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**Minutes of the
Columbia SWCD Board of Directors
Board Meeting
August 19, 2026**

Directors Present:

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

Directors Absent:

Jason Busch, Director

Associate Directors Present:

David Taylor
Alison Charbonneau
Rachell Meyers, Scappoose Bay Watershed Council
(via Zoom)

Columbia SWCD Staff:

Taylor Murray, Executive Director
Rebekah Gaxiola, Working Lands Conservationist
Jennifer Chavez, Operations & Communications
Manager (via Zoom)
Laurel Tappert, Field Technician

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS):

Hannah Isaacs, District Conservationist

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

Rachael Barry, Interim Coordinator

Public:

Claudia Eagle
Julia Rutherford
Bill Etter
Michael Miller (via Zoom)

BOARD MEETING CALL TO ORDER AT 5:01 PM

Prior Month's Minutes: Paul noted that the draft listed him as a Director and Alex as Vice President. Paul also suggested noting absent Directors within the attendee list. **Paul moved, and Alex seconded a motion to approve the Minutes from the June 17 Board meeting, with the two officer-title corrections. Approved motion passed.**

Vote Record: Approve the June 17, 2026, meeting minutes with corrections.

Director	Yes/Aye	No/Nay	Abstain	Motion	Seconded
Debra Brimacombe	☒				
Bill Eagle	☒				
Michael Calhoun	☒				
Alex Devin	☒				☒
Dave Freytag	☒				
Paul Gibbons	☒			☒	

Financial Report: Bill presented the Treasurer's Reports dated June 30 and July 31, 2026. For July, the U.S. Bank account began with \$85,376.13 and had an ending balance of \$108,555.41. **Bill moved, and Alex seconded a motion to approve the Treasurer's Reports. Approved motion passed.**

Alison noted that Science in the Park took place during the first week of July, adding that she believed it was the best one so far. She recognized Amber and Jennifer for organizing the event. Taylor mentioned that Jennifer has been preparing an article and photos about the program, which may be shared with newspapers through the Oregon Association of Conservation Districts.

SBWC: Rachell reported that she had returned from maternity leave and that the Scappoose Bay Watershed Council's fall programs were largely scheduled. Upcoming activities include the landowner knotweed workshop with the District on September 12 and the October 10 native plant sale. SBWC and the District were approved for a collaborative small grant supporting outreach and native planting for the Chief Concomly Park project, which will also help continue relationships with the City of Scappoose.

Rachell reported that SBWC submitted an Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) restoration grant request for part of a large project covering approximately 1.5 miles of South Scappoose Creek near Salt Creek and Mud Creek. SBWC plans to seek the remaining funds through the Private Forest Accord grant process. She is also working with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife on approximately four miles of large wood placement in the headwaters of South Scappoose Creek across Weyerhaeuser, Rainier, and Bureau of Land Management properties.

Rachell added that SBWC recently hosted an online outdoor recreation forum with local partners. She agreed to email information about the knotweed workshop and fall plant sale to Alex as requested.

Rachell left the meeting.

LCRWC: Rachael thanked the District for the volunteer opportunity at the Columbia County Fair and thanked SBWC for partnering on the Pollinator Festival in Clatskanie, which drew approximately 800 attendees. She reported that the OWEB approved the one-year Clatskanie Engagement Grant. The project will expand community relationships and develop three projects at various stages within the basin. She thanked Taylor for helping transfer the grant as LCRWC transitions away from District fiscal sponsorship.

Rachael reported that 26 people attended LCRWC's recent celebration. A landowner attending the event discussed several possible projects, and Rachael and Laurel completed a follow-up site visit. Rachael noted that the event led directly to project development and additional community conversations.

LCRWC submitted its first grants as an independent entity. One application, in partnership with Columbia County, would support restoration near the confluence of the Clatskanie and Little Clatskanie rivers in coordination with a County Public Works crossing upgrade. LCRWC is also the applicant for a North Coast regional technical assistance grant to share grant-writing services among watershed organizations.

Rachael added that LCRWC is developing an employee handbook and preparing for its first hire. Its September 10 Board meeting will include a presentation from Columbia Land Trust, and fall and winter stewardship events are being planned with the Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership.

Staff: Taylor introduced Laurel Tappert, the District's new Field Technician, and reported that she has been a strong addition to the team. The District has also begun using a new staff-meeting format to coordinate projects and assignments. Taylor is hopeful that this will help produce project update summaries to include in future Board packets once the process is fully established.

