



11/4/2024

**East Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation District
Board of Directors *APPROVED* Meeting Minutes**

Monday, November 4, 2024

6:02pm- Call to Order

Zimmer-Stucky called to order the regular meeting of the EMSWCD Board of Directors at 6:02pm on Monday, November 4th, 2024, at the EMSWCD Office in North Portland.

6:02pm- Introductions, Review/revise agenda, Review previous action items.

Zimmer-Stucky conducted introductions for the record. The following people were present:

Board of Directors: Jasmine Zimmer-Stucky (At-Large 2 Director, Chair), Mike Guebert (Zone 3 Director, Vice-Chair), Laura Masterson (Zone 2 Director, Secretary) (virtual), Jim Carlson (At-Large 1 Director, Treasurer) (virtual), Joe Rossi (Zone 1 Director)

Staff: Kelley Beamer (Executive Director), Kathy Shearin (Urban Land Program Supervisor), Heather Nelson Kent (Community Outreach & Engagement Program Supervisor), Julie DiLeone (Rural Lands Program Supervisor), Rowan Steele (Headwaters Farm Program Manager), Jeremy Baker (Senior Rural Conservationist), Asianna Fernandez (Executive Assistant)

Guests: Jen Aron (Blue Raven Farm and farm consultant for Headwaters), Nicki Passarella (Farm Consultant), Mary Colombo (Farmer), Larry Bailey (Multnomah County Farm Bureau), Deniece Tucker (MCFB), Tom Tucker (MCFB), Genevieve Rossi (public), Evan Gregoire (public), Craig Flynn (public), Joseph Kunsevi (DRC), Madeline Tucker (Farmer), Tara Violetta (Farmer), Jihelah Greenwald (Farmer), Leilani Mroczkowski (Farmer), Catherine Nguyen (Farmer), Kim Galland (NRCS)

Changes to the agenda: N/A

Previous Action Items: N/A

6:03pm- Paying Respects to Bob Sallinger

Board Members, Staff, and Public paid respects to Bob Sallinger and the Board said a few words.

6:08pm- Review/Approve October 2024 Board Meeting Minutes

Motion: Guebert moved to approve the October 7, 2024, Board Meeting Minutes. Carlson 2nd. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).

6:10pm- Public Comment:

Greenwald, a 2nd year Headwaters Farm Business Incubator Program farmer. They are speaking today to the Board to request an appeal to let their farm, Kasama Farm, stay at the incubator program, leasing land, and encouraging the Headwaters Farm and District staff to support their business. They run a less than 1-acre, no till farm, as their full-time job for four years, growing Filipino, Southeast, and East Asian vegetables. They grow for the Filipino community in East Multnomah county through CSA, working with the Filipino community center, and other Asian nonprofits and small businesses. They are feeling nervous about their business because of an email they received from HIP staff stating that without meeting additional requirements, their farm lease would not be renewed for next year. On page 31 of the Farmer Manual, there are benchmarks that the farmers are requested to meet, and right now there is one that they are not meeting, the new partnership agreement requirement, but they are scheduled to meet it by February 1st as asked to. They're also asked to meet two other requirements that seem like they have not been asked of other farmers, making them singled out. They've been asked to have 70% of their time, crops, and acreage at the Headwaters Incubator Program site, which would mean moving a third of their



farm, which is not feasible for their business. They're a small business and have to make decisions that are financially viable for them. They decided to split their operation between two sites because it works for them, and the District imposing its beliefs about how their operation should be midway through tenure in the program is not supporting their business, and they understand that the Board is in the role of supporting small business and not being in the nitty-gritty operations of each farm business. They are asking the Board to support staff in letting the farmers make those operational decisions themselves. On page six of the Farmer Manual, it says the District is working to break away from white supremacy culture, and center equity through all of its policies and services for the Headwaters program. Much of this work involves examining program policies, bolstering support services for underserved farmers, focusing on relationship building, and expanding the concept of what constitutes successful farm models. They asked the Board to please lean into these values and encourage the staff to do the same by supporting Kasama Farm, which they believe is meeting these goals that the program has. They've grown their farm slowly to prioritize sustainability, they're centered on feeding underserved immigrant communities in Multnomah County, and they're a no-till farm that prioritizes soil health, so they feel like they're in line with the District's values. They ask the District to let them operate to make their own business decisions. They know the manual is always changing and evolving, but please do not add policies that add additional barriers to their particular farm, and instead ask them how they can support their business and follow their lead on how they want to run their business.

