

# Walla Walla County Conservation District

## March 8 2021 Board Meeting

Date: March 8th, 2021 Time: 5:00 p.m. Place: Via phone conference

**Presiding Officer:** Jeff Schulke

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

**Supervisor Absent:** Pat McConnell, Jim Kent

**Other Agencies:** Ryan Baye, WACD; Tracy Hanger, NRCS; Lindsey Williams, WWCC; Allisa Carlson, SCC.

**Also present:** Renee Hadley, Audrey Ahmann, Lynda Oosterhuis, all WWCCD.

**Members of the Public:** Alyson Buckley

*The meeting was called to order at 5:15 p.m. by Jeff Schulke*

**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 14059 to 14070, total all accounts: \$397,824.18

**As of this date March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2021 the Board by a majority vote does approve for payment checks included in the March financial report and further described as follows: Checks 14059 to 14070, total all accounts \$397,824.18.**

### **New Business:**

- 1. Partner Updates:** **Lindsey Williams** spoke of the new Vice President of the community college as a strong supporter of agriculture and informed the board that the Walla Walla Community College Ag. Department has been recognized as the number one community college ag. program in the nation. She thanked Hadley and Annie Byerly for serving on the boards of the Ag. Department and the Ag. Center for Excellence. **Allisa Carlson** mentioned there was little news on the state budget but the revenue forecast will come out soon. She will be doing the preliminary CAPS review of districts; the Annual Plan of Work and Financial Report are due in May. She announced a Fire Recovery Workshop will be presented April 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>.

- 2. Nomination for SE Area Representative:** Ryan Baye of WACD explained that under the bylaws of WACD, nominations for the area representatives are to be approved by executive committee. As WWCCD is hosting the 2021 SE Area Meeting, the district is the executive committee. All 8 districts in the SE area were contacted and Amy Amerein volunteered for the position. **Ed Chvatal moved and Todd Kimball seconded that we approve the nomination of Amy Amerein for the SE Area Representative, motion passed.**
- 3. NRCS Update:** Tracy Hanger informed the board that CSP is open for applications through the end of March. There is a special pool of funds for beginning famers. CSP/EQIP won't have a "whole farm" requirement. There is no set deadline for CRP so signups are continuous.
- 4. Office Lease discussion:** Hadley said the office occupancy is now restricted to 5 employees at a time. This creates serious challenges. There is talk of Covid restrictions continuing for two years based on previous pandemics. Hanger said agencies can request waivers to the occupancy rules but the new administration is disinclined to grant them. After discussion of options, the board decided to revisit this in June. Hadley informed the board that the May meeting will be in-person at the airport room which has a large capacity for appropriate distancing.
- 5. Public Perception of Ag:** Hadley shared an email sent in response to an Audubon member who had concerns about the impact of ag. on erosion. Discussion included that there always seems to be a lack of knowledge about agriculture and while bias might be present, a lack of knowledge is worse; all of us have a role in educating the public. The board saw this as a good opportunity to share information about the ag. community's strong efforts to protect working lands from erosion. Hadley's email was posted to the Blue Mt. Audubon comment section.

**Public Comments:** There were no public comments.

**Program Updates:** **Oosterhuis** reported there has been significant CREP work. She signed up for the virtual Riparian Restoration Symposium and attended the Soil Conservation sessions along with Cowles Cleveland and Pat McConnell. **Hadley** reported Cowles Cleveland has started the CRP status reviews so as to hit the ground running when the new TSP contract is in place. Funding has been secured for tarp release on CREP projects; there is a lot of work but staff are prepared. RCO Cottonwood will move forward if we have designs in time. Staff have collected willow whips for spring planting. Hadley is still actively seeking a stream restoration project manager. She submitted the 5-Year Long Range Plan and the district completed 5 grant applications. On VSP, the 5-Year report was submitted. The VSP group is still seeking an ag. representative and an agency/environmental representative; the group meets twice a year. Armed to Farm training will commence in April in collaboration with NCAT, Vets on the Farm, Dept. of Veterans Affairs and the Ag. Center for Excellence with 22 beginning farmers participating. There are plans to make videos about what is involved with irrigated ag. and they need a volunteer farmer; Ed Chvatal agreed to participate. Hadley also reported that our Floodplains by Design grant application is in a good position to be funded. RCO was pleased that we are moving forward on the Russell Creek project now that the 5<sup>th</sup> landowner has signed his landowner agreement. There is a possible new source of mitigation funds that might provide match for the Walla Walla River at RM 35.5 project.

Finally, Hadley informed the board that she will be taking a one-week vacation in early April.


### Joint Agency Meetings

1. **Snake River Salmon Recovery Board.** No report
2. **2050 Plan:** As the Partnership sunsets, water management plans are being carried forward by this group. Participants were told to submit their projects for inclusion in the 2050 plan. Discussion included the conflict between the declining aquifer, irrigation, and many new developments in the rural areas. It was thought the 2050 Plan might be patterned after the Lower Columbia Estuary Project but there are significant differences, such as the estuary group has a source of funding and is comprised primarily of agency folk.
3. **Partnership:** Chvatal reported the Partnership is working to transfer responsibilities to other agencies.


The board decided to table the executive session. Ed Chvatal stated that after completing employee evaluations, he and Jim Kent felt very pleased by the upbeat employee attitude and thought everyone was functioning as well as could be expected.

With no further action, the meeting was adjourned at 6:15 without a formal motion.

Respectfully submitted,

  
Audrey Ahmann  
Assistant Manager, Finance

  
Jeff Schulke  
Chair

  
Ed Chvatal  
Secretary

Next meeting: April 12th, 2021 at **5:00** p.m.

### Motions:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| To approve the Feb. minutes as written,                              | Motion: Chvatal<br>Second: Kimball<br>Motion passed |
| To approve the March financial report,                               | Motion: Kimball<br>Second: Chvatal<br>Motion passed |
| To approve the nomination of Amy Amerein for SE Area Representative, | Motion: Chvatal<br>Second: Kimball<br>Motion passed |