



**Columbia
Soil & Water
Conservation District**

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**Minutes of the
Columbia SWCD Board of Directors
Annual Meeting January 21, 2026**

Directors Present:

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

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

Rachael Barry

CSWCD Staff:

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

Associate Director:

David Taylor (via Zoom – Regular Meeting only)

**Natural Resources Conservation Service
(NRCS):**

Hannah Isaacs, District Conservationist

Public:

Claudia Eagle

CALL TO ORDER OF ANNUAL BOARD MEETING: 5:03 PM

Annual Report:

Taylor introduced the annual report, and copies were provided. Jennifer explained that the report was published primarily online this year, with only a limited number of printed copies produced. She noted that this shift to electronic publishing is saving the district a significant amount of money and paper.

Audit:

Taylor reported that a spring celebration will be planned, as no dinner was scheduled for this year's annual meeting. He also reported that the District's audit is not yet complete, noting that auditors are behind and that other local SWCDs are experiencing similar delays.

The Annual Meeting adjourned at 5:06 PM

Michael called the regular board meeting to order at 5:07 PM

Prior Month's Minutes: Paul moved, and Debra seconded a motion to approve the Minutes from the Board meeting held on 12-17-25, as presented. **Approved Motion passed unanimously.**

Vote Record: Approve December 17, 2025, meeting minutes as presented.

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

David Taylor joined via Zoom

Financial Report: Bill presented the Treasurer’s Report. **Bill moved, and Debra seconded a motion** to approve the Treasurer’s Report from 12-31-25. **Approved Motion passed unanimously.**

Vote Record: Accept the Financial Report from December.

Director	Yes/Aye	No/Nay	Abstain	Motion	Seconded
Debra Brimacombe	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Jason Busch	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
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"/>				

Bills to Pay: No bills were submitted for review.

Public Comment: There was no public comment.

REPORTS

- NRCS:** Hannah reported that NRCS funding was previously focused on specific priority areas but will be changing moving forward. Funding is now divided into categories and will be available throughout the county. The categories offered this year are forestry, livestock, soil health, and wildlife. She provided the board with a summary sheet of funded practices.
Hannah also reported that she will be planning the annual Local Work Group meeting later this year, before May. She noted that a new NRCS planner will be splitting time between the St. Helens and Hillsboro offices and will be assisting her on Tuesdays and Wednesdays.
- Staff:** Taylor reported that he has scheduled committee meetings and emailed invitations to members. He added that he and Jenn have begun reviewing the District’s current policies, noting that most, if not all, require updates. The Personnel Policy/Handbook will be prioritized, with the goal of having it ready for review at the Policy Committee’s February 12 meeting at 10:00 a.m.
Bekah reported that she partnered with the Oregon Department of Forestry and the Oregon Department of Agriculture to host a virtual, Columbia County-specific Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) workshop. A recording is available upon request. She also reported that she is working with the Oregon State University Extension Office to assist with a pasture workshop tentatively scheduled for June 5. Additional details will be provided as they become available.
- LCRWC:** Rachael reported that the watershed council continues to gain momentum. She noted that the council partnered with Weyerhaeuser to assist with submitting a Private Forest Accord (PFA) Grant for a project along Tide Creek. She thanked David Taylor and the SWCD for their support and emphasized the value of building a relationship with Weyerhaeuser, one of the county’s largest landowners.
Rachael also reported that she attended a seed swap at the Clatskanie Food Hub, where she distributed materials for the SWCD and watershed councils. She noted that the Small Grant Team, which includes the Scappoose Bay Watershed Council and SWCD, reviewed and approved its first small grant application. She explained that these grants fund projects up to \$20,000 with a required 25 percent match.
Rachael also reported that she has spoken with the county Land Development Services office and would like to develop a one-page flyer for residents seeking additional resources or guidance. She and Jenn will continue discussions on this effort.
Rachael also informed the board that the Lower Columbia River Watershed Council is now recognized by the IRS as a 501(c)(3) and is in the process of establishing bookkeeping and policies. She noted that February 2 is Water Day at the Capitol and shared concerns about proposed funding cuts, encouraging others to advocate in support of programs that fund local conservation work.
Lastly, Rachael reported that the Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership has reached out to collaborate on a planting project at Fox Creek in Rainier, scheduled for February 21.