Violetta, a 2nd year Headwaters Farm Business Incubator Program farmer. They run a "no till-ish" farm, following similar practices as Kasama Farm. They are speaking in support of Kasama Farm, and their petition to let them stay in the program and maintain their lease for the next three years. They have concerns that the metrics or criteria that Kasama Farm is not meeting is not also being asked of other farmers in the program. The amount of money their farm is making is similar to Kasama's and they receive grant funding from USDA for their CSA shares to be able to implement a sliding scale, so their business health is similar. So, if there's question about the vitality of Kasama Farm's business, why is it also not being asked of theirs? It seems like these specific questions about Kasama Farm were not asked of their farm during the mid-season check-in, which they're concerned about, and it makes them feel like they cannot trust in having these mid-season check-ins without a notetaker present to ensure that the same information is being given and same question are being asked of each farm. They asked the Board to consider what Greenwald shared as well as Violetta's concerns for fairness and equity.

Bailey, President of the Multnomah County Farm Bureau. Speaking on behalf of Scot Ekstrom: He is frustrated by the fact that he's been farming in East Multnomah County, working hard to keep his land in production, while developments are going up around him. He has thoughts and suggestions about how the Land Legacy Program (LLP) can be more effecting in trying to create offers for farms, as opposed to purchasing properties that would otherwise go to another farmer or someplace else. He asked the Board to read his full letter, as he's very passionate about the topic.

Bailey, President of the Multnomah County Farm Bureau. He echoed the HIP farmers who spoke tonight. They talked about the fact that they're running a business whose practices are being scrutinized in a certain way that's causing challenges. From his perspective, the same thing happens with the LLP when property is purchased, and constraints are placed on how somebody can then do business moving forward. It may be well intentioned constraint, but it often causes problems for people who are trying to purchase property, but the District, from the farmer's perspective, "swoops in", and purchases it. Local farmers can't compete with the District. The unintended consequence is that all properties in the area become more expensive, which has to happen because the District is a competitor in the market. He would like the Board to think about these things and the unintended consequences of the program. He was hoping to have Shipkey speak with the Farm Bureau as they wanted to learn a little bit more about that and they appreciate the conversation, and he is asking for an ongoing conversation. He knows that Rossi is trying to have a conversation in that regard as well and he thinks that if staff go into Bailey's community and talk with people, the program is generally not well received, because it's competing with everybody else for a very limited resource which makes it more difficult for them. Though he doesn't know exactly which changes have been made to the program, with changes that are being made, the LLP



puts constraints on the property saying how it can and can't be farmed moving forward, which is problematic in terms of letting the business owner run their business in the way that's most profitable for them. Beamer and he have had a few conversations about that in the past. He appreciates the opportunity to discuss this and welcomes the opportunity to do so moving forward.

Tucker, a farmer in Troutdale. They run an 84-acre farm. Loves the concept of tying up farmland for farm use, as it's been their passion their whole life. Their land has been in the family for almost 200 years, so they know what works, what doesn't, and how to be stewards of their land. She would have full intentions of joining the LLP, but can't, because they've evolved into raising nursery stock, which the program wouldn't allow. They have no intention of stopping farming, but they also can't lock their property up into this type of program because they feel like they have to still have control of the property to make a living, and nobody loves the land more than they do. They've always backed away from joining the program because they can't get past the wall of giving up management decisions on how to best run the land for their purposes.

