



West Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District (WMSWCD) Board Meeting Minutes 01/21/2025

1. Meeting Location and Time:

Location: remote via Zoom meeting. The meeting was called to order by Chair Preeg Riggsby at 6:06 PM.

2. Introductions and Agenda Approval:

Directors Present: Sowder, Oliver, Preeg-Riggsby, Topaz, Hartline, Hamer (6:28pm), Looney (6:28pm); WMSWCD Staff Present: DM Barlow, Williams-Conway, Greene, Mauser; NRCS District Conservationist: Galland; Stormwater Stars Program Specialist: Dvorsky; Oregon Department of Agriculture Staff: Cowlshaw; Public Members: Foster, Spector.

The agenda was approved by acclamation, but the sequencing was modified throughout the meeting.

3. Minutes:

Board members reviewed the WMSWCD Board Meeting minutes from 12/17/2024ⁱ.

Director Looney made a motion to approve the Board meeting minutes as written, and Director Sowder seconded the motion. The motion was approved with a vote of 6-0. The Zone 4 seat is currently vacant.

4. Review of Treasurer's Reports:

Staff Williams-Conway presented the December financial statements for December 31, 2024, noting this mid-year snapshot (the fiscal year ends on June 30) shows a total cash balance of approximately \$2.6 million, which is about \$26,000 less than December 2023 due to the timing of tax receipts. Currently, the District is approximately \$172,000 ahead of its budget projection for increase in fund balance (net income). Despite another drop in the interest rate in the LGIP investment account (to 4.7%), the District's interest income remains above budget due to increased attention to cash flow optimizing timing of transfers to the operating account. All programs are operating within budget, and the slight variance in partner funding resulting from one partner receiving their second-half payment earlier than usual and a previous year partner payment occurring in this fiscal year. Overall, revenues are expected to meet budget, and the District's finances remain on track at the fiscal mid-year point.

The following reports were reviewed:

- a) WMSWCD-Balance Sheet as of December 31, 2024ⁱⁱ
- b) WMSWCD-Budget Performance Report for December 31, 2024ⁱⁱⁱ
- c) WMSWCD Financial Snapshot as of December 31, 2024^{iv}

5. Outreach & Communications Coordinator Presentation:

Staff Greene, the District's Outreach & Communications Coordinator reported on her outreach work over the past year. The District produced a web-based annual report that reached more readers than earlier printed editions and partnered with other districts to host a board member information session attended by more than 50 people. Social media activity rose, supporting increased conservation internship and Budget Committee applications. The District's website recorded over 25,000 visits in its first full year of tracking, and staff participated in more than 20 community events. Additionally, she

took part in professional development, including the Connect conference for SWCDs and a climate change and public health course.

Eleanor has been the project manager for the interpretive sign for the Sturgeon Lake/Dairy Creek restoration site with a Native American artist and Dr. David Lewis. She is coordinating events such as the annual Soil School (April 5 at PCC Rock Creek) and a Skyline Ridge wildfire readiness workshop (May 3) with other District staff and partner organizations. She continues to manage website maintenance, blog postings, social media outreach, and has submitted a grant application for website accessibility. These efforts are designed to strengthen District visibility in the community, community engagement and compliance.

6. Swearing in new Board Directors:

Director Preeg-Riggsby conducted the swearing-in of four newly elected Directors: Jan Hamer, Michael Oliver, George Sowder, and Katherine "Kat" Topaz. In the virtual oath-taking, each Director repeated the standard oath of office, affirming support for the U.S. and Oregon constitutions and their commitment to faithfully discharge their duties. The group will finalize their oath forms via DocuSign, after which the forms will be filed with the Oregon Department of Agriculture. Chair Preeg-Riggsby welcomed the new and returning Directors and thanked them for their willingness to serve.

7. Appointing Associate Directors:

Director Preeg-Riggsby noted that recently term-ended Directors Jane Hartline and Weston Miller had stepped down from their positions but agreed to continue serving as Associate Directors to support continuity of Board business, especially with the treasurer transition. Director Looney made a motion to appoint Hartline and Miller as Associate Directors, and Director Topaz seconded the motion. The motion was approved with a vote of 6-0. The zone 4 seat is currently vacant.

Preeg-Riggsby explained that although Associate Director appointments usually occur at a different time, the Board expedited these appointments to maintain consistency with Board business. She added that applications for additional Associate Director and Budget Committee positions will be sent to Directors after this January meeting, allowing members time to study all candidate materials and be ready to appoint both Associate Directors and Budget Committee members at the February Board meeting.

8. Resolution 2025.01.21 -Resolution Authorizing a Supplemental Budget for Appropriation of Reserve for Future Expenditures^v:

Director Preeg-Riggsby introduced Resolution 2025.01.21, authorizing a supplemental budget for appropriation of reserve for future expenditures in the amount of \$25,000, so the District could potentially contribute to a commercial forest land acquisition involving Trust for Public Land and Oregon State University. DM Barlow confirmed this measure merely makes the funds available rather than committing them. Director Hamer made a motion to adopt the resolution, Director Oliver seconded the motion, and the Board adopted the resolution with a vote of 6-0. Final decisions on spending will follow the OSU Board of Trustees' March meeting.

