

SWCD Board Meeting Minutes

Monday, October 21st, 2024

Board Members Present: Gary Bedortha, Zach Flegel, and Marcus Rossi, and Bill Sigman

SWCD Staff Present: Andy Gallagher, Melissa Stanek and Abby Papke

Additional Attendees: Tim Deboodt, Scott Dugan, Chris Mundy, & Damon Brosnan,
and Wes Noone

The following documents presented and are available upon request:

- August Minutes
- August Treasurers' Report
- September Treasurers' Report
- Project and Activity Update

9:04 a.m. meeting called to order by Zach Flegel.

Confirmation of Minutes: August 2024

Gary Bedortha motioned to accept minutes, Marcus Rossi 2nd the motion, minutes passed.

Treasurer's Report August & September: Andy Gallagher and Melissa Stanek

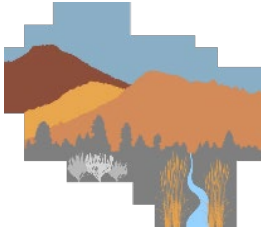
- The bank accounts are healthy, SWCD continues to earn interest on the LGIP account for the juniper bill.
 - Both Andy and Melissa have reviewed this agreement and confirmed that there aren't any restrictions on the interest. After reconciling the month those funds are then marked unrestricted in QB even though they remain in LGIP, this is so we can track our unrestricted funds.
- Andy and Melissa met with our accountant for our agreed upon procedures, things look good, we have a few red marks but don't believe SWCD will have any consequences and that we will be able to correct them.
- One of the things changes are to have Andy review the monthly financial report after Melissa reconciles, both Andy and Melissa with sign off on this every month in addition to the board reviewing and passing the treasurer's report.

Marcus Rossi motioned to accept treasures report, Gary Bedortha 2nd the motion, treasures report passed.

Project and Activity Update: Andy Gallagher

Sage Grouse Program

- CCAA:



- Abby is working on completing inventory for the season. SWCD will have 1 plan to finalize and get signed this winter. Working with Harney County on the 2nd plan.
- Fires impacted several plans. Changed circumstances will be considered for these plans and plans may be modified to address new threats.

Small Grants

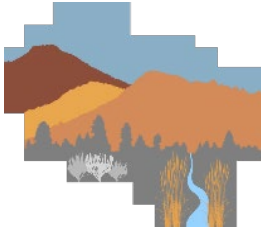
- 7 open grants for over \$67,000 to fund juniper treatment, livestock water developments, and hazard fence removal.
- 1 grant completed and waiting for payment.
- Next cycle is in November with \$15,392 remaining in funding.

Developing Projects and Funding

- Submitted SOW to NRCS to fund ½ time position and some contracted services to help implement NRCS programs in Crook County for 5 years.
 - This will help increase the capacity of NRCS to put more conservation dollars on the ground by helping them with planning and helping clear the cultural resources clearance backlog.
- Submitted request to NRCS/BLM on behalf of the LIT to house the LIT coordinator position at Crook SWCD. This position and associated administration would be fully funded by partners.
- Ochoco Fish Passage Phase 2
 - Project would continue fish passage work up to Wolf Creek Bridge on upper Ochoco Creek.
- Gillen's Beaver Creek project
 - Met with engineer and plan to submit a technical assistance application in the October 2024 cycle to fund designs for instream restoration.
- Blue Mountain Ranch Paulina Valley Restoration
 - Landowner is interested in instream restoration on Paulina Creek.
- Wildfire Recovery
 - Working with landowners and funders to secure funding to help with recovery from Crazy Creek, Durgan, Camp Creek, and Rail Ridge and other fires from 2024 fire season.

Hampton Sage Grouse, Migration, and Drought Relief

- **Fostering the Natural Ecology of Resilient Landscapes on Hampton Buttes**
 - No new activity.
 - Project scheduled to end 12/13/2024 – Extension was requested the first week in September.
- **Juniper Bill: HB 2010**
 - Monitoring equipment has been ordered, installation started first week of October, 3 shallow wells and a flume.
 - SWCD worked out a deal with Oregon State to purchase weather station and evap sensor, the cost is \$10-\$15K and will be paid for by SWCD but owned by OSU when the project is complete.



- SWCD doesn't expect this work to go quickly, its low priority is, and the longer we wait the more pre-data we can collect, we would prefer to get at least a year of data before we begin.

- **NFWF Big Game Migration**

- No New Activity.

- **Maury Mountain to High Desert Migration Enhancement**

- Reports and billing have been approved. Funds have been received and balance has been paid.

- **Fish Passage and Screening in the Upper Ochoco Creek Watershed: Phase I**

- Andy, Melissa, contractors, and USFS finished the repairs by adding fine materials and washing them in.
- 1 fish screen needs to be bolted in place and the fencing needs to be finished.
- Phase 2 application is planned for the Fall cycle.

