



**Columbia  
Soil & Water  
Conservation District**

35285 Millard Road  
St. Helens, OR 97051  
Ph: 503.433.3205

www.columbiaswcd.com

**Minutes of the  
Columbia SWCD Board of Directors  
Annual and Regular Meeting  
January 15, 2025**

**Directors Present:**

Debra Brimacombe, Vice  
Chair  
Dave Freytag, Director  
Michael Calhoun, Chair  
Bill Eagle, Secretary  
Paul Gibbons, Director  
David Taylor, Director

**Public:**

Jason Busch  
Claudia Eagle  
Toni Dockins\*  
Chuck Petersen  
Julia Hungerford  
Joel Kester  
Steve Calhoun\*  
Carol Calhoun\*  
Margaret Magruder,  
Columbia County  
Commissioner\*  
Jean Landers\*  
Pam Archuleta\*  
Jason Legg

**Associate Directors:**

Alison Charbonneau\*  
Barbara Travis\*

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

Hannah Isaacs, District  
Conservationist  
Rebekah Gaxiola, Natural  
Resource Specialist

**Scappoose Bay  
Watershed Council  
(SBWC):**

Rachell Meyers, Council  
Coordinator  
Brenden Thomas,  
Vegetation Manager  
Sophie Verdoorn, GIS &  
Watershed Technician

*\*Left after the Annual  
Meeting adjourned*

**CSWCD Staff:**

Malyssa Legg, District  
Manager  
Jennifer Chavez, Operations  
& Outreach Coordinator  
Crystalyn Bush, Resource  
Conservationist  
Amber Kester, Resource  
Conservationist

**Oregon State University  
Extension Office:**

Jake Barker, Forestry &  
Natural Resources Extension  
Forester\*  
Janhvi Pandey, Extension  
Horticulture Assistant  
Professor of Practice\*

**Oregon Department of  
Agriculture (ODA):**

Rick Cowlshaw, Regional  
Water Quality Specialist\*  
Karin Stutzman, SWCD  
Program Lead\*

**Welcome:** (12:12 PM) Malyssa introduced herself and announced that the annual meeting would begin with a staff presentation and a guest speaker to follow.

**Staff Reports:** Amber and Crystalyn gave a PowerPoint presentation to provide an update on projects and programs they are working on. Current and active projects include habitat diversification & enhancement on Conyers Creek, fish passage & habitat enhancement on McBride Creek, habitat restoration at a Scappoose Oak Woodland site, weed work with the Oregon State Weed Board (OSWB), providing technical assistance with ODA's Strategic Implementation Area (SIA) Program, the Water Quality Monitoring Program, Outreach & Volunteer events, as well as a handful of projects within the Small Grant Program.

Projects currently in development include fish passage and habitat enhancement at Apiary Road/Little Clatskanie, large wood installation at an Upper Clatskanie Restoration site, large wood installation at the Carcus Creek Phase 2 project location, fish passage and upstream restoration at Stewart Creek, fish passage and downstream restoration at Tandy Creek, Projects resulting from

the SIA program, and Nehalem Basin Partnership projects.

Amber added that there are a lot of great volunteer opportunities right now for anyone interested, as well as an upcoming propagation class in the spring. Brief discussion was held.

