



West Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District (WMSWCD, the District) Board Meeting Minutes 05/20/2025

1. Meeting Location and Time:

Location: Remote via Zoom. The meeting was called to order at 6:03 PM

2. Introductions and Agenda Approval:

Directors Present: Oliver, Looney, Preeg Riggsby, Topaz, Hamer (7:36pm); Associate Directors Present: Spector, Foster, Elicker, Hartline (6:15pm); WMSWCD Staff Present: DM Barlow, Williams-Conway (6:55 PM), Mauser, Kern-Korot; NRCS District Conservationist Galland; Tryon Creek Watershed Council Executive Director Barton Castro; Directors Absent: Sowder.

The agenda was approved by acclamation.

3. Amendments to Agenda

Appointment to the vacant Zone 4 seat was postponed one month to allow additional outreach; all other items remained.

4. Approval of April 2025 Board Meeting Minutes

Director Preeg Riggsby reminded the group that draft minutes are produced with AI software, then edited for accuracy by staff Mauser and reviewed by Director Looney. Members were invited to propose corrections or additions; none were offered.

Director Looney made a motion to approve the minutes as writtenⁱ. Director Topaz seconded the motion. The minutes were approved with the following votes: Ayes – Preeg Riggsby, Oliver, Looney, Topaz; Absent – Hamer, Sowder, the Zone 4 seat remains vacant.

5. Treasurer's Report & Financials

Director Oliver guided the board through the March 2025 financials ^{ii, iii, iv}. Current-year property-tax receipts are running about \$24 k below forecast, but higher prior-year collections (+\$14 k) and strong LGIP interest earnings more than offset the shortfall, keeping total revenue slightly ahead of budget. Year-to-date spending is under budget overall; modest overruns in contracted services (recruitment) and an unbudgeted legal bill were noted, and a seasonal spike in garlic-mustard control appeared in program costs. Net income remains positive, and the cash balance is roughly \$32 k higher than this time last year, placing the District in a solid financial position.

Director Oliver added that the final county property-tax transfer—reflecting May payments—will post in June and give a clearer year-end picture. With no questions from directors, the board accepted the treasurer’s report by consensus and moved to the next agenda item.

6. Schedule Setting

Annual Meeting

After discussion, the 2025 Annual Meeting was set for Tuesday, 18 November 2025 (regular board date) at Old Spaghetti Factory, South Waterfront. Resolution to come at the June 2025 Board of Directors Meeting.

Summer Calendar

- July 2025 board meeting cancelled for summer break.
- August meeting set for Tuesday, 19 August 2025 as an in-person social session at Jane Hartline’s property.

7. Program Presentation – Healthy Streams Riparian Program

Senior Conservationist Kammy Kern-Korot delivered a comprehensive 30-minute briefing on the Healthy Streams Program (HSP), the District’s flagship rural riparian-restoration effort launched in 2008 to provide a low-barrier alternative to "ECREP ["Enhanced Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program] supported by Clean Water Services funding. Kern-Korot reviewed the ecological rationale—shade for temperature-sensitive salmon, erosion control, habitat connectivity, and carbon storage, plus more. She shared water-temperature graphs illustrating how heavily forested Miller Creek outperforms partially restored McCarthy Creek in meeting DEQ cold-water criteria. To date the program has completed 64 projects across McCarthy, Abbey/Rock, Gilbert River and Crabapple watersheds, installing 206,000 native trees/shrubs and seeding 275 lbs. of native herbaceous species on roughly 36 riparian acres; a project map showed current and historic project sites, with clusters in lower and middle McCarthy, Rock Creek and Sauvie Island, plus a new project on Crabapple Creek (golf-course reach).

HSP operates on a lean \$30 K annual budget, augmented by small grants and land-owner cost-share, focusing current resources and attention on maintenance of existing projects, a new 1-acre pilot project on Crabapple Creek’s golf course, and a livestock-buffer project along Rock Creek. Planned next steps include “graduation” of mature sites on McCarthy Creek, empowering landowners to maintain project areas long-term, refining climate change-resilient plant palettes, outreach to additional Rock Creek landowners, and planting (this winter) and expanding the Crabapple reach. The latter efforts are in tandem with LCEP staff (Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership), who are planning a large fish passage and habitat connectivity project at the golf course, under Highway 30, and at Metro’s North Multnomah Channel Marsh site. These efforts support watershed-wide protection, which includes OSU’s purchase of ~3,000 acres in the (adjacent) middle and upper-watershed.

Unrelated to riparian restoration, Kern-Korot shared information and dates of upcoming community science workshops on Oregon ash and Oregon oak tree health (threatened by non-native wood-boring beetles), as well as a new brochure by WMSWCD on Oregon white oaks that includes a map of publicly accessible sites with Oregon oak. She encouraged board members to distribute / make the oak brochure available to constituents and see the website for a blog on the Rock Creek project. Board members asked about beaver activity and praised the decade of progress in rural riparian restoration/the HSP.

8. Public Comment

No members of the public present; no comments offered.