Rossi Last meeting, he issued an ask that the District address the perceived conflicts we have with our local farmers, which is competing for the scarce land that we have, for our farmers to adequately compete to expand or shift acreage toward less development. As a director, he sees himself as a conduit for information, so he engages a lot of the farm community; small urban, small rural, historic, and those in the city who saw water benefits. One group that we're underserving or mis serving due to unintended consequences are those we compete in the marketplace with for ag property. He asked for a conversation with fellow farmers, and it might have been believed that Rossi didn't represent a lot of people, but there are a lot of farmers at this meeting tonight and there are a lot more farmers that he's talked to that asked him to bring the issue up to the Board. He framed the issue in a statement that was intended to be exciting for both people, and the area of alignment to begin conversation, and he was disappointed that it got voted down. He was told that he shouldn't be preventing people from speaking to the District, so some people wanted to speak for themselves tonight. In conversation with Director Carlson, he perceived that the Board didn't understand his low level ask or that he represented a lot of people, and Carlson thought the Board didn't understand what Rossi was trying to say. So, to solve that, we're having a conversation now which is unnecessary, because he wishes we could've had it earlier, as he asked for. We may have a different approach, but we have the same goals. He loves farmland and wants to preserve it as much as possible. In terms of how we get there, our ideas may be different, but he thinks we should begin a conversation with our ag community in the district, like he asked for. Thanked the Headwaters Incubator Program farmers for attending, and thinks their commonality is that the District is rigid and not everybody can fit what we want to do. His proposal adds capacity instead of costing us money, because we don't have to make big purchases of ag land and tie up a lot of capital into one property. With the \$800,000 that we'd invest into a property, we could instead spread it amongst other people and actually accomplish soil and water health a lot more. If the goal is to accomplish the most soil and water health possible in our district, he thinks we're misapplying our resources because farmers can buy the farmland, and we could collaborate with them to be successful instead of competitors.

6:30pm- Leadership Team Monthly Updates

Beamer Offered her gratitude to the members of the public who showed up and shared their input today. We're stronger because you're part of this process. Internally, the Board passed the strategic plan with 3 main pillars: soil and water health, climate action, and equity.

- The Leadership Team is engaging with a consultant to help us bring the 72 goals from the strategic goals document into a succinct form and help us identify what success would look like year to year.
- We put a conditional use permit application into the Multnomah county for a Headwaters Farm (HWF) office, because the current office is in a riparian area and it's not a healthy or conductive office.
 - The Multnomah County Planning staff advised us to pursue a permit adjacent to the current farm structure, which is now the direction we're going in.
- Annual Evaluations are complete



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- Staff are participating in bi-monthly lunch and learns, with the next one highlighting the Human Access Project and water health in the Willamette.
- At the next Board meeting, we'll come back with Quart 2 report. It's also the Annual Meeting.

Shearin shared her Urban Lands program update:

- Recently hired Cat Ayala as the Urban Lands Education and Outreach Coordinator, and she'll be running workshops and other outreach. CO&E have helped to get the workshops up and running for the full season, which start soon.
- We've been getting a lot of technical assistance calls, so we've been doing a lot of site visits. We might get an urban CLIP project soon.
- Native Plant Sale planning is ongoing.

Zimmer-Stucky Congratulated the team on their work with getting the workshops up and running. Having a workshop geared towards prepping for the plant sale was a great idea. She also appreciates the wildfire resiliency workshop.

Shearin We heard from the community that they wanted that plant sale prep workshop earlier, which we've done. The team has been expanding our workshop options, sizes, and timeframes.

DiLeone shared her Rural Lands program update:

- Winter crops are planted at Headwaters Farm.
- Steele is meeting with current Headwaters Farm Business Incubator participants about planning for the next season.
- There's been more press coverage on the farm from OPB and the Capital Press.
- Held a required public meeting for the farms participating in our farmland protection program with easements. A few folks attended in support of the easements.
- The Eat n Greet was successful. About 15 farmers attended, and participated in discussions about how the District could help facilitate community building between the farmers in the area. Planning to move forward with a few of the ideas created then and meet again with a few individuals. Thanked Guebert and Zimmer-Stucky for their attendance.

Zimmer-Stucky The Eat n Greet was a great cross section of the farmers in the East county, with participants' experience ranging from early CSA, to retired folks tending land, to large commercial growers. It was great to see everyone in the room talking to each other and learning about the District.

Kent shared her Community Outreach & Engagement program update:

- We've been doing a lot of promotion for the Headwaters Farm Business Incubator application process.
- We've been working with Shipkey and Clackamas SWCD, to put together resources for succession planning. Testing out different languages for the materials as well as what to name the project besides succession planning, as it might not be the most obvious term for people. Shipkey and his counterparts contracted with Diana Tourney and colleagues to do 10-minute-long webinar sessions to walk people through the planning and process steps, five videos and accompanying worksheets. The Communications team has been trying to figure out how to market this program and making them accessible. We have incentives in mind in collaboration with the in-person succession planning workshops that the Oregon Agricultural Trust is hosting. We don't have a way to verify that people are using the resources, but this is a new way to make the information accessible to people.
- The new website design is coming together.

