

Walla Walla County Conservation District

Sept. 13th 2021 Board Meeting

Date: Sept 13, 2021 Time: 5:00 p.m.
Place: WW Airport Community Room and via Zoom link

Presiding Officer: Annie Byerley

Supervisors Present: Pat McConnell, Jeff Schulke, Annie Byerley, Alyson Buckley

Supervisor Absent: Jim Kent

Other Agencies: Allisa Carlson, SCC; Lindsey Williams, WWCC; Seth Flanders, Spokane CD

Also present: Renee Hadley, Audrey Ahmann, Grant Traynor, Alison Crowley, Cat Garza, Joanna Cowles Cleveland

Members of the Public: Dan Mildon

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m. by Annie Byerley

Minutes: The Board reviewed the July regular meeting minutes and the July 22nd Special Meeting minutes. **Motion by Jeff Schulke and second by Pat McConnell to approve both sets of minutes as presented, motion passed.**

Financial Reports: The board reviewed the August and September Financial Reports. **Motion by Pat McConnell and second by Jeff Schulke to approve the August and September financial reports and pay the bills, motion passed.**

August report included checks 14168 to 14183, total all accounts: \$478,727.76

Sept. report included checks 14184 to 14199, total all accounts: \$478,432.67

As of this date Sept. 13th 2021 the Board by a majority vote does approve for payment checks included in the August and September financial reports and further described as follows: Checks 14168 to 14199, total all accounts \$478,432.67

Public Comments: None.

New Business:

- 1. Partner Updates:** FSA and NRCS had no news; NRCS staff have a limited presence in-office due to Covid restrictions. Allisa Carlson of SCC said there will be cost share training on Sept. 21st and a mandatory elections training on the 23rd. She congratulated the district on being the first to submit the Biannual Report and reminded the board that the NRI addendum needs to be completed. (Hadley is

working with staff to select projects for board consideration.) Also, the SCC is recruiting for an Executive Director after the resignation of Carol Smith.

2. **Accounting Software purchase:** Ahmann reviewed past discussions of purchasing BIAS software, which is a subscription-based grant management/accounting software. Currently district accounting is done via QuickBooks and various spreadsheets. The purchase should streamline accounting duties and make future succession easier. Discussion included future price increases and cost control; the proposed contract allows up to a 5% annual increase. **Pat McConnell moved and Jeff Schulke seconded to purchase Springbrook accounting, motion passed.**
3. **Burn Program:** Ahmann informed the board that burn fees charged to producers covered the cost of the burn program. Costs are tracked from fall to spring.
4. **October SE Area meeting:** Hadley requested all board members attend the SE Area meeting which we are hosting October 26th. The meeting might be held remotely depending on Covid restrictions. The board discussed a resolution to request WACD set up a committee with representatives from each area to explore long-term funding for districts. **Pat McConnell moved and Jeff Schulke seconded to put forth a resolution at the SE Area meeting to request WACD set up a committee to explore long-term funding for districts, motion passed.** Lindsey Williams mentioned House Bill 11-68 which funds forest management; she suggested districts may have a role in assisting the Dept. of Natural Resources in meeting that goal.

Program Updates:

Hadley referred members to Oosterhuis' report. Lynda is developing an outreach pamphlet for vineyard owners about beneficial insects. She and Hadley met with the Washington Water Trust regarding Touchet East/West irrigators on plans related to improving the timing of water rights allocations. Hadley then congratulated Cowles Cleveland on reaching her 6th year with the district. **Cowles Cleveland** reported that of 9 CREP contracts up for reenrollment, 6 were reenrolled. She is applying for a second grant to address false indigo; this fall staff will be replanting the areas under the current grant. So far, removal of false indigo followed by replanting seems to be effective in dealing with this invasive. She reported the RCO Cottonwood grant is behind schedule with few options due to engineering delays. After discussion, the board agreed that the district should request the RCO grant be converted to design only, then apply for an installation grant, or the grant closed and remaining funds (about 78%) returned. **Alison Crowley** is working with engineering teams on the Floodplains by Design (FbD) project and has contacted landowners. Some have already returned forms indicating support. She will present at the Mill Creek work group¹ Oct. 12 meeting and is leading an open public forum October 14th. Outreach included being interviewed on KUJ by Jim Bock and creating an informative brochure. **Grant Traynor** reviewed the 2-year and 5-year report for VSP. The state panel accepted both and requested that future reports include the effectiveness of outreach in obtaining individual stewardship plans. They are also seeking

¹ The Mill Creek work group is an ad hoc committee of agency personnel (WDFW, USACE, CTUIR, etc.).

broader metrics such as # of producers implementing conservation activities and the result. (E.g., 100 producers using no-till within 40 ft of waterway resulting in ___ fewer tons of sediment in river.) Traynor also reported the number of BMPs implemented by other agencies. The board asked Traynor to report on the number of counties whose 5-year reports were accepted.