*The meeting recessed for lunch from 12:35 PM to 1:00 PM.*

**Guest Speaker – Katie Holzer, Watershed Scientist at the City of Gresham:** Katie gave a PowerPoint presentation on “Coexisting with Beavers”, explaining what she and the city of Gresham have experienced and learned from beavers since they began settling in the Columbia Slough Regional Water Quality Facility—a 13-acre site established in 2009 to manage stormwater runoff from 880 acres of industrial land. Their dam-building activities altered the facility’s hydrology, impacting stormwater flow patterns, retention times, and the composition of vegetation. Research revealed that beaver dams enhanced the removal of pollutants. The dams doubled the efficiency of reducing heavy metals, a key pollutant in the Columbia Slough. By slowing water flow, the dams allowed sediment to settle while filtering through the mud, sticks, and vegetation. Rather than removing the beavers, Gresham has adopted a management approach that appreciates their ecological value. Katie emphasized that her research demonstrates how beavers can enhance the effectiveness of stormwater treatment systems while also promoting cleaner water in various environments, such as streams and ponds. Their dams play a key role in filtering pollution from water, maintaining stable stream temperatures, and rapidly creating habitat complexity. Brief discussion was held. Jason noted signs of beaver activity along the Nehalem River in Vernonia, where undercutting of new growth on the banks has led to erosion concerns. Katie explained that while the first 10 years of a beaver family settling in may appear messy or undesirable, their presence ultimately brings significant long-term benefits.

*The Annual meeting concluded at 1:50 PM*

#### **CALL TO ORDER OF REGULAR BOARD MEETING: 2:08 PM**

#### **Swearing in of New Board Directors:**

The newly elected officers from Oregon’s general election in November 2024 are as follows: Zone 1 – Paul Gibbons, Zone 2 – Vacant, Zone 3 – Vacant, Zone 4 – Dave Freytag, Zone 5 – Debra Brimacombe, At-Large 1 – Bill Eagle.

Debra, Bill, and Paul individually read aloud and signed their oath of office, as follows:

*“I, [Name], do solemnly swear (or affirm), that I will support the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of Oregon, and that I will faithfully discharge the duties of the office of Director of the Columbia Soil and Water Conservation District upon which I am now about to enter”.*

Dave mentioned he has a hard time reading. Malysa administered Dave’s oath of office, which he signed.

**Prior Month’s Minutes:** Bill moved, and Deb seconded a motion to approve the Minutes from 12-18-24 as presented. **Approved Motion passed by unanimous vote.**

Vote Record: Approve December 2024 regular meeting minutes as presented.

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

**Financial Report: Bill moved, and Deb seconded a motion** to accept the Financial Report from 12-31-24. **Approved Motion passed by unanimous vote.**

Vote Record: Accept the Financial Report for December.

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

**Bills to Pay:** Malysa noted that there was a typo error with a check number. What reads as “306” should be “3062” **Deb moved, and Paul seconded a motion** to approve to pay the bills with check number 306 corrected to 3062. **Approved Motion passed by unanimous vote.**

Vote Record: Approve to pay the bills with a correction to check no. 306

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

**Public Comment:** Jason Busch thanked the staff and board for organizing the meeting and expressed appreciation for the food. He then raised the point that the timing of future meetings should be reconsidered. Jason read an excerpt from the district’s website highlighting who they work with, emphasizing that agricultural operators and landowners often find it challenging to take time off work to attend meetings like this. He noted that he himself has made several sacrifices, including taking time off today. Jason stated that the district’s target audience may feel alienated by the current timing of meetings. He also suggested that recruiting board members could be easier if meetings were not scheduled in the middle of the day.

Jason also mentioned that at last month’s (December) Board meeting, he made it clear that he was interested in being appointed to the Zone 2 position since no one ran for the position in the election. He noted that David Taylor is listed on the agenda for appointment, but he is not. Jason requested that, whether the board decides to also appoint him or not, they move the agenda item for David’s appointment to the beginning of the meeting. This would allow him—or anyone else appointed—to participate in the discussions.

Michael asked if any of the directors had thoughts or comments on the topics presented. There were none. He then stated that he believed it would be acceptable to move the discussion of appointing David Taylor up on the agenda as the next item for discussion.

Michael then asked if there were any other comments from the public. There were none.

Deb revisited Jason’s request to reconsider the timing of meetings. Malysa noted that today’s meeting was scheduled for noon as an alternative approach but believes that attendance remains consistent regardless of the meeting time. Bill stated that meetings were previously held at 7 p.m., but the board opted for daytime meetings to allow staff participation without having to pay overtime. Amber noted that, as a staff member, she serves landowners and already attends weekend events, so evening meetings would not be an issue if they better suited the community. Crystalyn agreed, adding that field staff are rarely requested to attend and present at board meetings. She noted that with a consistent schedule, staff could prepare materials in advance without the need for overtime.

