



**Columbia
Soil & Water
Conservation District**

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**Minutes of the
Columbia SWCD Board of Directors
Meeting April 15, 2026**

Directors Present:

Michael Calhoun, Chair
Paul Gibbons, Secretary
Bill Eagle, Treasurer
Dave Freytag, Director
Alex Devin (via Zoom)

Columbia SWCD Staff:

Taylor Murray, Executive Director
Rebekah Gaxiola, Working Lands Conservationist
Jennifer Chavez, Operations & Communications
Manager

Associate Director:

Rachell Meyers, Scappoose Bay Watershed Council
David Taylor
Alison Charbonneau

**Lower Columbia River Watershed Council
(LCRWC):**

Rachael Barry

Public:

Claudia Eagle
Bill Etter

Natural Resource Conservation Services (NRCS):

Hannah Isaacs, District Conservationist

Michael called the board meeting to order at 5:00 PM

Michael provided a brief “housekeeping update” regarding public comment.

Prior Month’s Minutes: Bill moved, and Dave seconded a motion to approve the Minutes from the Board meeting held on 03/18/26, as presented. **Approved Motion passed.**

Vote Record: Approve the March 18, 2026, meeting minutes as presented.

Director	Yes/Aye	No/Nay	Abstain	Motion	Seconded
Debra Brimacombe					
Jason Busch					
Michael Calhoun	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
Alex Devin	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
Bill Eagle	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Dave Freytag	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Paul Gibbons	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				

Financial Report: Bill presented the Treasurer’s Report. **Bill moved, and Dave seconded a motion** to approve the Treasurer’s Report from 3-31-26. **Approved Motion passed.**

Vote Record: Accept the Financial Report for March.

Director	Yes/Aye	No/Nay	Abstain	Motion	Seconded
Debra Brimacombe					
Jason Busch					
Michael Calhoun	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
Alex Devin	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
Bill Eagle	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Dave Freytag	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Paul Gibbons	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				

- **Staff:** Taylor reported that he and most staff attended the Connect Conference in Seaside earlier this month. He noted that the conference may be combined with the Oregon Association of Conservation Districts in the future and encouraged board members to attend. Taylor also shared that he attended a site visit earlier that day with Rebekah and David Taylor at the Columbia Land Trust's Stock Ranch, with representatives from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife also in attendance.

OLD BUSINESS

- **Strategic Plan:** Taylor asked Alison whether Amy Stork had been in contact to schedule the committee's portion of the implementation planning process. Alison confirmed that Amy had reached out, but noted that scheduling has been challenging. A brief discussion followed regarding Alison and Paul's upcoming absences. Alison added that the committee could move forward without her if necessary.
- **Audit:** Taylor reported that the audit remains incomplete. He explained that extension requests had been submitted multiple times over the past six months, but the auditing firm indicated an extension would not be necessary. As a result, funds owed to the District from the Oregon Department of Agriculture are currently frozen until the audit is completed. Taylor shared that the Secretary of State's office informed him that extension requests must be submitted by the auditing firm, not the District. He has also been in contact with the District's legal counsel.
Taylor noted that the District will need to hold another Annual Meeting, as the audit was not available for acceptance at the January meeting. A brief discussion followed.

NEW BUSINESS

Annual Meeting Reschedule/Resolution: Bill moved, and Paul seconded a motion to approve hosting the Annual Meeting on May 20, 2026, at 5:00 pm. **Approved Motion passed.**

Vote Record: Approve the Annual Meeting date as presented in the Resolution

Director	Yes/Aye	No/Nay	Abstain	Motion	Seconded
Debra Brimacombe					
Jason Busch					
Michael Calhoun	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
Alex Devin	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
Bill Eagle	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Dave Freytag	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
Paul Gibbons	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

- **Army Corps / Biofuels Plant letter:** Taylor reported that he and Rebekah drafted a response letter to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers regarding the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for a proposed renewable fuels refinery at Port Westward. He noted that the letter was written with a neutral tone to avoid impacting local partnerships. The comment period closes on Monday, April 20. Taylor explained that Rebekah researched how to respond as a special district and clarified that the letter will be submitted on behalf of the Board, not staff. He then read the letter aloud.
During discussion, Paul noted that if the project proceeds, there could be an approximate 10 percent loss of the Beaver Drainage District, adding that the affected property is currently used for grazing and is classified as prime farmland by the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Hannah added that conversion of prime farmland typically requires mitigation. Michael expressed support for submitting a letter of clear opposition. Paul also referenced the Draft Environmental Impact Statement's mention of degraded waters, noting the significant investment of time and resources that has gone into improving those systems. Bill Etter stated that he plans to submit an individual letter of opposition.
The Board plans to hold a special meeting on Saturday, April 18 at 4 pm, via Zoom and at the District Office, to discuss and approve a letter to be submitted to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

BOARD REPORTS

- Taylor gave a brief reminder to the Board regarding the upcoming election.
- Paul reported that he learned that there were projects that the LCRWC passed over to the District around 2021, encouraging Rachael to reach out to the District staff to see if there are any the council can pick back up. Brief discussion held.

MEETING ADJOURNED AT 6:06 PM

Respectfully Submitted by: *Jennifer Chavez*, Operations & Communications Manager