9. Policy Discussion – \$200,000 Reserve for Future Expenditures

Director Preeg Riggsby initiated a policy discussion on the District’s \$200,000 “reserve for future expenditures,” now shown as a standalone line in the FY 25-26 draft budget. Budget & Fiscal Manager Conway recapped that the sum has accumulated over eight years but, until now, only \$25,000 per year has been available to access during the budget year. Under Oregon Local Budget Law, the full reserve can be accessed according to conditions within the board policy throughout the fiscal year if needed by board resolution. The Tax Supervising & Conservation Commission (TSCC) recommends the Board adopt a resolution that both defines the reserve’s purpose and, if desired, sets a replenishment cap.

Directors weighed keeping the fund broad enough to address economic downturns, major equipment failures, potential office relocation, or board-approved conservation projects such as support for the OSU Research Forest. Consensus was to tie any use to the District’s mission while retaining flexibility. The Board asked District Manager Barlow, Budget & Fiscal Manager Conway, and Treasurer Oliver to draft resolution language—including a suitable fund name and examples from other districts—for circulation ahead of the June budget hearing. The draft budget’s \$200,000 figure will remain unchanged; only the reserve’s title and governing policy will come back for formal adoption prior to the final budget vote.

10. Partner Presentation – West Willamette Watershed Collaboration

Alexis Barton Castro, Executive Director of the Tryon Creek Watershed Council, was introduced by Director Preeg Riggsby and thanked for presenting on the West Willamette Watershed collaboration—a joint effort between Tryon Creek and Oswego Lake Watershed Councils to address gaps in watershed council coverage along the west side of the Willamette River. Alexis explained that, unlike most Oregon watershed councils, Tryon Creek does not receive OWEB capacity funds due to its small geographic size, making partner support from WMSWCD essential. She reviewed OWEB’s role in funding watershed councils statewide and highlighted the lack of coverage for smaller tributaries directly entering the Willamette in the Portland metro area. Using maps, Alexis demonstrated where priority habitat connectivity and salmon cold-water refugia exist and outlined a capital project request submitted to the State Legislature to fund a stakeholder engagement process. This process would gather community input to determine whether to form one merged watershed council or a network structure to serve the project

area, with letters of support already received from local governments, nonprofits, and academic partners.

During discussion, Board members expressed strong support for the project's potential to enhance watershed health and community engagement, noting that neighborhoods such as Linnton and Forest Park stand to benefit. Treasurer Oliver called the proposal "a fun project" with meaningful impact, and WMSWCD Senior Conservationist Kern-Korot confirmed the importance of including streams currently unserved by any council. Chair Preeg Riggsby and District Manager Barlow thanked Alexis (and her colleague Jack Halsey, unable to attend) for their extensive groundwork in identifying partners, securing letters of support, and developing the collaboration concept. They reiterated that WMSWCD's partner funding is critical for Tryon Creek's operations, and that this effort aligns closely with the District's mission to support healthy watersheds and communities.

11. District Manager's Report

District Manager Barlow reported on key agency partnerships, outreach, and staffing. She met with NRCS contacts Kim Galland and Kim Gray (now interim Basin Team Leader) during a recent field lunch; with only three NRCS staff remaining after deferred resignations, Gray will serve as the primary liaison and provide an updated contact list. NRCS is still determining FY 25 funding levels—EQIP dollars may be limited and RCPP funds are unlikely—so staff capacity to attend future Board meetings will be minimal.

Turning to OSU Extension, Barlow recapped the joint West/East SWCDs investment (\$10k from WMSWCD within a \$100k pool) that funded an OSU survey of local producers throughout Multnomah County; preliminary findings will be presented at East Multnomah's June Board meeting (remote option available). Because Multnomah County's draft FY25-26 budget does not include the requested \$500k for Extension agents, Barlow will testify at the county's public budget forum tomorrow night in Gresham on behalf of both districts to advocate for the amendment.

Upcoming events and personnel transitions were also highlighted. Board and Associate Directors are invited to a van-based field tour on June 5 featuring forest and Sauvie Island project sites; RSVPs are needed, and a detailed itinerary will be re-circulated, noting opportunities for participants who must step away for remote meetings. Staff will visit the Grand Ronde Museum tomorrow; a future Board tour may be arranged.

Recruitments continue: second-round interviews for the Budget & Fiscal Manager are complete, with a hire expected within four weeks, and the District Manager posting closes May 25, after which two Board-led interview panels will proceed. Finally, Barlow confirmed her forthcoming resignation but pledged full support for a smooth leadership transition.

12. Director & Associate Director Remarks

Due to time constraints, director/associate director updates were abbreviated. Chair Preeg Riggsby noted that watershed council activities (as already presented by Alexis) constituted her report and shared that the Endangered Species Act provision defining habitat degradation as a "take" is being

removed—a change outside advocacy influence but one that does not alter the District’s commitment to protecting and restoring habitat.

13. Upcoming Meetings

The next Board of Directors Meeting will be held on June 17, 2025, at 6pm remote via Zoom.

14. Adjournment

With no further business, Director Preeg Riggsby adjourned the meeting at 8:01 p.m.

ⁱ WMSWCD Board meeting minutes April 15, 2025

ⁱⁱ WMSWCD Balance Sheet as of April 30, 2025

ⁱⁱⁱ WMSWCD Budget Performance Sheet as of April 30, 2025

^{iv} WMSWCD Financial Snapshot as of April 30, 2025

^v Staff Reports