Michael called for additional public comments. David Taylor emphasized that the agency is designed to serve the people and stressed the importance of outreach to ensure meeting notices are sent well in advance. Michael acknowledged that one advantage of the post-pandemic era is the ability

to join meetings virtually. Jason reiterated that he is not expecting an immediate decision but wanted to emphasize that attending meetings at noon remains challenging.

No further public comment.

**Vacant Board Positions:**

• **David Taylor appointed Zone 3 per request:**

**Bill moved, and Paul seconded a motion** to appoint David Taylor to the Zone 3 position on the Columbia SWCD Board of Directors. Deb asked David to introduce himself. He shared his background, noting that he grew up in St. Helens and Columbia City, worked in law and the “corporate world” for over 30 years, and currently manages approximately 300 acres in the Deer Island/Tide Creek area. He explained that projects on Tide Creek specifically drew him to join the Board and emphasized his passion for the district’s work. Taylor also mentioned that he has collaborated with the District and NRCS on his property for about seven years.

Paul asked why David did not run in the election, noting that certain criteria must be met. David explained that the timing was not favorable at the time but affirmed that he meets the requirements and has owned property in Zone 3 since 1989. Deb said it would be appropriate to appoint David to Zone 3 since no candidates ran for the position in the election and it is now vacant. Brief discussion was held. Paul asked if there were other candidates interested – none were identified. **Approved Motion passed by unanimous vote.**

Vote Record: To appoint David Taylor to the vacant Zone 3 position on the CSWCD board of directors.

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

Michael called for a motion to discuss appointing Jason Busch back to the Zone 2 position. **Deb moved, and Paul seconded a motion** to discuss Jason’s return to the CSWCD Board. No vote was taken at this time, and the board proceeded with the discussion. Jason introduced himself to the new directors and briefly shared his background. He is a fifth-generation property owner on the Nehalem River in Mist and has served on the CSWCD Board for 16 years. Due to working full time, managing his property, and family responsibilities, he found it challenging to attend every meeting last year but participated virtually when possible. Jason had hoped someone from his zone would be interested in running for the position, but since he doesn't want the seat to remain vacant, he is willing to volunteer as much time as possible. He also expressed interest in recruiting a replacement for the position if he finds it difficult to attend many of the meetings this year.

Michael stated that he has a “number of concerns”. He began by acknowledging that 16 years of service is commendable. He then brought attention to the agenda, noting that the District Manager and Financial Manager positions were up for discussion. Michael expressed concern about how Jason ended his term, specifically raising issues regarding the job descriptions at the December Board meeting. He emphasized that Jason’s questions, comments, or concerns should have been addressed in November. Michael reiterated that it seemed Jason had waited until the December meeting to raise his concerns.

Michael added that just the day before Christmas Eve, he received a long email from Jason that he described as “full of accusations and innuendos.” Jason responded that there were no accusations, to which Michael responded that we all have our own points of view.

Michael continued, explaining that despite everything, he is still willing to work with Jason and wants his comments and concerns to be addressed. He mentioned that he would have liked Jason to be able to list all of his concerns in an executive session, reiterating that November would have been the time to do that but, “like Cinderella”, his term was expiring within the week, and they would need to consult with the lawyer to see if Jason could join an executive session.

Michael concluded by saying that if he had spent nearly two decades in service, he would think about how he would end it with respect and dignity rather than “throwing things into chaos.” He clarified that this is his point of view and questioned why Jason is asking the board to willingly bring him back to “endure more of that” when he had the opportunity to run for the position. When Jason asked if he could defend himself, Michael responded that he was welcome to provide input. Jason explained that during the December meeting, he apologized and specifically mentioned that he did not want to leave under chaotic circumstances. He clarified that his intention was to be re-appointed to the Zone 2 position to see it all through because it is important to him. Jason added that he didn’t view his actions as creating chaos but emphasized that it was up to the board to decide if they would leave him in chaos by choosing not to appoint him. He also pointed out that the November meeting minutes reflect that his questions about the job descriptions were not answered.