Zimmer-Stucky laughed so much about the Instagram video of Wood. Thanked him for being a good sport!

6:45pm- Personnel Committee Recommendations



Zimmer-Stucky The recommendations to the Board include procedural updates to the Employee Handbook and documenting and finalizing our Executive Director performance evaluation process.

Beamer The request is to make a motion to update the Employee Handbook, specifically to remove the section about Veteran's day as it is already one of the District's floating holidays for all employees and updating the language around the beginning vacation time to be in line with what the Board passed a few months ago.

Motion: Guebert moved to approve the Personnel Committee recommendations regarding the Employee Handbook. Carlson 2nd. Motion passed unanimously (4-0, Masterson unidentified).

Beamer The other motion is regarding codifying the Executive Director review process, as approved by the Personnel Committee.

Motion: Guebert moved to approve the Personnel Committee recommendations regarding the Executive Director evaluation process. Carlson 2nd. Motion passed unanimously (4-0, Masterson unidentified).

6:50pm- Headwaters Farm Weeds Assessment Update

Beamer Tonight, we'll be focusing on weed management and soil health strategy at Headwaters Farm (HWF). A year ago, staff presented the challenges and barriers around weed pressure at the farm, along with a plan for its management. That plan was put into place, and we've been trying to bring the Board along via the Rural Land updates, the HWF Work Session, and this space for reflection of the year. The Headwaters Farm is a complex ecosystem, with the Farm Business Incubator being interconnected as well.

Steele and Aron presented about Headwaters Farm Business Incubator –

- Headwaters Farm is a multipurpose space:
 - Headwaters Farm Business Incubator
 - Education, demonstration, experimentation, all promoting conservation agriculture, as one of the ways in which we're pursuing greater soil and soil health and meeting our climate goals.
- Soil health is synonymous with weed and pest management
- Main foundational piece of the program is to improve soil health
- 4 pillars for success:
 - Cover crops
 - Biological inoculant
 - Balancing micronutrients
 - Optimizing Tillage
- Complexities:
 - Being the home of the Farm Business Incubator means the plots have many different users, managing them differently over the years, creating a wide variation of conditions at each site.
 - District vs farmer managed land.
- What's been done this year:
 - The HWF soil health report was finished by Jen Aron 5 months ago.
 - Physical interventions of the soil
 - programmatic changes to match the plan
 - soil trials to follow up with the report
- **Aron** explained each of the physical interventions that the Weeds team has done to the soil as recommended by the Weeds plan:
 - Optimizing tillage- compromised soil structure is one of the primary challenges at HWF. This is the forefront of the physical intervention plan. We're working on choosing the least destructive/harmful tool to still reach the same result.



- Implemented successful trials to figure out how to move away from the disc use and found the “sow and mow” practice in which we sow the seed with a no till drill and follow with a mow of the cover crops or weeds which acted as mulch.
- Also successfully trialed the chisel plow in lieu of the disc for fall-sown cover crops.
- Cover crops- switched to a multi-species blend for collaborative growth instead of competitively. Each species was chosen to target different challenges at the farm.
- Mowing- in the past, we’ve used the disc, but this year we chose to mow to reduce tillage and to help keep weeds in check.
 - In just this season, we can already see the weeds start to calm down with this change.
- Inoculants- Had the most impact of all of the interventions. Biological tests from 2020 showed severe microbial deficiencies. We built two new on-site compost systems, used to mimic livestock on the farm.
 - On seed – to encourage biological relationship at the beginning of sowing. Inoculated about 4,500 lbs. of seed this year, with purchased and compost pile inoculants.
 - Added to seed foliar applications
 - On soil – farmers added compost to their seed propagation mix, inoculating their entire field.
 - Farm Business Incubator farmers have already reported rapid seed germination with solid crop stands from this trial.
- Rip and drip- optimizing tillage and introducing inoculants at the same time.
 - Modified our subsoiler with tanks that are filled with homemade inoculant that drips down the attached tubes into the soil. Though it feels invasive, the hope is that it’s a one and done situation instead of annually.
 - “Drip”: Compost extract, molasses, fish, etc. – as many things as we can fit in it.
 - Soil used to fracture and recompact in one season, but we’re no longer seeing that happen.
- Applying trace minerals – custom blend to apply to cover crops in farmer fields. Using a foliar feed means only a small amount was used.
 - Apply necessary nutrients with potential to be immediately absorbed by the plant when it needs it most.
- Irrigation- She didn’t expect this limitation, and it caught everyone off guard.
 - We were only able to irrigate three acres per week.
 - Instead of putting out a scare amount of water over 38 acres, we chose to focus irrigation on certain plots.
 - Physical limitations: the well can produce max 110 gallons per minute, we did not want to compete with the farmers during the day which means we have to place sprinklers in certain places overnight for iteration watering.

