Grant Soil and Water Conservation District
Kenneth H. Delano Agricultural Service Center
721 S. Canyon Blvd. - John Day, OR 97845 - Phone (541) 628-5045

MINUTES OF GRANT SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT'S
October 1, 2026 Meeting

Attendance

Directors Attending:
Pat Voigt – Chairman
Phil St. Clair – Director
Joanne Keerins – Director – Via phone
Alec Oliver – Associate – Via Teams
Rick Henslee - Director
Roger Ediger – Director
Ted Clausen – Associate

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

Visitors:
Hannah Smith – NRCS
Jennifer Bush – Malheur Forest
Brent Smith – ODA
Jesse Noone - DLCD

ADMINISTRATION

1. Call Meeting to Order – Pat called the meeting to order at 4:00pm

2. Approval of Minutes – **Phil moved to approve the September 3, 2026, meeting minutes. Rick gave the second. Phil St. Clair, Pat Voigt, Joanne Keerins, Rick Henslee, and Roger Ediger 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 Smith reported that staff are primarily focused on beginning-of-fiscal-year activities and finishing CSP documentation. Once agency systems are back online, they expect to begin processing CSP payments. On the program side, there are no entirely new NRCS programs being introduced, although the Regenerative Ag Pilot Program continues. The main development is that NRCS is considering using EQIP Act Now funding this year, similar to what was done for fire-related projects in 2024. Under Act Now, applications would be funded in the order they are received as long as they address the county's priority resource concern, which the local work group identified as wildfire resilience. This approach could bring additional EQIP funding into the county for practices such as pre-commercial thinning, juniper treatment, and annual grass management to reduce wildfire risk.

6. FSA – A representative was unable to attend.

7. South Fork John Day Watershed Council – Phil reported for Amy Stiner that the Ochoco National Forest Rail Ridge Fire Fences project is now open for bid, with proposals due by October 15. The project will replace approximately 60 miles of fencing damaged during the Rail Ridge Fire. Work is also underway to secure agreements and plan treatments through the Landscape Resilience Program (LRP) in partnership with ODF, including 250 acres of juniper removal and 250 acres of forestry treatments across eight landowners. Additionally, a Request for Proposals has been issued for engineered designs supporting two miles of restoration work along the Upper South Fork John Day River. RCPP applications are being accepted through mid-November. Finally, the Halter Virtual Fence Ranchers Night Out event will be held on October 28 at 5:30 p.m. at the pavilion and will include a free dinner. A flyer for the event has been sent to Kyle.

8. Malheur Forest – Jennifer Bush reported favorable conditions for prescribed burning activities, with a strong weather window allowing successful operations across the area and additional burning planned in both northern and southern regions. A pre-commercial thinning project will begin in the Beech Project area, and personal-use firewood permits will soon be available online while continuing to be offered at local office. Hiring efforts are underway to fill several permanent positions and recruit a limited number of seasonal fire and non-fire personnel. Regarding the Austin project, agency staff are currently reviewing public comments and anticipating a decision in November. Additionally, a monitoring symposium is scheduled for the 16th of this month.

9. ODA – Brent Smith reported concerns about the Governor's proposed budget, which includes a 5% reduction that could eliminate seven positions. Four of those positions are within the Ag Water Quality Program, with the manager position currently held by Karen Stutzman and the administrative/accounting position held by Sandy Hyatt identified as potentially being cut. While funding decisions could change depending on future lottery revenue forecasts, the organization OACD is already coordinating letters of support and legislative outreach to advocate for retaining these positions. On the DEQ 1200-C stormwater discharge permit, where an agricultural exemption was identified, may eliminate the need for certain restoration projects to obtain the permit, reducing duplication, costs, and regulatory burdens. The permit was originally intended for urban construction projects and not stream restoration work, which is already regulated under existing Clean Water Act requirements. The Oregon Environmental Restoration Council awarded $500,000 to the Ag Water Quality Program for restoration projects using funds connected to the Monsanto Roundup litigation settlement.

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 – Unable to attend.

DISTRICT PROGRAMS

13. Grant Weed Control – Matt reported that the weed department completed its aerial treatment program beginning September 8, finishing in just over a week and a half. Between what Mike had to do for his BLM contract and the private landowners Grant Weed had signed up, approximately 11,000 acres were treated across 20 landowners. Work extended throughout the region, including the Supplee area and nearly to Post. Efforts are now focused on expanding treatment opportunities in the Supplee area, where Crook County secured a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant to address annual grass infestations on lands impacted by the Rail Ridge Fire. The district has partnered with Crook County and the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation to pursue additional cost-share funding, with the goal of treating an additional 6,000 to 8,000 acres. The district continues to provide aerial contracting support for these projects. Other updates included the completion of substantial weed treatment work on remote Vale District BLM lands in southeastern Grant County and progress toward obtaining Nate's aerial applicator license. After navigating an extensive state approval process, the license is expected to be approved, and Nate should have his license in about a week.

14. District Programs – Kyle reported that district programs continue to make good progress. Tyler is coordinating with landowners for the juniper treatment work funded through ODF, while Timber Basin Contractor has resumed fence construction along the Malheur River, including projects associated with the Cow and Black butte Fire recovery efforts. One fence project is nearing completion, and work is expected to begin soon on a new fence

along the South Fork of Long Creek within the Forest Service allotment. Cole also completed installation of two culverts at the IZ Ranch. The work was completed by Choate Contracting, LLC from Burns, and ODF representatives were complementary of both the quality and efficiency of the project, noting interest in bringing more work of this type to eastern Oregon. The district was also recognized with an award from the Working Lands Fire Extension Program for its collaborative efforts, Tyler went and accepted the award. Prescribed burning activities continue to move forward with support from Micah Schmidt. With improving weather conditions, contractors are returning to fieldwork, forestry activities are expected to resume, and several juniper treatment projects are anticipated to go out for bid within the next month.

DISTRICT BUSINESS

15. Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan Focus Group – Kyle introduced Jesse Noon to the board. The Grant Soil and Water Conservation District continues to participate in the update of Grant County's Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan, a FEMA-supported planning effort being managed by Jesse Noon, a Natural Hazards Planner with the Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD). The current plan was adopted by the district through board resolution, which is updated every five years. As part of the update process, Jesse is seeking to form a focus group consisting of district board members and community representatives to discuss local natural hazards and mitigation priorities. In addition to traditional hazards such as wildfires, drought, floods, landslides, earthquakes, and volcanic events, the updated plan is expected to include invasive species, including invasive annual grasses and weeds, which are increasingly recognized as significant threats to Grant County's agricultural economy and natural resources. Jesse noted that incorporating mitigation strategies into the plan can improve eligibility for state and federal funding opportunities related to disaster preparedness and recovery. He also emphasized that the district's status as a plan holder enables it to pursue hazard mitigation funding directly and positions it well to continue leveraging grant opportunities through its strong network of local, state, and federal partnerships.

FINANCIAL BUSINESS

16. Financial Report/Financial Summary – Financial reports for the month September 2026 were reviewed by the Directors.

17. Approve Bills – **Phil moved to approve the bills and financial reports for the month of September 2026. Roger gave the second. Phil St. Clair, Pat Voigt, Joanne Keerins, Rick Henslee, and Roger Ediger voted in favor. No opposing votes. The motion passed unanimously.**

Meeting adjourned at 5:11

Patrick Voigt
Board Chair

11-5-26
Date

District Manager

11/5/2026
Date