Michael noted that it appeared the questions were not answered at the December meeting either. Jason responded that they were mostly answered, which allowed him to voice his opinion and influenced his vote on the job description. He stressed that a difference in votes is a natural part of board dynamics. Michael stated that he would like to hear thoughts from the board.

David explained that he had attended the December Board meeting virtually as an associate director. With over 35 years of board experience, he expressed that Jason made several strong points and is a valuable board member, emphasizing that a board benefits from diverse opinions. Bill agreed that diversity is important, and hopes that Jason can at least attend more meetings virtually if re-appointed. Jason confirmed his willingness to do so. Deb added that she also values hearing different perspectives.

Michael reiterated that he would have preferred for Jason’s concerns to have been addressed at the November meeting when the matter was still open. He added that it is not only the eleventh hour, but 11:59. He continued that if Jason would like to come back, he asks that everyone share their views without any kind of disrespect.

Jason responded that he felt Michael was “throwing shade” at him. He explained that the Financial Manager job description had been changed without being presented to the Board for approval. Malyssa explained that the job description was presented at November’s meeting. Michael reiterated that he has strong concerns about Jason as a Board member, adding that he’s not throwing shade but that it is from experience. David then called the question to proceed to a vote.

**The initial vote began, with Yes votes from David, Debra, and Michael.**

Before the vote continued, Malyssa interjected to read an excerpt from December’s meeting minutes, aiming to clarify that the Financial Manager job description had been discussed in November.

Jason asked if she had a copy of the November minutes, explaining that the job description had not been listed as an agenda item but was included in the meeting packet. He recalled that when he had inquired about it, Malyssa had explained that it was the old job description from before she became District Manager and did not require board approval since there were no changes.

Malyssa agreed, confirming that the document provided in the November meeting was the old job description. Jason then asked if the new job description had been included in the November meeting packet. Malyssa responded that, to the best of her recollection, it was the old description. However, she added that if the new version had been included, it might have been “jumbled” in with the District Manager description but was not specifically discussed at the November meeting beyond Jason’s inquiry about whether it required approval.

Brief discussion was held regarding whether a motion was open.

**David moved, and Deb seconded a motion** to appoint Jason to the vacant Zone 2 position of the CSWCD board of directors. **Motion failed.**

Vote Record: Appoint Jason Busch to the vacant Zone 2 position on the CSWCD board of directors.

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

David questioned if Michael could vote, adding that a chairman usually only votes if there is a tie.

Michael stated that is not the case on this board.

David then read aloud and signed his oath of office.

### **REPORTS**

- **NRCS:** Hannah stated that there were no new topics to discuss but reminded the board that an intern will be joining this summer. She expressed her desire for the intern to work closely with CSWCD staff, assisting with outreach and fieldwork. Additionally, she reminded the board that the Local Work Group meeting is scheduled for February 13 from 9:30 AM to Noon at the NRCS/SWCD office, with a virtual attendance option available.
- **SBWC:** Rachell explained that the council is staying busy with a lot of plantings happening right now. She also introduced Brenden, their new vegetation manager who will also oversee the council's nursery.

*Jason Busch left at 2:50 pm*

### **OLD BUSINESS**

- **District Manager Job:** Michael stated that he would like to backtrack briefly to bring the new Directors up to speed. He explained that several months ago, staff raised concerns about the District Manager (DM) position to the Personnel Committee. After meeting with staff, the committee presented these concerns to the full board for discussion. Ultimately, the board decided not to terminate the District Manager based on the information provided.