Public Is the data and information for the inoculant available to the public?

Aron To some degree, yes. It included a vermicast extract produced on site, molasses, fish emulsion, and humic acid.

Rossi Why is this farm the only one he knows of that does this practice, when other historic farms including his own don’t seem to need this heavy intervention?

Aron It’s just context, this is a unique farm with unique conditions, and due to how it’s been managed for the last 40 years, it’s been left in a pretty compromised state.

Rossi Why are neighboring farms who also have a history of ball and burlap operation producing good soil? Rossi offered a sample of said soil to Aron. We’ve run that ground (referring to Headwaters Farm) down for the last seven years, why do you keep blame shifting to the previous grower? We’ve had less



performance every year for seven years. You don't tell anybody why we have an intervention this year. Why do we have intervention this year? Why are you pointing to somebody from 7-9 years ago about the problem instead of our management for the last 7 years?

Aron hasn't blamed anyone for everything. It's context. She can't speak about the practices of the Ball and Burlap operations nearby. The soil in the cup Rossi brought doesn't have a good soil structure. What we're looking for is a marble-like structure, but the soil in the cup has a little bit of that with mostly something that looks like powdered sugar. From everything she understands about soil structure and the physicality of it, it's not indicative of good, healthy soil. She cannot speak to the neighboring farm; she can only speak to Headwaters Farm. In the report there are all the reasons why HWF is having challenges.

Rossi So, why does that soil produce good crops and ours does not, including this year, where we have a nitrogen deficiency across all of the plots. A seemingly demonized practice has better soil than ours and has better crops than ours. We're teaching pseudo farming. Of the no till methods plowing does a service when correctly applied, discing only touches so much, as well as tilling. The optimized tillage is wrong. Taking what's on top and flipping it to the bottom provides a deep way for the roots to go down. Right now, what HWF has is stratified soil, it doesn't have the ability to take moisture and nutrients down, causing shallow roots. The ability to draw up nitrogen is bad. He's frustrated because he was asked to be at meetings at HWF, and he was never invited, and the reason we're having this discussion is because he pointed out the non-performance of the farm. As a director, he should know what's going on out there and he feels like there is distrust in him from the group because he knows what a farm is supposed to look like and what he's being told about it in meetings doesn't match.

Aron Speaking to the tillage, we're four to five months into the trial, this farm has been tilled and disced to death for 10 years. From taking extensive site history, we saw production go down, soil structure and biology being destroyed. This new approach of not tilling at depth has only happened for four months, and we're only seeing the opposite of a decrease in productivity. The way that agriculture has been for decades is starting to shift. We're starting to understand how dynamic and complex soil is and know better. While things have historically been done a certain way for a long time and worked, once it doesn't is where she begins working with a lot of farms after they've hit a wall, just as HWF has. When they hit a wall, the weeds, pests, and disease took over. So, we're making a shift and trial run. The lack of tilling is not what's causing the crops to not grow well, because that's been happening for the last few years, which is why she's been brought in. We're doing things differently and we're already starting to see some impressive results.

Rossi hasn't seen impressive results when he visits HWF. We're talking about two different things- tilling and plowing. Plowing has never been done at HWF. He asked for a trial so that the District could get an independent opinion on the farm. But you're not inviting an expert independent opinion to the farm, and not actually doing a trial like he asked for. He's tired of underserving our farmers, they should have land that's productive and easy to farm.

Rossi Our taxpayers spend \$800,000 on that asset, we spend \$70,000 per student and an OSU education cost \$12,000. Are we really doing our taxpayers a service?

Beamer This project was catalyzed from the land's intense weed pressure. There isn't a magic wand to fix this, the context is about the weed problem. We're dealing with a unique site situation that proliferates under tillage. We're all trying to figure out how to fix the nutsedge problem and create an abundant farm that serves the Farm Business Incubator farmers, lifts soil health, and is an important community investment. Soil health is only one of the approaches to the weed issue.