Taylor reported that Science in the Park was successful and that the fair booth generated meaningful educational conversations about emerald ash borer and soil testing. Staff tracked visitor activity to document the limited public engagement after approximately 7:00 p.m. Taylor said the District will continue discussing an educational-vendor designation and earlier closing time with the Fair Board. He also reported that recent transitions involving the District's auditor and IT provider had been resolved and that he was returning more of his attention to strategic planning.

OLD BUSINESS

Strategic Plan Board Development: Taylor reported that Directors, Associate Directors, and staff have continued working with Amy Stork on Board roles, responsibilities, and supporting documents. The next phase will include individual sessions between Taylor and Amy, followed by another staff session to align roles and responsibilities now that Laurel has joined the team.

Strategic Plan Retreat: Taylor encouraged all Directors and Associate Directors to attend the Board retreat scheduled for Friday, September 25, from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the Columbia SWCD office. Rachell noted that the date conflicts with a SBWC advisory board luncheon. She and Taylor agreed to discuss the scheduling conflict separately.

NEW BUSINESS

Associate, Board Director, and Officer Position Descriptions: Paul explained that the Strategic Planning Work Group, including Deb, Alison, Alex, Taylor, and Paul, had worked with Amy Stork to review and revise the documents. The drafts were distributed to the Board five days before the meeting. Paul said approval would allow the documents to help guide discussion at the September retreat.

The Board first reviewed the roles, responsibilities, and expectations for the Board and individual Directors. Discussion focused on active participation, reviewing meeting materials in advance, staying informed about conservation issues, communicating with landowners and constituents, and using the District's mission and vision to guide decisions. **Alex moved, and Bill seconded a motion to approve the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of the Board and individual Directors. Approved motion passed.**

Vote Record: Approve the Board and individual Director roles, responsibilities, and expectations.

Director	Yes/Aye	No/Nay	Abstain	Motion	Seconded
Debra Brimacombe	☒				
Bill Eagle	☒				☒
Michael Calhoun	☒				
Alex Devin	☒			☒	
Dave Freytag	☒				
Paul Gibbons	☒				

The Board next reviewed the Associate Director document, which clarifies the purpose of the position, expected participation, and the value Associate Directors provide to the District. Members identified minor title and formatting changes. **Alex moved, and Paul seconded a motion to approve the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of Associate Directors with the identified formatting changes. Approved motion passed.**

Vote Record: Approve the Associate Director roles, responsibilities, and expectations with formatting changes.

Director	Yes/Aye	No/Nay	Abstain	Motion	Seconded
Debra Brimacombe	☒				
Bill Eagle	☒				
Michael Calhoun	☒				
Alex Devin	☒			☒	
Dave Freytag	☒				
Paul Gibbons	☒				☒

The Board reviewed the duties and expectations for its officers. Discussion addressed the Chair's working relationship with the Executive Director and responsibility for committee assignments, the Vice Chair's role when the Chair is unavailable, and the Treasurer's and Secretary's oversight of duties commonly delegated to staff. It was noted that the Chair serves on the Personnel Committee.

Members discussed whether officer terms should be longer than one year or staggered to maintain continuity. They agreed that the topic would be appropriate for the September retreat. Members also noted that the position descriptions may be reviewed after the Board has used them and must be reviewed at least every three years or as needed. **Alex moved, and Paul seconded a motion to approve the officers of the Board of Directors' roles, responsibilities, and expectations. Approved motion passed.**

Vote Record: Approve the officer roles, responsibilities, and expectations.

Director	Yes/Aye	No/Nay	Abstain	Motion	Seconded
Debra Brimacombe	☒				
Bill Eagle	☒				
Michael Calhoun	☒				
Alex Devin	☒			☒	
Dave Freytag	☒				
Paul Gibbons	☒				☒

The Board also reviewed the Staff Support for the Board of Directors document. Paul explained that it largely reflects the Executive Director's job description and presents staff support responsibilities alongside the Board's governance duties. No action was taken.

Meeting Room Policy: Taylor reported that the District has encountered legal and compliance questions related to community use of the meeting room because the office is shared with NRCS. He has paused approval of new room-use requests while he develops a revised policy identifying prohibited political activities and other requirements. The draft will be reviewed by legal counsel before being presented to the Board.

Discussion addressed the distinction between political campaigning, advocacy organizations, and nonpolitical educational uses. Members also discussed the kitchen's lack of commercial certification and the need for users to leave the room in good condition. Taylor said he intends to prepare a policy for Board review at the next meeting.

The Board meeting was adjourned at 5:56 p.m.

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