Commodity Buffer presentation: Traynor presented commodity buffers as an option for future district projects. Program details were developed over time by Spokane CD. The gist of the idea is to pay producers a rental payment on buffer acres taken out of commodity production and put into cover. Unique features include a requirement that the cover be harvested (hayed or grazed) and payment is based on crop insurance formulas for the adjacent crop. (Installation and maintenance are not cost shared.) Existing buffers can be enrolled. These buffers meet conservation goals, maintain the viability of agriculture, and protect producers from regulation. Producers receive an additional incentive for including woody species and it was suggested that pollinator habitat also be incentivized. The board decided to form a sub-committee of Traynor, McConnell, and Seth Flanders to develop program particulars.

VSP Projects for approval: Staff presented two projects for board approval. Both build on previously funded projects. The first phase of the Walsh Creek project was completed in 2019. The proposed second phase will include exclusion fencing, additional planting, and a hardened water gap. The other project is the Coppei Meinberg Rd project which will need replanting. The initial planting failed due to a sudden early hard freeze followed by one of the driest years on record. **Jeff Schulke moved and Pat McConnell seconded to approve the Walsh Creek and Coppei Meinberg VSP projects, motion passed.**

Schwenke Shallow Aquifer recharge: Hadley reported that this project, long inactive due to extremely expensive water testing requirements, can now resume operation. Ecology will accept a more practical water testing regimen which opens the door to future aquifer recharge projects.

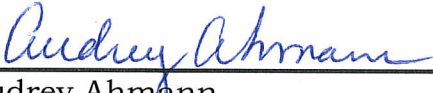

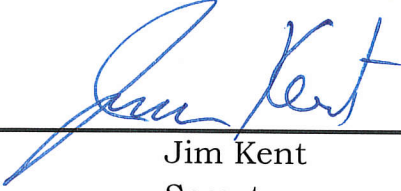
Joint Agency Meetings

1. **Snake River Salmon Recovery Board:** Cowles Cleveland reported the final project list has been approved. All projects remaining after the application process will be funded. Remaining funds were sent to other Lead Entities for distribution. Columbia County Flood control district hopes to work with the SFSRB. The WW Spring Chinook hatchery on the S. Fork is starting operations.
2. **2050 Plan:** No update
3. **WW County Commissioners:** Hadley met with this group and updated them on VSP progress.
4. **Blue Mountain Land Trust:** no meeting
5. **Others:** Annie Byerley reported that the WACD Diversity and Inclusion Task force is continuing to meet. She participated in the Pollinator Task Force and through them presented and answered questions regarding non-honey bee pollinators to head agriculture organizations.

Executive Session: As per RCW 42.30.110 (1) (g) the board went into executive session to review the performance of an employee at 7:33 for and estimated 30 minutes. The board returned to open session at 7:50.

With no further business on the agenda, Jeff Schulke moved and Pat McConnell seconded to close the meeting, motion passed.

Respectfully submitted,

		
Audrey Ahmann	Annie Byerley	Jim Kent
Assistant Manager, Finance	Chair	Secretary

Next meeting: October 12, 2021 at 5:00 p.m.

Motions:

To approve the July regular and July 22 Special meeting minutes as written,	Motion: Schulke Second: McConnell Motion passed
To approve the August and September financial reports,	Motion: McConnell Second: Schulke Motion passed
To purchase Springbrook (BIAS) accounting and grant management software,	Motion: McConnell Second: Schulke Motion passed
To put forth a resolution to be presented at the SE Area meeting to request WACD set up a committee to explore long-term funding for districts,	Motion: McConnell Second: Schulke Motion passed
To approve the Walsh Creek and Coppei Meinberg VSP projects,	Motion: Schulke Second: McConnell Motion passed
To close the meeting,	Motion: Schulke Second: McConnell Motion passed