

COOS BAY-NORTH BEND WATER BOARD
P O BOX 539 – 2305 Ocean Boulevard
Coos Bay, Oregon 97420

Minutes
Regular Board Meeting

April 3, 2025
7:00 a.m.

Coos Bay-North Bend Water Board met in open session in the Board Room at the above address, date, and time with Chair Carmen Matthews presiding. Other Board members present: Bill Richardson, Rob Kilmer, and Greg Solarz. Board Members absent: none. Water Board staff present: Ivan D. Thomas, General Manager; Matt Whitty, Engineering Manager; Jeff Miller, Operations Manager; Aimee Hollis, Customer Relations Manager; and Stacey Parrott, Executive Assistant & HR Specialist. Water Resources Analyst of GSI Water Solutions, Inc. (virtually); Board Legal Counsel Melissa Cribbins was present. Media present: None.

Chair Matthews opened the meeting at 7:00 a.m. and led the Board and assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chair Matthews asked if there were any corrections or additions to the March 13, 2025, Regular Board meeting minutes. Mr. Solarz moved the minutes be approved as written. The motion was seconded by Mr. Kilmer and passed unanimously.

Chair Matthews asked if there were any public comments and there were none.

Regarding the approval of Pay Equity and Market Compensation Analysis for fiscal year 2026, General Manager Ivan Thomas explained that in August 2024, the Water Board contracted with HR Answers to complete a Pay Equity and Market Compensation Analysis for all full-time labor positions. The purpose was to support recent labor negotiations, audit existing practices, and ensure compliance with pay equity laws.

HR Answers recommended improvements to documentation and procedures, including maintaining detailed comparison spreadsheets, updating job descriptions to reflect job series levels, and creating a compensation philosophy and pay administration manual. These recommendations will be brought to the Board for future approval before July 1, 2025. Four positions were evaluated for updates and recommended updated job descriptions based on work performed.

- Field Customer Service Representative I & II: Recommended consolidation into one role at the level II pay range due to automation reducing the need for dedicated meter readers.
- Engineering Technician I: Due to added GIS responsibilities, a 3% pay scale increase and job description update were recommended.
- Customer Service Representative Senior: A new senior-level position was proposed as part of a career ladder path, with a 4% pay increase above the base Customer Service Representative role.

- HR Specialist/Executive Assistant (Non-Union): Due to added safety and workers' compensation duties and other responsibilities, this position is considered a specialized hybrid role with no direct comparator; a 3% pay increase and job description update were recommended.

HR Answers conducted a market analysis comparing Water Board positions to similar roles across other water utilities. To meet internal goals of 90% marketability for all positions and 95% for the organization overall, adjustments were recommended for the following roles, including two positions for slight adjustments to prevent wage compression:

- Accounting Clerk: +2%
- Customer Service Clerk: +1.2% (compression)
- Utility Crew Leader: +6%
- Customer Service Leader: +1% (compression)
- Utility Billing Leader: +1%
- Payroll Clerk: +4%

With these adjustments, the Water Board will reach 96% marketability across all positions. These updates were accepted during union negotiations and would be effective July 1, 2025.

After a brief discussion and general consensus that the proposal and supporting analysis were well prepared, Mr. Richardson moved to approve the results of the Fiscal Year 2026 Pay Equity and Market Compensation Analysis and approve the General Manager to implement necessary updates to policies, procedures, job descriptions, and pay scales as needed. The motion was seconded by Mr. Kilmer and passed unanimously.

Regarding the proposed approval of the 2025 Coos Bay-North Bend Water Boards Water Management and Conservation Plan, Mr. Thomas introduced Leah Cogan Water Resources Analyst with GSI Water Solutions, Inc. to present the final draft for the Board. Ms. Cogan provided a comprehensive overview of the plan's background, purpose, structure, and importance in maintaining and expanding the Water Board's water rights. She explained that the WMCP is required by the Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD) as a condition of permit extensions for unutilized water rights. The purpose of the plan is twofold:

1. To demonstrate that the Water Board is not wasting water, and
2. To request access to additional water under existing permits in anticipation of future demands.

The Water Board currently has several permits requiring a WMCP. The most significant is the permit for use of stored water from the Upper Pony Creek Reservoir, which was extended in November of last year. The extension includes a development limitation of 210.5 million gallons, despite the previous permit allowing up to 1.5 billion gallons. This updated WMCP provides justification to increase access to 250 million gallons based on projected demand.

