

**VALLEY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT**  
**SEPTEMBER MINUTES 209 N IDAHO ST, CASCADE**  
**WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 4, 2025, 9:00 A.M. IN-PERSON/ZOOM HYBRID MEETING**  
**Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88091655753?pwd=XaHxrYwWifdTvnYrk1b2qYlMJjAu4j.1>**

**Meeting Called to Order at 9:01am by Art Troutner**

**Members Present:** Art Troutner (Chairman), John Lillehaug, Judy Anderson, Lenard Long (Associate Supervisor).

**Others Present:** Durena Farr, VSWCD District Manager

**Others Online:** Neil Shippy, Watermaster; Cynda Herrick, Valley Co. P&Z; Ron Brooks, NRCS; Meghan Brooksher, ISWCC; Pam Pace; Zack Billingsley, RivHab; Kim Thompson, NFPRWC admin.

**Reports and Presentations:**

1. **Ron Brooks - NRCS Update:** Staffing changes include Rachel Hammer's departure via deferred resignation offer and Sam Hyde's recent departure after approximately one year of service. The Emmett office is now shorthanded and redistributing workload with the Weiser office. **Jerome Faulkner is serving as acting State Conservationist** on a temporary 3–4-month detail from headquarters. **Fiscal year 2025 EQIP obligations are nearly complete** with normal end-of-fiscal-year administrative tasks underway. **For Valley District EQIP fiscal year 2025, four projects were initially approved but two participants withdrew, resulting in two funded contracts totaling \$44,000 covering 140 acres** - one high tunnel project and one forestry management project. **Twenty-one applications were evaluated and ranked** in Valley County. **The rescission of IRA funding significantly impacted the program**, cutting the budget approximately in half and eliminating many vegetative treatment projects including forestry and rangeland work. **Seventeen active EQIP contracts are currently ongoing in Valley County** in various stages of implementation, with **21 contracts completed in the last five years**. **EQIP application deadline for next fiscal year is early October** with many rollover applications expected. Discussion of Scott Nicholson's interest in additional pivot conversion projects under EQIP, with income eligibility requirements of \$900,000 adjusted gross income three-year average. **Team 5 local work group meeting scheduled for September 18th at 10:00 AM via Zoom.**
2. **Neil Shippy - Watermaster Update:** Flow augmentation releases ended August 30th with Bureau of Reclamation running extra storage water through September 1st for rafters before reducing to minimum flows of 5 cfs. Currently ordering approximately 1,000 cfs out of Cascade Dam for irrigators. **Water usage comparable to last year despite dry spring and summer.** Recent rain lifted priority and reduced late-season storage usage. **District expansion continuing with plans to grow from current 360 users to approximately 800 next year**, including small river users and **Phase 5 expansion from Cascade to Banks area covering tributaries.** Working to identify current landowners for decades-old water rights. **Planning town hall meetings in Veterans Hall and possibly Garden Valley** to answer questions for new participants entering the district.
3. **Cynda Herrick - Valley County P&Z Updates:** September 11th P&Z agenda items previously discussed. **Comprehensive plan public hearing scheduled for October 23rd** with documents and ordinances to be available to public in two weeks on the website and distributed to agencies. **The plan represents amendments to the existing plan, incorporating four years of agency input and public testimony.** New items learned from recent public meeting include updating future land use map for industrial zoning around airport and reviewing lot coverage application differences between Valley County and McCall ordinances. **Riparian area overlay zone planned for 150 feet with 25-foot vegetative cover from high water line** requiring engineer review for stormwater management. **Fire Department driveway approval and 30-foot hardened/cleared surfaces included as immediate protective measures** while full fire zone ordinance development is planned for winter.
4. **Meghan Brooksher - Commission Update:** Kaitlyn Parks hired for Division 1 NRC position starting September 15th, working from Boise for two weeks before moving to Coeur d'Alene office. **District merger survey with IDWR forthcoming** from Langdon Group for district input. **Governor Little's Executive Order 2025-05 Idaho Act imposes 3% general fund hold back** affecting district match allocations by \$47,500 statewide. **District Allocations Working Group meeting September 8th** to recommend match allocations from remaining \$811,300 available for all 50 districts. **Match funds expected October or November** via direct deposit. **Fall Division 3 meeting October 14th in Weiser at train depot.** **Dave Carey site visit update:** Discussed grazing plans, pasture seedings, cross fencing, and irrigation conversions (wheel

line to pivot). **Funding prioritizes flood to sprinkler conversions over sprinkler to sprinkler.** Carey has one flood-irrigated field that is very steep and may not qualify under NRCS slope guidelines. Carey received EQIP application with October deadline but has not contacted staff for assistance. **Cross fencing not covered under WQPA**, only livestock exclusion fencing for TMDL-listed streams. Coordination planned with district for future site visits.