9. NRCS Update:

NRCS District Conservationist Galland updated the Board on staffing and program activities. Urban Conservationist Payne will begin new parent leave next week. Her workload will be covered by other NRCS team members. Galland noted about 70 active landowner applications across NRCS funding

programs, including two in the Sauvie Island area for irrigation improvements, rainwater harvesting, and soil health practices. She highlighted the Conservation Stewardship Program's (CSP) upcoming application deadline at the end of February, which provides five-year contracts to landowners who have addressed basic resource concerns and wish to implement above-and-beyond conservation practices. Galland also announced that the NRCS Local Working Group meeting will be held in a hybrid format on February 27 at the Clackamas SWCD office, with registration details to follow.

10. Stormwater Stars Program Discussion:

DM Barlow presented a discussion on the Stormwater Stars program, which has been funded through annual grants from the District since 2015. This program addresses erosion control and stormwater issues in the West Hills by holding workshops and carrying out on-the-ground projects, often in partnership with a West Side Watershed Resource Center position funded by the City of Portland's Bureau of Environmental Services (BES). DM Barlow explained that, rather than continuing to fund Stormwater Stars through a grant, District staff propose absorbing the program and its part-time program specialist into the District staff. This shift would cost slightly more but would align the program more closely with the District's long-range business plan, expand service to historically underserved neighborhoods, synergize with the stormwater projects and priorities of the Urban Conservationist, and stabilize the program amid potential changes within the City of Portland.

Staff Williams-Conway noted that additional expenses for bringing Stormwater Stars in-house could be covered by reallocating funds from the District's budget conservation funding pool, which has historically been underutilized. Director Preeg-Riggsby highlighted a past example of a permanent, part-time seasonal position that served both the District's needs and the employee's scheduling preferences, suggesting a similar model could work for Stormwater Stars. She also stressed the importance of protecting the program from restructuring at BES, ensuring the District retains control over its own outreach in the urban area. The proposal will formally come before the Board and Budget Committee in upcoming budget discussions.

11. Public Comment Period:

No Public Comment.

12. Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) Water Quality Specialist introduction and ODA updates:

Rick Cowlshaw, from the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA), introduced himself and described his background in academia, environmental science, and farming. He outlined ODA's Agricultural Water Quality Program, which includes Strategic Implementation Areas (SIAs) that address water quality issues by working with landowners and partnering with SWCDs on voluntary solutions. Cowlshaw focused on the Sauvie Island SIA, where he and District staff are coordinating on monitoring plans for parameters such as bacteria and groundwater nitrate*. He acknowledged the complexity of Sauvie Island's hydrology, the need for more targeted community engagement, and the importance of understanding whether water issues originate on the island or flow in from outside sources such as Multnomah Channel.

Director Topaz raised concerns about the ODA SIA meeting at Sauvie Island School in spring 2024 where farmers felt blindsided by the regulatory issues ODA was speaking to, emphasizing the need for more inclusive outreach and baseline water quality data collection—particularly regarding the quality of water entering the island. Cowlshaw indicated he will continue meeting with District staff and area partners

and welcomed additional input from board members on how best to tailor SIA efforts to Sauvie Island's unique conditions.

*Per a follow up conversation on 1/22/2025 with Rick Cowlshaw and Director Topaz, it was clarified that the Sauvie Island Strategic Implementation Plan will focus on Mercury, not nitrates.

13. Information about Budget Committee and Associate Director Applicants:

Director Preeg-Riggsby noted that although the meeting ran longer than scheduled, the remaining agenda item concerning Budget Committee applicants would be addressed via email. WMSWCD Staff Mauser will send out applications for both Budget Committee and Associate Director positions; there is no limit on Associate Directors, but the number of Budget Committee seats is limited to the number of Director seats. For 2025, the Budget Committee has 3 (three) seats that need to be filled. Further details will be included in the circulated materials.

14. District Manager Update:

DM Barlow noted the start of the legislative session and the possibility that the District may provide advocacy on relevant bills through letters or testimony, in coordination with the Oregon Association of Conservation Districts (OACD). She will include the District's advocacy policy in the February board packet for review. Director Preeg-Riggsby mentioned one bill—nicknamed the "Beaver Bill"—focused on helping landowners coexist with beavers.

15. Upcoming Meetings:

The next Board of Directors meeting will be held February 18, 2025, via Zoom.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:09 PM.

ⁱ WMSWCD Board meeting minutes December 17, 2024

ⁱⁱ WMSWCD Balance Sheet as of December 31, 2024

ⁱⁱⁱ WMSWCD Budget Performance Sheet as of December 31, 2024

^{iv} WMSWCD Financial Snapshot as of December 31, 2024

^v Resolution 2025.01.21 -Resolution Authorizing a Supplemental Budget for Appropriation of Reserve for Future Expenditures

^{vi} Staff Reports