



Wheeler Soil and Water Conservation District

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Board of Directors
Meeting Minutes
November 20, 2025

Directors

Jim Bob Collins
Jason Davis
Anna Thomas
Dave Hunt
Brent Johnson
Zach Bruce
Ross Ryno

Employees

Cassandra Newton
Brooke Moore
Kristen Neuburger
Laurel Tappert
Robin Champagne

Others Present

Don Sietz

The board meeting was called to order by Chair Collins at 6:09 p.m. by the clock on the wall.

1. Agency Reports

a. none

2. District Reports

a. District Manager, Cassi Newton

Cassi apologized for not having a written report and provided a few highlights verbally pertaining to:

- Fraud emails and calendar payments
- Explored options for repairing or replacing printer/copier
- Meetings started for the OWEB JDBP Fire TA project
- Worked through contracting for the Kinzua project
- Continued assisting with the updates to the JDBP Operations Manual
- Started working on programming for the education kits
- Assisting staff with project documentation and reporting
- Purchased DroneDeploy and authorized Kristen to work towards her pilot's license
- She arranged OSU to come to Wheeler County to conduct a post-fire assessment training for all staff
- Attended Conservation Partnership Day at the Capitol – met with Senator Nash and Representative Smith, and watched Herb and SNW present to the Ag Committee
- A significant amount of her time has continued to be geared towards the SWCD property

b. Conservation Technician, Brooke Moore

Brooke advised that she has wrapping up the completion reporting for a few OWEB grants. She also advised that she has worked with Laurel on some applications for opportunities that Cassi has requested they pursue. Brooke stated that aside from applications and reporting, her time has been spent on assisting NRCS with their workload.

c. Conservation Technician, Kristen Neuburger

Meeting Location: The Rock in Spray, Oregon

To Join from a computer or smartphone:

<https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/954414701> (Contact the office for meeting password)

To dial in using a phone:

(571) 317-3122 (Access Code: 954-414-701)

Kristen advised that she did not have a written report prepared. She provided updates on the ODA grant application, USFS reporting for the Crazy Creek rehab, a new treatment being piloted for Western juniper, and status of the Weed Board.

d. Conservation Technician, Laurel Tappert

Laurel advised that she has been assisting Brooke with applications and working on the legislative juniper project with getting mapping and landowner agreements finalized. She stated that she has continued working on the Prescribed Burn Association and has started familiarizing herself with FireWise.

e. Office Assistant, Robin Champagne

Robin stated that she has deep cleaned the education trailer in preparing of it getting wrapped. She advised that she has also continued assisting Cassi with documentation and filing.

3. Monthly Business

a. Review and approve minutes

i. October 30, 2025, regular meeting

‡Motion made by Director Davis to approve the board meeting minutes, Director Hunt seconded the motion. Chair Collins, Vice Chair Thomas, Director Davis, Director Hunt, Director Johnson, Director Bruce, Director Ryno voted yes. There were no opposing votes. The motion passed unanimously.

b. Review and approve financial reports

i. None

c. Review and approve Accounts Payable

i. None

4. Upcoming Meetings & Events

a. Staff Meeting, every Monday

b. November

i. 20th SWCD Board Meeting, 6pm Spray

ii. 26th SWCD OFFICE CLOSED

iii. 27th Thanksgiving, OFFICE CLOSED

c. December

i. 2nd OISC Meeting

ii. 2nd OACD Board Meeting, 9am virtual

iii. 4th-6th Oregon Cattlemen's, Pendleton

iv. 10th JDBP Meeting, 9am virtual

v. 11th DSL Permit Training, 1pm virtual

vi. 16th LJDWG Meeting, 10am virtual

vii. 18th OCEAN Board Meeting, 1pm virtual

viii. 18th SWCD Board Meeting, 6pm Spray

ix. 25th Christmas Day, OFFICE CLOSED

5. Upcoming Deadlines

a. December

i. 11th NACD NRCS TA

ii. 17th ODA OSWB Weed Grants

6. District Management

a. Annual Meeting

Cassi advised that the county trapper was not comfortable with presenting at the Annual Meeting, so she has secured Shane Koyle with APHIS to present and the county trapper will be in attendance. The Board asked Cassi to ask Josh Smith to tailor his presentation on habitat growth and specifics of what landowners can do.

b. Property

Cassi provided updates on the project at the property:

- Senator Merkley's office advised of approved Congressional Direct Spending anticipated early 2026, but it is a significantly reduced amount.
- The CUP and WSR permits were approved, but she is still working on the full septic, placement, and electrical permits with assistance from the contractor and consultants.
- Contractor will be mobilizing in the next couple of weeks.
- Co-op assisted with removing a power line that would interfere with equipment operation and provided a work order for the new service.
- A service quote has been received for the well and work will be subcontracted through our contractor.
- Vaagen Timbers has some business changes occurring, but she has not received exact information on feasibility of continuing our project through them.

Cassi reminded the Board of the plan laid out last year for administration of a non-profit and asked the Board to take action on a decision.

‡**Motion** made by Director Davis to approve Wheeler SWCD to administer, through the District Manager position, a non-profit organization with a mission tailored towards promoting natural resource education and providing resources to Wheeler County residence by use of the SWCD property, Director Ryno seconded the motion. Chair Collins, Vice Chair Thomas, Director Davis, Director Hunt, Director Johnson, Director Bruce, Director Ryno voted yes. There were no opposing votes. The motion passed unanimously.

7. Legislation

a. None

8. Projects/Programs

a. ECO Education Program

Cassi stated that she has the intern working with her to develop the hybrid library for the education kits. She advised that the grant objectives include actually getting them into the schools, so she has made plans to attend the school board meetings at each the schools in the upcoming months. Cassi stated that she will have the intern assist with the training of educators and conducting the lessons, as the intern plans to major in early education after she graduates this year.

b. HB5006 Project

Laurel and Cassi provided updates on the planning for the juniper removal project sites which includes approximately 880 acres that will be assessed prior to implementation and then monitored.

c. USFS BAER Project

Kristen advised that she has finished up the surveying and treatment for this project. She stated that she is currently working on the reporting.

d. Weed Board

Kristen provided an update on her recruitment for the Weed Board. Her and Cassi explained the plans for scheduling of meetings once the members are recruited.

e. OWEB

Cassi and Brooke presented the spring development worksheet that Amy provided to them. Cassi advised that her and Brooke will be reviewing it and providing comments back. The Board discussed input towards the comments to be returned to Amy.

9. Partners

a. None


10. Business Not Listed

a. None

Next Meeting: Thursday, December 18, 2025

The board meeting was adjourned by Chair Collins at 7:00 p.m. by the clock on the wall.

Respectfully submitted by Cassandra Newton


James Collins, Chair


Cassandra Newton, District Manager