5. **Lenard Long - Lake Health and Water Quality Updates: First location-specific health advisory issued August 12th for Van Wyck boat ramp** after DEQ sampling found cyanobacteria toxins above recreational thresholds while dam location tested below threshold. Satellite imagery shows **seasonal cyanobacteria bloom progression with clearing beginning mid-August in northern lake areas.** Different species dominate at different times: **Gloe Trichia in July/August, followed by dolichospermum and anabaena in September/October.** Current bloom levels comparable to same timeframe last year with **low to moderate concentrations overall but potential for isolated blooms in stagnant backwater areas.** Recent blooms reported at Boulder Creek near Willow Creek confluence and Huckleberry Campground. **SEEP training postponed until spring due to insufficient interest. McCall city SEEP program planned for fall (October 7th)** where Leonard and Art will present on water quality importance and conservation district best management practices, with plans to obtain contractor lists for future district training programs.
6. **Water Availability Study Grant: Valley SWCD selected for \$250,000 Round 2 funding** from Philanthropy Northwest program. Contracts expected after October 1st with **work plan focusing on water availability studies and lake monitoring.** Plans include potential purchase of **\$20,000 portable sonde system** compatible with DEQ equipment for shared use between Payette Lake and Cascade Lake monitoring. Discussion of including watermaster in study and potentially hiring hydrologist for planning model development.
7. **Zack Billingsley - RivHab Introduction:** Water resources engineering and general contracting firm from Eagle conducting **Northwest Passage campground project with Parks and Recreation and Fish and Game**, sourcing willows from Dale Loomis. Available for stream bank restoration, floodplain work, and related projects. Toured district projects at YWAM Depot and Strand with suggestions for culvert improvements.

#### **Action Items:**

1. Bill Leaf moved to approve minutes from the August meeting with corrections to item 12 regarding the Leaf Ranch APA process. The correction clarified that establishing a limited liability partnership was what the Leaf family chose to do, but is not a requirement for APA applications. Judy Anderson seconded and **motion carried** with all in favor.
2. **John Lillehaug moved to approve August Treasurer's Report. Bill Leaf seconded and motion carried with all in favor.** Bank statement reconciled with all accounts in good standing.

#### **Unfinished Business:**

**Fiscal Year 2026 Operating Budget:** Review and approval **postponed to next meeting** pending final budget preparation work.

**Grading Stormwater Calculation Work Session: Leonard and Art scheduled to attend October 7th McCall city training** to present conservation district best management practices and gather contractor information for future SEEP training programs.

**South End Fence Project:** Site visit conducted showing good willow growth from fall plantings and effective electric fence installation. Some cattle access still occurring through grandfathered easement area during shipping operations.

**North Fork Payette River Coalition: Restoration plan at 60% completion in working draft form, over 100 megabytes requiring OneDrive sharing.** Final submission deadline in October with board review needed.

**Agricultural Protection Area: Leaf Ranch became first property to complete APA process** awaiting final county commissioner approval. **APA application and information to be included in upcoming district newsletter** to 1,500 recipients.

#### **GOOD OF THE ORDER:**

**Nez Perce Tribe filed lawsuit against Forest Service** for Stibnite Mine permitting, representing second lawsuit alongside environmental organization suit for Endangered Species Act violations.

**Waterways Management Plan:** Discussion of plan updates this fall with Dave Bingaman and need for district input on recommendations. **Waterways Advisory Committee meets first Tuesday of each month** with district participation planned for October meeting.

**West Mountain Water System Issue:** Report of damaged black pipe potentially part of public water system in Katherine Way area. Coordination with IDWR (Rob Whitney) for investigation.

**Pond Permitting Issues:** Discussion of unpermitted pond construction on Smiley Road and East Lake Fork with coordination between Valley County P&Z, IDWR, and Fish and Game.

**Potential Projects:** Sean Barton (10800 Spring Valley Road) contacted district about **2,640 feet of ditch running directly into reservoir** with interest in sediment mitigation measures. **Josh Tolson expressed interest in off-site water development project** to draw cattle away from reservoir access.

#### **Date Reminders**

*September 8th District Allocations Working Group meeting*

*September 11th Valley Co P&Z meeting*

*September 15th Caitlin Parks starts with Commission*

*September 18th NRCS Team 5 local work group meeting, 10:00 AM*

*October 1st Grant contracts expected*

*October 7th McCall SEEP training (Leonard and Art attending)*

*October 14th Fall Division 3 meeting, Weiser*

*October 23rd Comprehensive plan public hearing*

**Meeting Adjourned by Art Troutner at 10:35 AM** Thanks extended to all participants for their updates and continued collaboration.

**Chairman:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date Approved: October 2, 2025**

Minutes prepared by Durena Farr, VSWCD District Manager and Kim Thompson, NFPRWC admin.