



**Grant Soil and Water Conservation District**  
**Kenneth H. Delano Agricultural Service Center**

721 S. Canyon Blvd. - John Day, OR 97845 - Phone (541) 575-0135

**MINUTES OF GRANT SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT'S**  
**May 7, 2026 Meeting**

**Attendance**

**Directors Attending:**

Phil St. Clair – Director – Via phone  
Pat Voigt – Chairman  
Roger Ediger - Director  
Rick Henslee - Director

Joanne Keerins – Director  
Ted Clausen - Associate  
Alec Oliver – Associate – Via phone

**Staff Attending:**

Kyle Sullivan – District Manager  
Danielle Kimball – Program Assistant  
Matt Wenick – Grant Weed Control

**Visitors:**

Hannah Smith – NRCS  
Anne Neisen – Malhuer Forest  
Brandon Ferguson - ODF

**ADMINISTRATION**

1. Call Meeting to Order – Pat called the meeting to order at 4:00pm
2. Approval of Minutes – Roger moved to approve the April 2, 2026, meeting minutes reflecting the correction. Rick gave the second. Phil St. Clair, Pat Voigt, Roger Ediger, Rick Henslee, and Joanne Keerins voted in favor. No opposing votes. The motion passed unanimously.
3. Introduction of Visitors – There were no visitors to introduce.
4. Public Input – There was no public input.

**REPORTS**

5. NRCS – Hannah reported that they are continuing to rank all EQIP and CSP applications, and due to significant errors identified across the state, the deadlines have been extended to allow more time for thorough review. The EQIP ranking deadline is now Friday the 15th, and the CSP deadline is the 22nd, giving us extra time to carefully comb through everything and ensure accuracy, which is especially important since this is a new program and a high priority. Couple of trainings coming up, Jonathan will be attending a course on working effectively with Native Americans, and Hannah will be going to the prescribed burning fire class in La Grande the week of the 18th, which will complete her burn manager certification.
6. FSA – A representative was unable to attend.

7. South Fork John Day Watershed Council – Joanne reported that the predator control program was considered successful this year, as only 10% of the acreage was flown but a total of 40 coyotes were removed. Timing was identified as a key factor influencing effectiveness. Due to the late start this year, opportunities were somewhat limited. For the upcoming year, it is anticipated that operations will begin earlier, ideally in February, to coincide with the period before denning season, when coyotes may be more effectively targeted. Reported observations during the effort included instances of coyotes actively preying on wildlife and livestock. Overall, those involved expressed satisfaction with the initial results and progress of the program. Phil reported that a representative from the Tribes is scheduled to attend an upcoming meeting to provide a presentation on beaver dam analogs (BDAs). Following the meeting, a brief field visit is planned along Rosebud Creek to observe the BDA structures that have been installed in that area.
8. Malheur Forest – Anne reported that they are currently working on the Forest Plan revision for the Blue Mountains, with the draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) expected to be published by the end of May, although that timeline could shift depending on the approval process, which includes multiple levels up through USDA and even the White House. Public meetings are tentatively scheduled for the first two weeks of June, and we plan to share the draft with local partners, including the Grant County Commissioners, as soon as it's available. Regarding the Forest Service reorganization, we've recently received information on the top levels of the agency structure, though many details are still being worked out; however, we've been reassured that forests will remain the core of the agency. While some offices in larger communities are being closed, that has not impacted us locally, though there have been significant staffing changes nationwide and we are working hard to retain our employees and provide internal hiring opportunities to support career advancement and maintain our skilled workforce here in John Day. On the funding front, we successfully secured our full \$3 million CFLRP allocation and continue to receive additional targeted investment funds due to our strong track record of getting work done on the ground. We remain focused on supporting and rebuilding the local forest products industry, recognizing that restoration work depends on a healthy and diverse industry. Additionally, we are developing a large agreement with Lummi Forest Partners, facilitated by Sustainable Northwest, to address areas lacking NEPA coverage and keep landscape-level work moving forward. Finally, while we are heading into fire season, we are also in an active prescribed fire window, with fuel moisture levels currently within prescription, providing a valuable opportunity to conduct effective landscape burning.
9. ODA – A representative was unable to attend.
10. OR State Forestry – Brandon reported that fire season will officially begin at 12:01 a.m. tomorrow, starting at a moderate level with no public use restrictions in place yet, although conditions are expected to worsen and potentially lead to an early and extended season compared to the past two years. Staffing is in good shape, with engine operators and forest officers already on board and full staffing in John Day and Monument, though additional seasonal personnel will arrive around June 1st. Efforts are underway to increase public awareness, and a new engine is expected to be completed by the end of the month. The team recently hosted a well-attended operator breakfast with about 30 participants, marking the first event of its kind in six years and helping build momentum for future outreach. Additionally, Grant County secured a \$3.4 million Landscape Resilience Program grant—one of only three awarded statewide—which will fund approximately 3,000 acres of fuels treatments and support multiple partners, along with equipment for prescribed burning efforts and funding for next year's Natural Resources Fair. Work is also progressing through agreements with the Forest Service to treat an additional 1,500 acres on public lands and 500 acres on private lands, including staffing support for those efforts. Other funding opportunities, such as the Western States Fire Managers Grant and Community Wildfire Defense grants, will help expand defensible space work and community assistance, while forest resources staff remain fully engaged in training, out-of-state assignments, and ongoing preparedness activities, including the start of pack testing.
11. OR Dept. Environmental Quality – A representative was unable to attend.
12. John Rowell County Commissioner – Was unable to attend.

## **DISTRICT PROGRAMS**

13. Grant Weed Control – We've completed all road treatments in Grant County, Wheeler County, and our private bare ground for the year, finishing significantly ahead of schedule—by April 30, which is about three weeks

earlier than usual and the earliest completion in nine years. Broadleaf treatments also began a couple of weeks early. We've advertised the 2026 annual grass cost-share program through Title II and currently have 12 applicants, which is in line with recent years, and we'll begin working on contracts soon to prepare for fall implementation. On the carbon program side, some landowners enrolled through Envue and Enset have started receiving contract information, indicating progress is being made, though we're still waiting to see when payments will occur. We also received our heavy lift waiver for the drone and are expecting our Part 137 aerial application certification shortly, which will allow us to begin seeding operations once pilot flight hours are completed. Recent drone testing showed excellent performance, with a coefficient of variation at just 7%, well below the 20% standard and even outperforming typical helicopter application rates.

14. District Programs – Things are moving along well, with contractors actively cutting and several units in the thinning project under the CWDG already completed. Seed purchased earlier this year is being distributed to landowners, and plans are in place to use the drone for seeding efforts on treated hillsides as part of the State Fire Marshal's project, particularly in areas where piles were burned. Progress has also resumed on the Izee Ranch culvert project after some contractor setbacks, and there is hope that the Belshaw project will move forward this year as well. We have successfully launched a new Facebook page to improve outreach and communication, and efforts are underway to strengthen partnerships with local schools by developing materials that highlight career opportunities, technology, and skills within the organization, with potential for job shadowing. Additionally, a collaborative video project is kicking off this month with filming beginning at a local property that highlights long-term vegetation management and restoration work; more footage will be gathered throughout the year, including during aerial applications and conifer treatment projects, culminating in a short promotional video to highlight regional priorities and successes.

#### **DISTRICT BUSINESS**

15. Review and Approval of District 26-27 Work Plan – 2026-2027 work plan was reviewed by the Board of Directors.  
**Joanne moved to approve the 2026 work plan. Rick gave the second. Joanne Keerins, Rick Henslee, Phil St. Clair, Pat Voigt, and Roger Ediger voted yes. No opposing votes. The motion passed unanimously.**
16. Director Elections- Kyle attended a training through ODA, and they've done a great job outlining the process and simplifying the requirements for us. So far, Kyle has spoken with one potential candidate who is considering running for Joanne's position. Kyle will continue outreach efforts to other potential candidates. Based on the timeline, we can begin submitting candidate packets in June to get on the ballot and included in the voters' pamphlet. The final filing deadline is in August.
17. Review of Marketing Materials – Kyle presented several new logo concepts for the Board of Directors review and feedback.
18. Other – TMDL meeting on the 20<sup>th</sup>. DEQ will present revisions following the initial comment period. While they have indicated that some comments were incorporated, it appears that not all concerns were addressed. Since the release of the revised materials, Kyle has begun reviewing the documents in detail and expects to have more substantive feedback after completing that review. Following the upcoming meeting, DEQ is expected to open a formal public comment period. At that time, we will need to consider and coordinate our response strategy, including potential submission of additional comment letters. Kyle anticipates preparing one or more draft letters for board review.

#### **FINANCIAL BUSINESS**

19. Financial Report/Financial Summary – Financial reports for the month of April 2026 were reviewed by the Directors.
20. Approve Bills – **Joanne moved to approve the bills and financial reports for the month of April 2026. Phil gave the second. Joanne Keerins, Rick Henslee, Phil St. Clair, Pat Voigt, and Roger Ediger voted yes. No opposing votes. The motion passed unanimously.**

Meeting adjourned at 5:25

*Patrick Voigt*

Board Chair

*6-4-26*

Date

*Kyle Sun*

District Manager

*6/5/2026*

Date