- **Supplee 2**

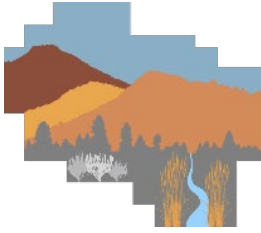
- SWCD will contract Mark Peterson for help on BDA portion of project.
- A meeting will be scheduled with contractors and landowners as soon as fire season calms down.

- **New Sun Solar project**

- The solar farm is located on Wyble corner on the south side of the highway, the mitigation plan is on shotgun ranch.
- SWCD would need the boards approve this grant, SWCD would be responsible for maintaining this for 40 years which includes juniper treatment, follow up, and monitoring.
- It comes out to a little over \$1K an acre, that money would be paid to the county upfront and they would hold the funds.
- They don't need an answer yet and will ask for that when they are ready to break ground.

SWCD Business:

- Revisit Mission Statement -
 - "The mission of the Crook County Soil and Water Conservation District is to provide technical and financial assistance to land managers, promoting sustainability of agricultural lands and conservation of natural resources for generations to come"
 - SWCD will keep the mission statement as it reads above, this was approved by the board in the August meeting.
- Revisit meeting day and time
 - SWCD will wait until our new board to discuss dates and times, for now the 2nd Monday works for everyone.
- November Meeting – falls on Veterans Day



- Skip the November meeting due to the holiday, there will be a meeting in December and then our annual meeting in January. February meeting will be replaced by our Paulina workshop.
- Revisit SWCD presence on CRWC board
 - SWCD employee will sit in on the Watershed meetings until we have a board member to join.
 - Meetings are 2nd Thursday 5-7pm.
 - Revisit in the next couple of months once we have our new board.
- Retirement plan makeup payments
 - The only concern is if there are any tax obligation, because it's not employee contribution or match we want to make sure.
 - Melissa will contact our CPA for advice on this and ask for clarification on taxes, if there are no issue, SWCD will move forward to clean this up, these funds will specifically go directly into retirement accounts for Andy and Rachael.

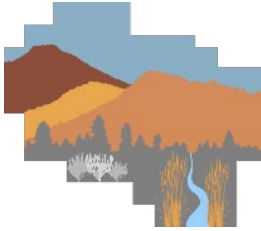
Marcus Rossie motion to approve the retirement makeup payment and Gary Bedortha 2nd, makeup retirement payments are approved after checking in with CPA.
- Revised Expense Policy
 - After meeting with the accountant, the recommendation was to add a reference to our ethics and procurement policy in the expense policy, that way they aren't missed in a review. Added section 12 and 13 to the Expense Policy.

Gary Bedortha motioned to accept revised expense policy, Marcus Rossie 2nd the motion, revised expense policy passed.
- Procurement Policy
 - In addition to the expense policy changes, there have been some additional changes to the law that effect our procurement policy, the changes were around the thresholds and Melissa is working to update the procurement policy with these new amounts.
- State Land Board's Partnership Award
 - Crook SWCD and 15 others received the state land board partnership award last week.

10:00 a.m. Board Members and Partners' Reports:

Chris Mundy – NRCS:

- Fiscal year has ended, there was approx. 5 million in conservation dollars in Crook County last year, forestry, Powell Butte, RCPP in lower Crooked River, sage-grouse, etc.
- Application for this year is Nov 29th, Powell Butte irrigation is still active, sage grouse, McKay RCPP should come online this year and we will be helping landowners with new irrigation systems.
- CSP contracts this year for BDAs on camp creek.



- Attended a BDA tour in Gillam and Wheeler County, the tour consisted of BDA work done 17 years ago in comparison to some done a couple of years old, the response was phenomenal.
- Contractors are starting again; they are trying to stay ahead of them and laying everything out

Scott Duggan – OSU:

- Scott provided updates about grazing.

Tim Deboodt - OSU:

- Tim provided updates on virtual fencing and additional funding for the juniper bill.

Wes Noone - BLM:

- We provided updates on the Rail Ridge and Pine Fire response/recovery and district wide restoration EA.

Damon Brosnan – NRCS:

- LIT – local implementation teams
 - NRCS will support having LIT locally housed at SWCD to get them involved at the local level where they can be more of an imbedded partner.
 - This request came in last year, there is a 1.2-million-dollar agreement with Pheasants Forever to help hire the LIT positions for 5 years.
 - This will bring value to the partnership having them local and help landowners get sage grouse and restoration progress done.
 - Also leveraging BLM for the LIT position.
- NRCS has an agreement with Deschutes SWCD to bring capacity to Crook and others for the ½ time coordinator, this is 1.1 million dollars, this position is not just doing work for NRCS it's doing work for conservation and landowners, doesn't have to be contract work but work that goes towards the common goal.
 - Additional funds could possibly be added later.

Meeting adjourned by Zack Flegel at 10:40 a.m.