NEW BUSINESS

- **LCRWC Funding Request:** Supporting documents for this request were given to the SWCD Board (see meeting packet). Rachael explained that the LCRWC will experience a gap in funding this Spring and are requesting \$10,000 in unrestricted capacity support. She further explained that the council has been spending down the capacity funds received in 2021. Bill raised the questions whether or not the District has the capacity to approve the council's request. Taylor confirmed. **Bill moved, and Debra seconded a motion** to approve the LCRWC's request for \$10,000. **Approved Motion passed unanimously.**

Vote Record: Approve giving the LCRWC \$10,000

Director	Yes/Aye	No/Nay	Abstain	Motion	Seconded
Debra Brimacombe	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Jason Busch	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
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"/>				

- **Officer Nominations:** The Board discussed the process for officer elections, referencing past practice. It was noted that in previous years, the Chair opened the floor for nominations for each position and called for nominations three times before closing and proceeding to a vote. **Bill moved, and Paul seconded,** a motion that the officers remain in their current positions. Discussion followed regarding officer roles and procedures. The motion was withdrawn. Deb invited Alex to serve as Vice Chair. Alex accepted. Bill nominated Alex to serve as Vice Chair. Bill nominated Michael to remain as Chair. Bill also nominated Paul to remain as Secretary. As Bill could not nominate himself, Paul nominated Bill to serve as Treasurer. Discussion followed regarding the value of periodically rotating officer positions. Jason noted that the officers have remained largely unchanged for several years and encouraged considering leadership changes. Jason nominated Paul to serve as Chair. Paul declined the nomination. **Deb moved, and Dave seconded,** a motion to cast a unanimous ballot for the nominated officers. **Vote:** Motion passed 6 to 1, with Jason opposed.

Vote Record: Approve unanimous ballot for officers nominated

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

OLD BUSINESS

- **Strategic Plan – Amy Stork:** Amy reported that the document is ready for approval and noted that she has several discussion items related to implementation once a motion is made. **Paul moved** to approve the Strategic Plan as written, without the editor comments. **Alex seconded** the motion. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Amy clarified that the version included in the board packet was not the most up-to-date version, and discussion followed.

Paul amended his motion to specify approval of Version 5 of the Strategic Plan as written.

Vote Record: Approve Version 5 of the Strategic Plan by Amy Stork

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

Amy asked everyone to share what they felt was most important or significant in the document, and discussion was held. She then asked how the board would like to use the plan moving forward, noting that staff have already begun implementing the original schedule by aligning year one activities with each strategy. She also asked how the board would like to stay connected to the plan, referencing examples used by other organizations.

Deb expressed interest in receiving frequent, smaller updates during the first year, such as more structured staff reports. Paul suggested including the Strategic Plan as a standing item on the monthly board meeting agenda to support ongoing engagement and accountability.

Amy suggested forming a Board Development Committee, possibly transitioning from the current Strategic Planning Committee. She explained that the committee could work on developing a board work plan and a board director job description. Paul asked whether Amy could be involved in this work. She noted that some flexibility may exist within the current contract hours. Amy also clarified that the responsibility would not rest solely with the committee, but that the committee would help identify ways for the full board to engage in these discussions.

- **Storm Ready Certification:** Michael reported that this topic was raised last year and shared that, two years ago, he served as chair of the City of Vernonia's Public Works Committee and assisted in obtaining Storm Ready community certification from the National Weather Service. He expressed interest in having the SWCD apply for Storm Ready Supporter certification, noting that while the designation does not include grant funding, it provides name recognition and demonstrates that the District is prepared for storm related emergencies.

Bill asked what would be required for certification. Michael responded that an application must be submitted, including the District's emergency plan for storm related events. Bekah asked for clarification on what the certification would mean for the District, and Michael explained that it signifies the District has an internal preparedness plan. Alex asked for clarification on the document provided, and Michael explained that it was a resource describing the national Storm Ready program for informational purposes. Bekah asked whether the District would be responsible for issuing severe weather warnings, and Michael clarified that it would not.

Taylor noted that the effort aligns with the Strategic Plan goal of serving as a resource hub and suggested the District could put together a storm preparedness packet for the public.

Bill moved to approve the District applying for a Storm Ready Supporter Certificate. Alex seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

Vote Record: Approve giving the LCRWC \$10,000

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

BOARD REPORTS

Deb reported that the Columbia County Historical Society and Museum Association is developing a museum within the John Gumm School building. The museum is not yet open to the public. She encouraged everyone to keep the organization in mind if they come across items suitable for display on the Natural History shelf. Brief discussion followed.

MEETING ADJOURNED AT 6:24 PM

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