Colombo What's the reason for getting the inoculants down deeper with the rip and drip?

Aron They don't travel well down the soil. There are multiple distribution points along the tubing of the tool.

7:24pm – **Jim Carlson** left the meeting.



Steele went on to explain Soil Health Initiative: Programmatic Shifts

- Farmer Supports:
 - Provided the farmers with the same inoculants and nutrient blends that the District has been using on our own crops, which have all shown fast and encouraging results.
 - Provided all of the tools involved in weed management for free: string trimmers, flame weeder, power ox, etc.
 - Each farmer got six hours of farm work with our weed management crew
 - Bi-weekly technical assistance for each farmer with Aron to discuss any production challenges.
- Soil Ambassador Program (optional):
 - Meets with Aron for 15-30 minutes a week to discuss production topics and how to apply the soil health assessment to their individual plot.
 - Attends six soil health workshops in the season
 - Participants for 3+ years graduate with a soil health kit to assess and monitor their own soil conditions: penetrometer, refractometer, soil probe, etc.
- Accountability and small changes to the Farm Business Incubator Programming:
 - Weed Assessment Team: provides each farmer with two to three progress reports throughout the season particularly about how urgent their weed management needs are.
 - At first, they worked to create a rubric that was too complex, and decided to shift it to a simple green, yellow, red-light form, in regard to weed severity.
 - The team includes Steele, Rodrigo Corona, and Catherine Nguyen.
 - Emergency mowing in small blocks at a time. If a farmer has lost control of their bed or area, we'd let the farmer know that they need to fix it, or it will be mowed in an x amount of time. We want the farmer to know that we're here as a safety net to help them quickly arrest a weed problem.
 - First year farmers are put on a trial year: to ensure that the program is working for the new farmers, before they're accepted into the program.
- Recruitment: Improving our outreach for recruitment
 - Standing ads in Capital Press for market all season long
 - OPB and Capital Press articles
 - KGW interview
 - Steele was part of a farmer Podcast
 - Changes to application and selection process. Mostly highlighting experience as a key criterion for farmer selection, as well as moving interviews too sooner in the selection process to help us get to know them better.

Steele listed the Weed Management Plan's original areas of concern: significant existing seed bank, nutsedge pressure, ensuring our farmers are prepared and have the resources they need, accountability pieces are clear, fair, and agreed upon, ensure our tools and resources are serving our farmers, and the acknowledgement that the farmers are not starting with clean fields and that we play a role in making sure that changes.

Steele Over the course of the season, we haven't solved all of these big issues, but despite setbacks, we have achieved all of the actions that we set out to do, including the interventions and program shifts mentioned today.

Zimmer-Stucky With water availability and only being able to treat three acres at a time per week, are there thoughts on finding ways to expand that next year?

Steele Yes, that's on District-managed lands only, so Farmers have the water they need and flexible timing during the day. Once they meet their cap of 110 gallon per minute while irrigating at the same time, we have an irrigation board that the farmers can sign up for to alternate irrigation times between them all.



Masterson Of the 15 acres that the District is managing, how many of those were in the cover crop blend and how many in Sudan grass this summer?

Steele The Sudan grass trial alone was under half an acre, based off timing, as we'd already sowed the multi-species blend earlier in the summer.

Steele and Aron explained the trials done:

- Pigs and nutsedge control: We pastured eight pigs on about half an acre, rotating them throughout the farm with the intention of them digging up and eating the nutsedge. Aron ran transects before the season started, so we'll be able to see if there was any impact from the pigs next Spring or Summer. Just in case it did work, he's working on lining up pigs again for next year.
- Cultivation and Stale Seed Bed: Done to dial in our cultivation equipment, demonstrate its use to the farmers, and give them space to learn how to operate the equipment. This will be done again next year.
- Stale Bed trial: Ran a disc through it every few weeks and irrigated in between to promote weed seed germination and then rapid termination.
- Nutrient Balancing: **Aron** worked on a half-acre of the farm's most difficult land to trial different levels of trace minerals to explore the impact of various rates. Unfortunately, due to the large amount of variability, it was difficult to quantify the results. She then broke the space into two parts, one being disced and the other being ripped and dripped. She has some preliminary data but won't know for sure until the conditions are a little dryer.
- Perennial Cover: Done in a plot with some of the most challenging conditions. It's already being filled in. The nutsedge in this field is more down the hill, but it's smaller and not thriving.
- Sudan Grass smother crop: Tried a monocrop and a diverse cover crop blend and found that while the plant is only a fraction of the size from the blend, the root system is almost twice the size of the monocrop. These were planted a few weeks apart in different flats but with similar starting conditions.

Aron gave a background on weeds, which are a huge concern at HWF. Soil is a living breathing ecosystem, and historically, weeds are just one of the ways the Earth repairs itself. They're a symptom of much bigger concern on the farm; mineral imbalances or mismanaged soil. We want to pay attention to what the weeds are responding to instead of suppressing with herbicides or aggressive tillage. The weed indicators for each issue will be resolved with them, with some time. When folks come to her farm, they're often shocked at the lack of weed pressure.

Masterson At a different phase of the plant's growth, their root systems might look different. It would be cool to see the results if you planted them at the same time and compared their root systems at different foliage sizes. Also found that Sudan Grass will grow a bigger root system when mowed.

Aron In her research, found that the root system for Sudan grass is usually one to five feet.

Looking forward:

Aron We will continue to use the Headwaters Soil Health Plan as a guide, we will continue to build on the Weed Management Plan, and we'll have the advantage of starting all these applications at the next season's start next year instead of June like we had to do this year. She already sees space for making shifts in the Soil Health Plan, as their goal is to be adaptive instead of prescriptive.

- Three-phase management plan:
 - Active Restoration – documented field history and created a color-coded map to show where we're headed. There are areas of least acreage, active restoration areas with lowest weed pressure, transition to active areas with only a little more weed pressure, and holding areas that will take the most time to repair because irrigation and management resources are not available.
 - As the team works, each field will move into a different color or category of improvement. Each plot of land will move into a different category in tiers, as a cycle, before they can reach "green" status to give to a new farmer.



Masterson Do we expect the active restoration zones would be passed for new Farm Business Incubator farmers in this coming year, or keep them for another year before recruiting more farmers?

Steele This is a tentative map. Yes, some of the fields will be moved to different categories in this next year.

Masterson would like to continue to improve the land and bring in less farmers this year. Wants to ensure the land they start on is healthy, high-quality land.

Zimmer-Stucky recognized that the District has done more in terms of outreach while we're running this plan at the same time.

Steele Some of the outreach we're doing now is likely going to help down the road instead of instantly as many of those farmers might not be ready for the Business Incubator Program now, but they'll see it as part of their trajectory to work towards.

Guebert Great job on the podcast.

Zimmer-Stucky is this the first year that the cultivation area is being offered?

Steele Yes, we got the tractor in late Spring. He was very impressed with how effective it was, even with nutsedge. It was knocking the nutsedge back and even removing it from the ground. He's heard from the farmers that they're intrigued and want to figure out if they'll be able to use it next season.

Rossi How did we come across the cultivation tractor? How much did it cost?

Steele The producers brought a bunch of equipment to a workshop a couple of years ago, and he was able to take a look at the plots to see what kind of equipment we might need and recommend some to us. He was impressed that this particular one was able to be more universal in terms of row size than others. It cost us around \$35,000.

Rossi It's hard for farmers who struggle to see that tractor knowing that they could never afford it. When he made his suggestion, he was thinking of the Allis-Chalmers G that's also interchangeable, which is about \$25,000 and it does the same job. He wishes his opinion was asked for before buying it. We could've saved money and taught the farmers about a tool they could actually use and afford after graduating. We shouldn't be teaching something that farmers can't actually use.

Steele sees Rossi's point. HIP is unique in that it's a multi-user site, and equipment needs to be able to handle all the different kinds of beginning farmers using it, so it's important to make investments that are going to be reliable and more helpful in different ways.

Steele shared about land leased to farmers.

- We have 22 acres of leasable, irrigatable land
 - In the past, we had 17 acres in production at a time.
- Leasing max = 13 acres, now that we're looking at longer breaks in between farmers.
- The District is still managing 40% of the land, which is good to keep in mind in terms of capacity.
- This is all in terms of the immediate future, for as long as we have soil health concerns.

Limiting factors:

- Plot variability – can't do a one size fits all approach.
- Time – the farm wasn't degraded overnight; it won't be restored overnight either.
- Capacity - couldn't have done work this year without contracting Passarelli and our weeds management team
- Water - We looked into well improvements before, but there isn't guarantee that we'd get any additional capacity from any changes, it's just what the well produces. Something that might work is having storage capacity on site, to backfill our pump. We're working with a local company to price that, but if it's within a comfortable range, we'll bring it back to the Board for the next Budget cycle.