The plan includes five main sections:

1. Introduction & Regulatory Background – An overview of the plan’s statutory basis.
2. Water Supplier Description – Details about the Water Board’s infrastructure, customer base, water sources (groundwater, surface water, and reservoirs), and historical usage. Data from 2019–2023 shows average water loss at 11.2%, slightly above the current OWRD standard of 10%, but still better than many other utilities.
3. Water Conservation – Documents existing practices that meet or exceed OWRD requirements. These include advanced metering, public education, leak detection, and low-flow fixture distribution. The AMR program and ongoing leak detection are expected to reduce water loss below 10%.
4. Curtailment Plan – Outlines how the Water Board would respond to a water shortage due to drought, disaster, or mechanical failure, using current rules and practices.
5. Water Supply Planning & Green Light Water Request – Projects demand through 2043. Based on growth projections from the Water Master Plan, the Water Board is requesting an increase to 250 million gallons of accessible water under the permit. This plan aligns with the long-term planning strategy and supports community and industrial growth.

Ms. Cogan shared that a water loss analysis will be due within two years of OWRD approval, and a five-year progress report will be required. The WMCP will be valid for 10 years upon final approval.

Chair Matthews thanked Ms. Cogan for her time and detailed presentation. Ms. Cogan invited follow-up questions; Chair Matthews asked about the Water Board’s average water loss exceeding the 10% industry standard and how this compares to other utilities. Ms. Cogan responded that the Water Board’s current figures are actually favorable, noting that many utilities they work with experience water loss rates above 20%. She added that, based on ongoing improvements and initiatives, the Water Board is expected, and hopeful of reducing its water loss below the 10% threshold.

Mr. Solarz asked for clarification on how the 250 million gallon request was calculated and whether industrial developments such as the North Spit container terminal were included. Mr. Thomas shared that water demands for the North Spit container project were considered through consistency with the Water Master Plan, although specific project data wasn’t isolated. The requested increase allows for growth without needing to immediately reapply for further extensions. Ms. Cogan also stated that non-potable groundwater sources are also available and not subject to the same limitations, clarifying that the 250 million gallons requested is specifically treated water from the treatment plant.

The Board expressed pride in the Water Board’s conservation progress and low water loss rate compared to other municipalities, and after a brief discussion Mr. Kilmer moved to approve the 2025 Water Management and Conservation Plan and authorize the General Manager in conjunction with GSI Water Solutions to submit the completed plan to the Oregon Water Resources Department for their comments and approval. The motion was seconded by Mr. Richardson and passed unanimously.

The Board's next regular meeting was set for Thursday, April 17, 2025, at 7:00 a.m.

Updates were given as follows:

- 2024 Dunes Surface Water Monitoring Plan (SWMP) – this required annual report has been completed and submitted to the US Forest Service. The plan is part of an on-going agreement with the US Forest Service and pertains to monitoring activities within the Dunal well field and surrounding areas. This includes monitoring water quality and hydrology, tracking lake levels and ensuring no seawater intrusion, confirming sustainable use of the groundwater resources, and meeting all required hydrological criteria to ensure compliance with US Forest Service expectations. The current water usage from the well field remains steady, averaging just under 500,000 gallons per day. All indications in the 2024 report reflect normal operations, with no irregularities or areas of concern.
- Dam Vegetation Clearing - the recent vegetation clearing project was completed on and around the Upper Pony Creek Dam and Merritt Dam. Over time, a significant amount of overgrowth, including large shrubs and small trees had developed on the face of the dam and adjacent hillside. This area has historically been an area of concern due to potential instability, and it had been monitored closely since the construction of the dam. The recent clearing was necessary to restore access to areas to ensure visual inspection and continued effective monitoring. Blue Sky crew's work was completed to high standards and well received as the areas resemble the dam's original post-construction state. The importance of regular clearing and maintenance was discussed in order to avoid issues where root systems may lead to structural damage or leaks, and where regular maintenance will ensure long-term stability and accessibility. The State Dam Safety Engineer will visit next week for inspection.

At 7:45 a.m. Chair Matthews directed they go into executive session for the purpose of discussing potential litigation pursuant to ORS 192.660(2)(h) and personnel issues pursuant to ORS 192.660(2)(a). The Board returned to open session at 7:49 a.m.

There being no other business to come before the Board, Chair Matthews adjourned the meeting at 7:49 a.m.

Approved: _____, 2025

By: _____
Carmen Matthews, Chair

ATTEST:
