

# Walla Walla County Conservation District

## March 2020 Board Meeting

Date: March 9, 2020      Time: 5:00 p.m.      Place: District Conference Room

**Presiding Officer:** Jim Kent

**Supervisors Present:** Ed Chvatal, Todd Kimball, Associate Annie Byerley

**Supervisors Absent:** Jeff Schulke, Pat McConnell

**Other Agencies:** Tracy Hanger, NRCS; Lindsey Williams, WWCC

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

**Members of the Public:** Nick Plucker

*The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m. by Chairman Jim Kent.*

**Minutes:** The Board reviewed the February minutes. **Motion by Ed Chvatal and second by Todd Kimball to approve the minutes as presented, motion passed.**

**Financial Report:** The board reviewed the March Financial Report. **Motion by Todd Kimball and second by Ed Chvatal to approve the March financial report and pay the bills, motion passed.** Checks included 13770 to 13786, total all accounts: \$394,202.05

**As of this date March 9th, 2020 the Board by a majority vote does approve for payment checks included in the March financial report and further described as follows: Checks 13770 to 13786, total all accounts \$394,202.05**

### **New Business:**

- 1. NRCS update:** Tracy Hanger informed those present that the first round of EQIP will end April 3<sup>rd</sup>. There is a general sign-up for CSP renewals which is expected (unofficially) to end in mid to late May. The two local resource priorities remain soil health and surface water quality. She announced there will be an NRCS forester stationed in Dayton in July.
- 2. Flood Damage:** Hadley reported that staff assisted Walla Walla residents complete information about their flood damage and brought the total (\$10,000,000) to the county to add to their FEMA application. There were dramatic changes to the courses of area rivers. Staff is planning to cut, deliver, and help plant willow whips with some landowners. Chvatal



reported that after a lot of work, water was restored to the both the Gardena and Lowden diversions. Other diversions are still out of operation. He described the amount of rock deposited by the flood in one area as the “area of a football field 20’ deep” and said the river is full of rock. Kimball reported that the county had tens of millions in flood related damage to infrastructure. Governor Inslee requested \$100,000,000 for all disaster damage related to climate change.

- 3. Review of RCW 89.08** The board received SCC District Operations Brief 3-2008 in their emailed read ahead packets. Video clips of the SCC Orientation for CD Supervisors and staff Module 2: Governance & Operations were reviewed and discussed during the board meeting

**Program Updates:** **Oosterhuis** reported that there were many calls about flood damage to screens, meters, and pump stations. She took information and helped people document damage. Intakes, if not capped, were filled with silt. Some pumps are not repairable. The local pump repair shop is overwhelmed. In other meter related discussion, she reported finding relatively new Seametrics meters were not watertight and the electronics are ruined. Older mechanical meters seem to be the most reliable but there are issues with these too. Chvatal reiterated the general frustration at the lack of a good, reliable accurate meter for our irrigators.

**Cowles Cleveland** reported flood damage to CREP sites. About 20 projects were damaged. Some are missing a few trees and others are simply wiped out. She is working with FSA to determine how the latter can be dropped from the program without penalty to the landowner. In some areas, while the river seriously damaged the buffers, the buffers seemed to help stop direct damaging flows. In areas where the flood forces were less extreme, the CREP buffers lessened the flood damage. Chvatal observed that at one site, the trees obviously helped dissipate river energy as a swath of sediment had settled out on the field after running through the buffer.

**Hadley** reported on the following:

Spokane CD has set up a weeklong NCAT Armed to Farm training at the community college Center for Ag. Excellence as part of Spokane’s Vets on the Farm program. The program helps veterans begin farming. About 30 participants will learn about the business of farming (like farm records keeping) and go out to the field to study production.

Dept. of Ecology is filling vacancies and may restart their program of contacting area producers with letters regarding water quality concerns.



VSP: Hadley said the VSP Work Group is meeting quarterly to be informed on projects implemented with VSP funds. There is a vacancy on the VSP Work Group for someone who would represent environmental groups.

Irrigation Efficiency: There continues to be a lack of support for aquifer recharge projects because the measured water in does not equal the water out. The actual source of water in the aquifer (surface infiltration? Glacial melt?) is still unknown.

Restoration Projects: Contractors estimates on the Rea-Lyons bridge were much higher than WDFW/NRCS estimates. The Walla Walla River at RM 35.5 restoration design is late; at this point we were expected to have designs ready for RCO's first round of reviews and as a result have withdrawn our application for construction funds.

### **Joint Agency Meetings**

1. **Snake River Salmon Recovery Board.** Cowles Cleveland reported that the last meeting focused on flood impacts. Some structures did ok and worked as intended, some were partially damaged, but overall most projects fared well. The group discussed lessons learned and current designs. There was discussion of pit tagging smolts to count returning adults. The assumption is that all spawning occurs in the upper reaches but this has not been demonstrated, so tagging smolts could provide good information. There is a vacancy on the SRSRB for a Walla Walla County (county commissioner appointed) representative.
2. **WW Water Management Partnership:** The Partnership continues to work on their report to Ecology. This report will define how the Partnership will transition from their previous mission to align with the Walla Walla 2050 vision. Annie Byerley is now a board member.
3. **Food Coalition:** The group had a final discussion on the results of the feasibility study. They are pricing equipment and planning a value-added line for processing locally grown products. Funds will be provided by a small grant from Seattle Tilth and a USDA block grant. Oosterhuis said they're building momentum and hoping to work with the Blue Mountain Action Council.

### **Misc. Discussion and Public Comment:**

**Ahmman** referred the board to a graph in her report showing burn program income over time. While spring burning continues to decline, fall burning has risen, so the total rate over the last five years has been relatively stable.



**Public Comment:** Plucker reported that he has been working on repairing his pump station while documenting the flood damage and the cost in case FEMA cost share (or other sources) becomes available. The WDFW engineer has been giving advice on possible ways to protect property from future flood events. He also observed that while all present understand the problems created by false indigo, those banks with false indigo seemed to hold during the flood.

**With no further action, the meeting was adjourned at 6:45 without a formal motion.**

Respectfully submitted,

		
Audrey Ahmann	Jim Kent	Ed Chvatal
Assistant Manager, Finance	Chair	Secretary

Next meeting: April 13th, 2020 at 5:00 p.m.

**Motions:**

To approve the Feb. minutes as written,

Motion: Chvatal  
Second: Kimball  
Motion passed

To approve the March financial report,

Motion: Kimball  
Second: Chvatal  
Motion passed