Lessons Learned:

- Don't plant summer cover crops too early – will either keep Fall cover crops longer or do a quick wheat round to buy us time.
- Maintaining soil moisture – learned how long it takes to move sprinklers, hoses, etc.
- Trials are critical
- Mowing is our safety net
- Building partnership with our farmers by providing a lot of support, incentives, and clear, mutually agreed upon points of accountability.
- Adaptive management is critical – be nimble, adjust, and learn as we go.
- Soil health work is active farming and active management of land, not fallowing.

Aron prepared herself for things to look worse when she started. While crops didn't grow optimally, there were so many important shifts happening below the ground. She began seeing Rizosheaths around the root systems. There weren't any Rizosheaths just last year, and since we're seeing them now, it's proof that things are starting to move in the right direction. We've seen corn showing improvements in manganese deficiency. We're seeing improved root growth. In 2023, average root growth was 2 inches. Now we're seeing 3–4-inch improvements, with expectations for it to continue to grow. We're starting to see even the soil from our most challenging fields form into small marble-like structures that resist compaction, are a microbial powerhouse of fungi and beneficial organisms, help with water filtration, etc. We are now seeing visible fungi on the soil which was absent before. Biology is the most difficult piece of the restoration puzzle. We need to be patient and stay the course as good things are happening.

7:39pm: A few members of the public left.

Guebert is excited about the biological approach. Without it, you just have dirt.

Rossi complimented Aron on bringing a biology approach as we haven't done before. We're still not bringing in historical expertise. Part of what Aron says is true, part of it isn't though. He doesn't think it's a transparent presentation about the performance at Headwaters Farm. It's hopes and dreams. Aron is an insider, and he thought she was expert opinion before, but she is not completely independent.

Aron was not brought in because things were going great, but because the District needed a different approach.

Zimmer-Stucky We don't need to question her integrity.

Rossi As a Board member, that is my job.

Masterson It sounds like Rossi has a different perspective, which is fine, but the Board agreed to go in this direction, and Aron is taking us in that direction. It's likely that a lot of this will work, and while some of it might not now, that's okay. This is in line with the work being done with NRCS, and science across the country, so it's exciting to be pushing the envelope. It's also okay to ask if there are historical and conventional ways of farming that might still be useful. These are all just tools in the toolbox. She might advocate for monoculture Sudan because she's had positive experiences with it, but she's also happy to have people push back on that.

Beamer read Carlson's note to the Board: The East Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation District's Land Legacy Program is a good program that helps ensure valuable farmland is protected forever and not lost to development. However, the program has come under scrutiny of historic farmers and groups that support agriculture. The feeling among these groups is that EMSWCD is purchasing farms "off market" and then protecting them with easements and reselling them to Headwaters graduates thereby excluding historic farmers for purchasing these properties. Granted some property owners have come directly to EMSWCD with desires to deal with EMSWCD directly and protect their land through either a buy, protect, sell strategy, or by just selling an easement to EMSWCD. In these cases, it is not excluding historic farmers because the property owners are coming directly to us. In other cases, EMSWCD has acquired properties not listed on the open market, placed easements on them and held on to them for sometimes several years before reselling them. This is part of what has caused hard feelings among some historic farmers in



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our district boundaries. In my opinion there needs to be more transparency in the implementation of the Land Legacy Program so that anyone, be they a beginning farmer, Headwaters graduate or historic farmer, has an equal opportunity to acquire and farmland that is presented to EMSWCD for protection.

At the October board meeting this topic was discussed and proved to be a very contentious subject among board members. I asked the question "How do we change the narrative that we are excluding historic farmers from acquiring land?" There were no immediate answers or solutions to my question. Therefore, I suggest that question should serve as a starting point for discussions with the board, farmers and the Associations they represent them, i.e., Farm Bureau, Oregon Association of Nurseries, etc. to improve transparency and repair relationships with these groups.

8:17pm- Announcements, Action Items, and Adjournment

Rossi Sometimes it's perceived that Farm Bureau represents big ag, but most of these farmers own less than an acre, and six of them are new farmers.

Action Items: N/A

Zimmer-Stucky adjourned the meeting at 8:18pm.