

# Walla Walla County Conservation District

## Dec. 2019 Board Meeting

Date: December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2019 Time: 4:00 p.m. Place: District Conference Room

**Presiding Officer:** Jim Kent

**Supervisors Present:** Jim Kent, Jeff Schulke, Pat McConnell, and Associate Annie Byerley

**Supervisors Absent:** Ed Chvatal, Todd Kimball

**Also present:** Renee Hadley, Lynda Oosterhuis, Lisa Stearns, Joanna Cowles Cleveland, Cat Garza, Lorna Emerich and Audrey Ahmann

***The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m. by Chairman Jim Kent.***

**Minutes:** The Board reviewed the November minutes. **Motion by Pat McConnell and second by Jeff Schulke to approve the minutes as presented, motion passed.**

**Financial Report:** The board reviewed the December Financial Report. **Motion by Pat McConnell and second by Jeff Schulke to approve the December financial report and pay the bills, motion passed.** Checks included 13690 to 13713, total all accounts: \$389,524.04

**As of this date December 9th, 2019 the Board by a majority vote does approve for payment checks included in the December financial report and further described as follows: Checks 13690 to 13713, total all accounts \$389,524.04**

### **New Business:**

- 1. NRCS update:** Hadley reported on changes in the delivery of NRCS programs. All participants must have a conservation plan. The CART tool will allow producers to have one contract across multiple programs: one plan and one application for all programs. The Local Working Group will still have a voice in area priorities.
- 2. New Staff:** Cat Garza and Lorna Emerich introduced themselves. Both have CRP experience and will be very helpful with the planned CRP work this spring.
- 3. Election Resolution:** Ahmann referred the board to the full text of the draft election resolution in their packets. **After discussion, Jeff Schulke moved and Pat McConnell seconded to adopt the resolution in its full:** that a poll site election for an open position on the District board of Supervisors be held on

January 30 from 8:30 until 12:30 at the WW Regional Airport. The election supervisor is Audrey Ahmann. The current elected position expires May 2020 and is held by Pat McConnell. Interested candidates must be registered voters who reside within the boundaries of the District. Candidates may be required to be landowners or operators of a farm, depending on the current composition of the District Board of Supervisors. The filing deadline for candidates to file their candidate information is noon on December 31st, 2019. Interested candidates must file their candidate information at the following location: 325 N. 13th Ave, Walla Walla, WA. Eligible voters are registered voters who reside within the boundaries of the District. The last day and time that voters can request absentee ballots from the District is January 9th, 2020 at 4:30. Absentee ballots can be requested from Walla Walla County Conservation District, Audrey Ahmann, 325 N 13th Ave, Walla Walla, WA., or by calling (509)956-3753 during normal business hours 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., **motion passed.**

4. **Resolution to approve Snake River Salmon Recovery applications:** Hadley explained that the RCO process requires the board to approve applications prior to submittal. The two projects were described and their merits discussed. These are to address water quality, habitat, and help restore stream morphology. It was also noted that the Touchet River project was approved last year but fell below the funding cut-off line. The complete resolution language was included in board preparation materials. **Pat McConnell moved and Jeff Schulke seconded to approve the resolution as presented for both the Touchet River at River Mile 42 design project and the Walla Walla River at River Mile 35.5 above Last Chance Rd restoration project applications, motion passed.**
5. **CREP hold down rates:** Cowles Cleveland reviewed draft changes to the CREP maintenance hold down rates. Staff developed new rates after considering inflation, increased labor costs, and with input from contractors. The overall 5-year maintenance cap is unchanged. Cowles Cleveland noted that on larger contracts, the cap is usually not reached. She explained that cutting the tarps to allow trees to reach mature girth without girdling is labor intensive, so has been added as a practice instead of being included under plant release. Use of weed-eaters was also added. After discussion, the board adjusted the suggested rates as follows: 1) reduce weed-eater use to 42\$ an hour, and 2) grass re-seeding will be \$100 per acre for the first 10 acres and \$50 per acre for additional acres. **Pat McConnell moved and Jeff Schulke seconded to approve the new rates as presented with the above 2 changes, motion passed.**

**New Projects:** Stearns and Oosterhuis reported on meter projects. Both will be presented to the VSP Work Group at their December 7 meeting. Oosterhuis is looking for approval to move forward on a project to replace a meter with another type of meter; it was replaced once before and failed in less than 5 years. The cost will be about \$2700.

