not authorized to talk about anything relating to the new farm bill because as of yet, there is just not enough detailed information available. However, in her opinion, she did not believe there was going to be a lot of change from the current way of operations. As far as she knew, NRCS would continue to have its 3 main strategies; Irrigation Automation for Cranberries, Ag. Water Quality and Quantity for livestock operations, and Collaborative Forest Health; as well as continuing to maintain the wetlands that they already have easements on. NRCS is still accepting applications for national initiatives and many other programs in Coos County. She mentioned that they had passed one program cut-off in February, and one a week ago in March, and she anticipated one more yet this year.

One of Amy's handouts included a pie chart that showed the projected outlays under the 2014-2018 Farm Act. 80% of the pie chart was allotted to "nutrition" and when Manette asked for clarification as to what that meant, Amy replied that it was largely food stamps. 6% was to conservation, 8% to crop insurance, 5% to commodities, and 1% to "other" out of a projected \$489 billion total.

She talked about another strategy that was not mentioned on the handout; the spread of sudden oak death in Curry County. She pointed out that there is a danger of sudden oak death spreading to wherever there is tan oak growing. Some landowners don't care too much for tan oak, but significant losses could and would carry impacts to landowners as well as to wildlife who rely on the tan oak for habitat. Ernie asked whether Chinquapin is the same as Tan Oak. Amy said they are similar, but not the same plant.

CREP (7:30 PM -7:35 PM) Barbara- Barbara did not have a lot of news to report. She mentioned that she is still working on a planting project on Bear Creek, but her main purpose for attending the meeting was to offer support to Caley during her report on a potential project site they had visited together, along with Jeff Jackson and Mark Villers, in the Coos SWCD Focus Area. The site represents a significant opportunity for some CREP restoration work and will be a cooperative effort between Coos SWCD, ODFW, and CREP.

FSA- N/A

ODF&W (7:35 PM-7:36 PM) – Jeff Jackson- Jeff also did not have a lot of news to report, his presence at the meeting also mainly being to act as support for Caley during her report on the potential Myrtle Creek project site and to provide information about the scope of the project.

OSU-Extension - N/A

Weed Board (7:37 PM-7:42 PM) -Steve Scheer- Steve announced that Woody Lane of FANG will be offering an online training webinar on intensive grazing, April 22nd, at 5:30 PM. He also mentioned that the Forages and Pasture Management Course, also being taught by Woody Lane, will be beginning on Wednesday April 2nd, at 6:00 PM. So far there are ten persons enrolled in the class who are paying tuition, including Dan and Caley of the Coos SWCD; and three Weed Board members who are enrolled for free (because the Weed Board is one of the sponsors of the class), including Steve. Amy Wilson of NRCS is also registered for the course. Steve said that he was looking forward to the class and expected it to be highly beneficial and informative. He pointed out that many of the subjects and problems dealt with by FANG (Forage and Nutrition Group) often coincide with the Weed Board's objectives and may also carry over into water quality, as well.

Steve also reported that the Weed Board's herbicide cost share program had about 28 applicants this year, and treated a total of approximately 2500 acres. At the last Weed Board meeting, OSU extension had agreed with the Weed Board to put on a sprayer calibration training class and Tristan Huff will be contacting NRCS about seeing whether or not they want to partner on the project later in the summer. One other thing that's going to be coming up is a voluntary quarry certification program. The program is market-driven, and mainly driven by BLM who would like to start buying lots that have some sort of accreditation attached to them for weed control. The program will mainly affect landowners who have quarries on their property that they wish to sell to BLM, but is going to be strictly voluntary.

ODA (7:42 PM-7:46 PM) - Manette Simpson- Manette reported that the SWCC would be holding a meeting on April 21-22nd in Keizer. She expected that Marilyn Rice might soon visit the Coos SWCD as she is our district's representative on the SWCC. She also reported having attended an OWEB listening session about their Focused Investment Partnerships. OWEB will be carving out some money for these FIPs as part of their long term investment strategy and they are looking for highly functioning partnerships to work together on long term (2+ years) programs. They are looking for groups who work well together and have a history of getting work done and accomplishing results. OWEB is also working on rules for watershed councils to define their operating capacity. There are currently 89 watershed councils across Oregon and OWEB has decided it can only support 64. So they are currently examining what councils might be combined or merged to reduce the total number. She gave Clackamas SWCD as an example, explaining that there are 10 watershed councils within the District. The new rules for watershed councils will be similar to the ones that SWCD's are already following. The goal is to reduce the total number to 64, with one council per basin, although in some areas geography may get in the way of this. Manette said that she believed that OWEB was moving more in the direction of supporting partnerships between agencies and that in the future, funds would be awarded to the those that were achieving the most in ecological results, be they Districts or Councils.

CWA (7:46 PM-7:57 PM) - Ernie Newton – Ernie did not have a written report this time but mentioned that the Coquille Watershed Association had recently approved a project on Woodward creek, on the North Fork of the Coquille. Jeff added that he had been working on planning the project with Dawn Weekly and BLM. He said that the work will involve log placement, planting, erosion control, and blackberry removal. Jeff mentioned that there are problems on Woodward with mud-bogging and four-wheeling having created huge mud pits which are a contributor of sediment. Ernie added that those activities have been a problem for years and that gates have been put in place but people are still finding access. Jeff also mentioned that there is a wood placement project being proposed on Yankee run (East Fork) and he believed it would be approved as well. This project has been mentioned in past months' CWA reports, and is going to involve the CWA, BLM, ODFW; Menasha and Plum Creek are both donating logs, and the CWA will also be buying some logs locally as well. This project is very large scale and will provide some good contracting work opportunities in the community as well as extensive benefits to water quality.

Beau asked Jeff a question about how in the past, natural resources experts thought that it was good for water quality to take everything out of the creeks, as far as trees and logs; now they are recommending the exact opposite. He wanted to know what had changed. Jeff explained that over the years, knowledge and understanding of habitat and the way ecosystems work has increased and improved, leading to the realization that some things which were done in the past that were thought to be beneficial (such as stream cleaning)

might not be so good after all. He suggested that after WWII there was a prevailing idea that fish needed the quickest smoothest route to and from the ocean. Now, biologists understand that fish need the trees in the streams and that those are a critical part of their habitat. Amy Wilson added that this was also a response to heavy flooding that was happening at the time. Beau asked how they were going to anchor the trees that they placed to prevent them from washing downstream in a flood event. Jeff mentioned several methods that were used, including pinning them to the banks. Charlie pointed out that this restoration technique of large wood placement is mainly used on smaller streams and would not be possible on say, the South Fork, where the river is so large that anything you placed would just get washed away. Steve had a question about flooding concerns, and Jeff responded that with wood placement in the uplands, flood was not much of a concern. In the lowlands, however, flooding could possibly be a concern, but floodplain assessments were always conducted pre-placement of any wood in-stream.

Staff Reports:

WTS (7:57 PM-8:05 PM) – (see attached report) Staff Caley Sowers provided a brief report of her activities over the past month. These included registering for Woody Lane’s Forage and Pasture Management class and the CONNECT 2014 Training Conference; attending multiple meetings such as the SF Advisory, and the Coos WA TMDL Awareness Meeting at SWOCC; conducting site visits to landowners, working with and assisting other agency personnel; maintaining and running the District office, checking and repairing the Langlois Mountain rain gauges, and attempting to plan an educational/outreach workshop. Staff also wanted to announce a board training opportunity that was coming up at the Mill Casino on April 5th. **Charlie moved to allow any board members who were interested to go to the Director Training on the 5th using District Operations funds to cover the costs. Steve seconded the motion; all in favor, the motion passed.**

Old Business:

8:05 PM-8:10 PM

- a) **Employee Handbook Ch. 3 Review** (Tabled from last month’s meeting) - Nobody really had any major changes to offer. Steve noted a miss-numbering error that needed to be corrected. Staff made a note of the error. With that, **Beau moved to approve Chapter 3 of the Employee Handbook, with the aforementioned revision. Ernie seconded the motion. All in favor, the motion passed.**
- b) **Dawn Weekly’s employee performance final evaluation** – Steve mentioned Dawn Weekly’s final evaluation once again. Staff mentioned that Mark Villers had said that Charlie could do the paperwork since he was still out of town. Charlie said he would pick up the forms from the District office and do the evaluation.

New Business:

8:10 PM - 8:45 PM

- a) **Board Officer Elections-** Mark had agreed to run as Chairman again, and with help from staff, may be able to attend some meetings long distance via Skype. Beau said that he would like to see a Chairman that’s more present and involved at meetings, but declined to run for Chairman himself due to having too many other time commitments. Other board members also expressed a disinclination to run for Chair due either to time commitments, intent to retire, or possible conflicts of interest. After a discussion on the matter, **Charlie moved to have Mark Villers continue to be Chairman. Dan seconded the motion; all in favor, the motion passed.** With that decided, **Steve moved to leave the entire board as it is (all officers keep their current positions). Dan, Ernie, Beau, and Charlie all seconded this. All members were in favor, and the motion passed.**
- b) **Power-point slideshow of potential erosion management project on Myrtle Creek-** Staff Caley Sowers presented a Power-point slideshow of photos taken on James Waterman’s property on Myrtle Creek, and outlined the restoration work that needs to be done on the property. She passed out a draft small grant application (provided by Jeff Jackson, with CREP estimates provided by Barbara) and a report of the second site visit (provided by Barbara Grant). She talked about the proposed project and Barbara and Jeff offered their input. After a brief discussion of the project, **Beau moved to approve the Waterman’s Stream Bank Erosion Management Project. Steve 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:** April 24th, 2014, at 7 p.m. at the Coos County Annex/Owen Building Large Conference Room.
- f) **Additional Business to Address:** No additional business.
- g) **Director's Signatures Needed: November, December, and January Meeting Minutes; Heather Lane Stables small grant application.** Charlie signed the past months' minutes and the small grant application.
- h) **Meeting Adjourned at 8:45 PM**

Ratified by the Board of Directors:

Signature of the Chairman

Date

Submitted by:

Caley Sowers

Date