Idaho Association of Soil Conservation Districts

Meeting Minutes

Date: August 17, 2026
Time: 9:00 a.m. to approximately 10:32 a.m. MT
Location: Zoom

Attendance

Present: Tori O'Neal, President; Wendy Green, Secretary; Richard Kunau, Director; Jeff Connolly, Director; Clint Zenner, Director; Mary Huff, Executive Director; Patxi Larrocea-Phillips, Government Affairs; Carie Bronson, Payette SWCD; Mike Pellant, Ada SWCD; Jessica Harrold, Ada SWCD; Meghan Brooks; and George Hitz, Idaho Soil and Water Conservation Commission.

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at approximately 9:00 a.m. Mountain Time. Tori O'Neal presided.

Conference Planning Update

The Board discussed the need to provide districts with preliminary conference information so districts can plan travel, lodging, registration, and budgets. The Board agreed that a draft agenda may be marked subject to change, but should include basic start and end times, registration cost, business meeting timing, IDEA session timing, and other key planning information.

Mary reported that a preliminary schedule can be prepared and distributed. Wendy will use available conference information for a newsletter update. The Board discussed the registration cost as $300 based on prior Board direction and expressed appreciation for the work of Division II and the conference planning committee.

Approval of July 20, 2026 Minutes

Motion: Wendy moved to approve the July 20, 2026 meeting minutes. Richard seconded. Motion carried.

ISWCC/IDWR Merger MOU

The Board discussed the draft Memorandum of Understanding between IDWR and the Idaho Soil and Water Conservation Commission and the process for developing IASCD comments. Tori summarized the stakeholder process, prior district survey, and public comment period. Districts were encouraged to submit comments directly to the Commission and copy the IASCD Board so district concerns can be tracked.

The Board reviewed recurring district concerns, including preserving the Commission's mission and identity, maintaining separation from IDWR regulatory functions, protecting district autonomy and local relationships, clarifying the Commission's role as the primary state-level support entity for conservation districts, and ensuring that Commission staff remain focused on Commission duties and district support.

The Board also discussed statutory changes, Commission staffing, hiring authority, staff direction, funding visibility, budget integrity, technical assistance, and project support. Patxi and George provided context regarding the legislative process and noted that updated statutory language may not be available until after review through the Governor's Office and DFM process.

George noted that the MOU remains a draft and must ultimately align with any statutory changes adopted by the Legislature. The Board agreed that IASCD should continue gathering district input

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before taking a final position and should consider another discussion before the public comment deadline if needed.

Wildfire Response and District Role

Wendy raised the possibility of convening interested districts and partners to discuss how conservation districts can assist with wildfire response and rehabilitation. Mike Pellant shared information regarding BLM rangeland drills, increased maintenance fees, reduced equipment shop staffing, and the University of Idaho Rangeland Fall Forum in Twin Falls on September 11-12, which will focus on fire rehabilitation.

The Board supported continuing the wildfire response discussion offline among interested and affected districts, partners, and staff.

Conference Program and IDEA Sessions

Mary asked whether IDEA sessions should be incorporated into the IASCD conference agenda as a fourth track or kept as a separate IDEA agenda. The Board supported folding IDEA sessions into the IASCD conference agenda and promotion so district employees and supervisors can see and consider all available sessions.

Awards and Banquet Planning

The Board discussed keeping awards recognition meaningful while keeping the banquet program timely and engaging. Depending on the number of nominations received, award presentations may need to be scaled to brief time limits. Tori and Devin are expected to assist with emceeing the banquet and program flow. Mary noted that the official call for nominations has been sent and that Employee of the Year has been added to IASCD awards.

Action Items and Next Steps

Mary will prepare and distribute preliminary conference schedule information and provide conference content to Wendy for the newsletter.

IASCD will continue gathering district input on the draft MOU, including district comments submitted directly to the Commission and copied to the Board. Tori and Mary will continue developing a summary of concerns and possible IASCD comments based on district feedback, submitted comments, and Board discussion.

IASCD will monitor for updated statutory language and determine whether another Board or district discussion is needed before final comments are submitted. Interested districts and partners will continue offline discussion regarding wildfire response, post-fire rehabilitation, rangeland drills, and potential roles for conservation districts.

The conference planning committee will integrate IDEA sessions into the conference agenda and promotion and continue refining awards banquet timing and program flow.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at approximately 10:32 a.m. Mountain Time.

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Huff, Executive Director

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