## Program Updates:

1. **Cowles Cleveland** reported that CRP and CREP reenrollments are open. There is a general CRP open signup; contracts in place can also be reenrolled. Acres that might not have been eligible for reenrollment may be eligible now. Rental rates are still low. There will be increased scrutiny of weed control in CRP and there may be a per-acre payment for weed control. She also reported that all CSP reviews were completed.
2. **Hadley** reported progress is being made on the REA bridge project. Permit applications are in progress now that we have a 60% design.

## Joint Agency Meetings

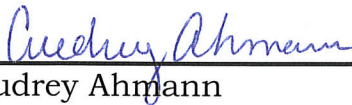
1. **Snake River Salmon Recovery Board.** There is no December meeting but the 2020 grant round has commenced.
2. **Irrigation Efficiency:** Hadley reported that there are a lot of water-related forums taking place. WSU is doing an in-depth study starting in January and two area irrigators (Annie Byerley and Dunning) piloted the study questions and helped reword some of them.
3. **WACD Meeting:** Hadley attended and described some highlights. There are plans to merge NRCS and FSA. Both are chronically under-staffed. Local producer Pat Jensen was recognized as the state Wildlife Steward of the Year. Jeff Schulke received a 10-year pin.

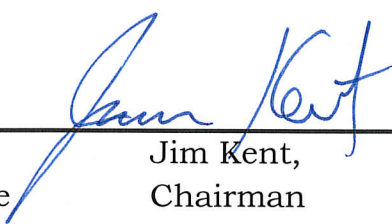
**Misc. Discussion and Public Comment:** There were no public comments. Hadley applied for an AmeriCorps volunteer. Benton has a grant in the Wallula Management Area and asked for permission to work with some Walla Walla producers in that area. The board expressed approval of this but did not make a formal motion. (When producers return former CRP acres to production, Benton will offer cost share to adopt conservation practices.) Hadley then reported that Gardena and WSU are investigating why, despite recharge efforts, the aquifer continues to drop. WSU has funds for this study which will track isotopes as an indicator of water movement but cannot fund the collection of the data. The Basin Council is asking for district support. It has funds for the Oregon side but not Washington. **Pat McConnell moved and Jeff Schulke seconded to approve the expenditure of 1,000 to support collection of isotope data in the aquifer by WSU and the Basin Council, motion passed.**


**Executive Session:** As per RCW 42.30.110 (1)(g) the board went into executive session to review the performance of a public employee for 30 minutes, going into Executive Session at 5:35 and returning to open session at 6:05.

**With no further action, the meeting was adjourned at 6:10 without a formal motion.**

Respectfully submitted,

  
Audrey Ahmann  
Assistant Manager, Finance

  
Jim Kent,  
Chairman

  
Jeff Schulke  
Vice-Chair

Next meeting: January 13th, 2020

Motions:

To approve the Nov. minutes as written,      Motion: McConnell  
Second: Schulke  
Motion passed

To approve the December financial report,      Motion: McConnell  
Second: Schulke  
Motion passed

To approve the 2020 Election Resolution  
as presented,      Motion: Schulke  
Second: McConnell  
Motion passed

To approve the RCO Resolution for both  
the Touchet River at River Mile 42 design  
project and the Walla Walla River at River  
Mile 35.5 above Last Chance Rd  
restoration project,      Motion: McConnell  
Second: Schulke  
Motion passed

To approve the CREP maintenance hold  
down rates as presented with two  
changes (weed-eater use 42\$ an hour and  
grass reseeded at 100\$ for the first 10  
acres and \$50 thereafter),      Motion: McConnell  
Second: Schulke  
Motion passed

To approve the expenditure of 1,000 to  
support collection of isotope data in the  
aquifer by WSU and the Basin Council,      Motion: McConnell  
Second: Schulke  
Motion passed