



**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**  
**February 5, 2026 Meeting**

**Attendance**

**Directors Attending:**

Phil St. Clair – Director  
Pat Voigt – Chairman  
Rick Henslee – Director

Alec Oliver – Associate Director  
Dustin Kreger – Associate Director  
Joanne Keerins – Director

**Staff Attending:**

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

**Visitors:**

Hannah Smith – Natural Resources Conservation Service  
John Rowell – Grant County Commissioner  
Chase Bloom – Malheur Forest Service  
Brent Smith - ODA

**ADMINISTRATION**

1. Call Meeting to Order – Pat called the meeting to order at 3:58pm.
2. Approval of Minutes – **Phil moved to approve the January 8, 2026, meeting minutes with corrections. Joanne gave the second. Phil St. Clair, Pat Voigt, 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 the EQIP and CSP applications are in progress, eligibility checks and field reviews underway. Deadlines: eligibility by March 13; ranking by April 17 (subject to change). The new Regenerative Agriculture Pilot Program remains confusing, staff are learning and request patience. Funding remains available throughout the fiscal year; federal shutdown did not impact funds.
6. FSA – A representative was unable to attend.
7. South Fork John Day Watershed Council – Joanne reported that they had their predator meeting regarding mule deer population and predators. Phil reported that OWEB applications are submitted, and they are working on site visits.

8. Malheur Forest – Chase reported a big milestone this week with the Upper Bear Lake signed and moving forward. Austin project is going out for public comment on Monday—both major steps forward. Excited about the momentum from the recent PBA meeting, with Tyler and Mike planning to present again at our range banquet in Prairie City next month, which will bring the message to a strong group of landowners.
9. ODA – Brent reported a lot of TMDL stuff going on with DEQ. DEQ held its public information webinar in January. Brent, Kyle, Phil, and John attended the RAC meeting last week to review progress and data gaps. ODA is preparing comments that emphasize the need for a coordinated, basin-wide water temperature monitoring network and better use of DEQ’s temperature modeling to help prioritize restoration projects. Another RAC meeting is scheduled for May, and public comment opportunities are expected later in the summer or early fall, likely between August and October. In addition, the North Fork–Middle Fork light review is set for May 10, 2026 at 10 AM.
10. OR State Forestry – A representative was unable to attend.
11. OR Dept. Environmental Quality – A representative was unable to attend.
12. John Rowell County Commissioner – Did not give a report.

### **DISTRICT PROGRAMS**

13. Grant Weed Control – Matt reported that seeding project is moving ahead, with seed bids back out to bid after some initial incomplete submissions; final bids are due Monday at 3 p.m., and the plan is to seed roughly 6,000–7,000 acres across 12–14 landowners, including three in Wheeler County affected by the fire. Mike is expected to be onsite for seeding between late February and early March. We have begun advertising no-spray agreements for Grant County landowners; deadline for no-spray agreements is February 27<sup>th</sup>. We are already about halfway through residual work for the Wheeler County Road Department. FAA MedExpress requirements are complete so Nate and I can take our medical exams for drone operations. We have purchased both the trailer and the container and are now planning to build them out as a single, fully equipped transport unit for the drone, generators, chemicals, and all other operational equipment needed for drone application. Staff have been attending required training, with more scheduled at the OVMA conference in Seaside where I will participate in a presentation. We received a new \$315,000 contract modification with the Malheur National Forest extending work through January 2029, bringing our total active funding with the forest to roughly \$800,000–\$900,000 across three contracts, alongside ongoing agreements with other counties, ensuring plenty of work once the weather cooperates.
14. District Programs – Kyle reported that the repair on the Berry Creek project is moving forward with tribal funding supporting materials. Materials are finally out for bid after delays; the hope is to have materials in hand by late February and begin work in March or April. All State Fire Marshal burn piles have been completed, and with funds available we are now expanding seeding opportunities. Tyler is reaching out to interested landowners. The Prescribed Burn Association meeting went well, drawing strong participation from Firewise communities. Tyler is now burn certified and will be able to support outreach with more knowledge of the program. The pre commercial thinning projects that have started have made good progress with the good weather.

### **DISTRICT BUSINESS**

15. Solutions Disengagement – District received notice from Solutions that they can no longer handle our audit due to staffing shortages following Bob’s full retirement, which was concerning given past difficulties finding a replacement when Osters stopped auditing. Fortunately, Solutions recommended a firm in Idaho Zwygart John & Associates. I contacted Zwygart John and Associates and within 24 hours they provided a solid quote. After calling around to other firms with no success and checking references from City of Prairie City, City of Mount Vernon, City of Seneca, and the Malheur SWCD; all of whom spoke highly of the company. Pat and I decided to move forward and sign a contract with them for this year’s audit. The firm appears reliable, familiar with local municipalities, and the lead auditor even offered to visit in person during his regular trips to Grant County.
16. TMDL Update – Kyle, Brent, and Phil attended the Temperature TMDL meeting. Kyle is preparing a comment letter for the new DEQ temperature TMDL rulemaking, and several issues need to be addressed. DEQ is using an arbitrary 0.5°F human-caused temperature allowance, dividing it into fractional allocations for roads, riparian conditions, and other factors without clear scientific justification. Their small-business impact analysis is also flawed, identifying only 156 agricultural businesses based on a limited database, even though Oregon’s own

ag/forest deferral records show that most privately owned land in the basin is part of small agricultural or forestry operations that would be affected by wider buffers and land-use restrictions. Going to recommend that DEQ use ag/forest deferral data for a more accurate count. Also want to highlight that DEQ's focus on riparian vegetation ignores broader watershed issues like overstocked forests and water yield. Kyle will draft a letter incorporating these concerns for the board to review before submission.


- 17. District Work Session – Kyle is putting together an agenda and presentation for the work session scheduled February 12<sup>th</sup> at 2:00pm.
- 18. Resolution to hold 2026 Annual Meeting on March 5, 2026 - **Phil moved to pass a Resolution for Grant SWCD to hold its 2026 Annual Meeting on March 5, 2026. Joanne gave the second. Phil St. Clair, Pat Voigt, Rick Henslee, and Joanne Keerins voted yes. No opposing votes. The motion passed unanimously.**

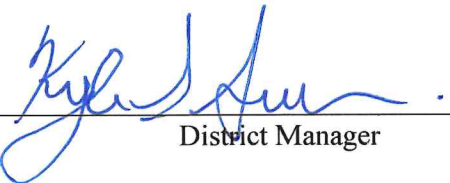
**FINANCIAL BUSINESS**

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

Meeting adjourned at 4:57

  
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Board Chair

  
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Date

  
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District Manager

  
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Date