Following this executive session held in October, Malysa chose to step down from DM and transition back into the role of Financial/HR Manager while acting as Interim DM until the position is filled. In response, Michael asked staff to provide feedback on what they would like to see in a DM. He explained that this is what he was referring to earlier about the public comment period, emphasizing that this is when everyone should have voiced their opinions.

Michael continued, stating that during the December meeting, it was suggested to eliminate the Financial Manager position, which Malysa had planned to transition into, "essentially destroying a person's career". He described this as a turning point for him, stating that the board faced two options: they could either spend months going over job applications and interviews or reappoint Malysa as DM.

Michael shared that he consulted with the district's lawyer and was advised that this could happen since the job has not yet been posted. He proposed moving forward with her reappointment, provided that the concerns raised by staff are addressed and that a probationary period is implemented. He concluded by stating that with how the December meeting played out, he is not in favor of going down this road for the next few months and doesn't think that the majority of the board would like to either.

David stated that after attending the December Board meeting, he does have some concerns. He would like to see the maximum possible resources spent on the field staff. A brief discussion followed regarding the District's budget, which is available online, and the employee retirement plan.

Bill noted that the Personnel Committee recently conducted a performance review of Malysa and is satisfied with her work.

Rachell expressed concerns that a second position should be hired to prevent the DM position from becoming overburdened, as it has in the past. She added that the job descriptions overlap in certain areas and need to be more clearly defined.

Michael explained that a Financial Manager would still be hired to help offload duties.

Deb asked if Malysa would continue to perform financial duties during the probationary period. Michael responded that salary would need to be discussed. Paul asked if the district has salary guidelines. Malysa explained that there is a salary chart, but that it will need to be updated since there isn't currently a Financial Manager listed.

Discussion was held. David and Paul requested further discussion before making any salary decisions, as they would like to be brought up to speed.

David also noted that Jennifer's job description includes financial duties. Jennifer clarified that while she occasionally handles payroll, she has not been trained to take on additional financial responsibilities. Bill expressed surprise that this topic was being discussed at the annual meeting. Deb asked if they need to specify financial duties if they reappoint Malysa as the DM, questioning if it makes more sense to have Jennifer take on more of the financial tasks during the interim period. Discussion was held.

**Deb moved, and Bill seconded** a motion to reappoint Malysa to the District Manager position with a probationary period. **Approved Motion passed by unanimous vote.**

Vote Record: Reappoint Malysa to the District Manager position with a probationary period.

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

- **Financial Manager Job:** Malysa would like to discuss this at another meeting.
- **Wildlife Certificate:** Malysa explained that Jenn applied for the National Wildlife Federation certificate and a sign for the district grounds should arrive soon. Michael explained what the certificate represents. Rebekah requested that the maintenance crew discontinue blowing leaves away. A brief discussion followed. Michael proposed that the district establish a policy regarding this. Jennifer suggested that if a policy is to be created, the Policy Committee should convene to discuss it, noting that the committee has not met for quite some time though other policies have been created/approved. Michael informed Malysa he will reach out after the meeting to get this started.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

**Officer Nominations:** **Bill moved, and Dave seconded a motion** to cast a unanimous vote to maintain the current slate of elected officers as they stand, except for Treasurer. **Approved Motion passed by unanimous vote.**

Vote Record: To cast a unanimous vote to maintain the current slate of elected officers as they stand, except for the Treasurer position.

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

- Michael Calhoun – Chairman
- Debra Brimacombe– Vice-Chair
- Bill Eagle – Secretary

Interest in the Treasurer position was discussed. Paul requested a copy of the District's Bylaws. The Board will vote on a Treasurer at a future meeting.

- **Budget Committee Members:** Malyssa requested that anyone who knows someone interested in joining the budget committee should bring them to next month's meeting.

**BOARD REPORTS**

- Bill gave copies of the Annual Report to the Chamber of Commerce.

***REGULAR MEETING ADJOURNED AT 3:18 PM***

Respectfully Submitted by: *Jennifer Chavez*  
Jennifer Chavez, Operations & Outreach Coordinator