

# Walla Walla County Conservation District

## March 14<sup>th</sup> 2022 Board Meeting

Date: March 14, 2022

Time: 5:00 p.m.

Place: In person and via conference call

**Presiding Officer:** Annie Byerley

**Supervisors Present:** Jim Kent, Alyson Buckley, Jesse McCaw

**Supervisor Absent:** Jeff Schulke

**Other Agencies:** Bryce Krueger, NRCS; Allisa Carlson, SCC

**Also present:** Renee Hadley, Audrey Ahmann; Joanna Cowles Cleveland, Lynda Oosterhuis, Alison Crowley, and Grant Traynor.

**Members of the Public:** Dan Milden, Michelle Nelson, Tyler Kench

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

**Minutes:** The Board reviewed the February meeting minutes. **Motion by Jim Kent and second by Jesse McCaw to approve the February minutes as presented, motion passed.**

**Financial Reports:** The board reviewed the March Financial Report. Ahmann explained the Treasurer's report generated by Springbrook is for the month of February. She included a record of the check register to March 14th. **Motion by Jim Kent and second by Jesse McCaw to approve the March financial reports and pay the bills, motion passed.** March reports included checks 14333 to 14348, total all accounts: \$354,227.73

Ahmann explained that there was a duplicate check number (14292) for 26,825 and a check (14315) for 45.12 in the Feb. financial report that were voided. (see Ahmann's board report for details.) **Jesse McCaw moved and Jim Kent seconded to approve voiding these two previously approved transactions, motion passed.**

**As of this date March 14th 2022 the Board by a majority vote does approve for payment checks included in the March financial reports and further described as follows: Checks 14333 to 14348, total all accounts \$354,227.73**

### **New Business:**

- 1. Partner Updates:** Krueger said he plans to attend about half the district meetings. There are several EQIP projects including forestry and irrigation improvements. The CSP sign-up deadline is March 31<sup>st</sup> for renewals and new contracts. NRCS is reviewing the design of a district project. **Carlson** said SCC's new executive director plans to attend a meeting of each district in

the state. The supplemental budget has more funding for voluntary conservation efforts; interest was sparked by the tabled mandatory buffer bill. There will be an all-district meeting in early April about anticipated new funding. The mask mandate has been lifted but the remote option for public meetings is still required. The CAPP initial assessment was completed and WWCCD is meeting all current requirements.

- 2. Draft policy on burn permitting** Hadley presented a revised burn permit policy regarding late burn refund requests. The policy clarifies that the burn permit refund request deadline is the date printed on the permit and that late requests will not be accepted. **Alyson Buckley moved and Jesse McCaw seconded to approve the draft policy as presented, motion passed.**
- 3. Review, Budget vs Actual 2021, approve 2022 Budget:** The board reviewed the 2021 budget vs actual spending. This is a schedule 22 requirement. Ahmann told the board ending balances for income and expenses match the QuickBooks amounts. The category "other district" was for Columbia County covering Lance Horning's work. The 2022 Budget presented doesn't include expected grants that are not approved. Some grants are flexible and the amounts budgeted for cost share can be used for office costs and vice-versa. **Jim Kent moved and Jesse McCaw seconded to approve the 2022 budget as presented, motion passed.**
- 4. Project Development:** Hadley explained that with funding of Sustainable Farms and Fields there is potentially a significant increase in funds available for district projects. Projects in development are not ready to construct this year. If the funds are from the salmon recovery act they may be carried forward to the next biennium. Krueger mentioned that he has a list of projects ready to implement which were not funded by NRCS, including tree planning, forestry thinning projects, and irrigation efficiency projects. Older CREP projects no longer under contract could benefit from thinning and tree-release (tarp cutting). Hadley also mentioned the district has signed a technical service contract with NRCS to conduct 80 CRP status reviews which will keep staff busy.
- 5. VSP projects for approval:** Traynor presented three projects approved by the VSP work group that also need district approval. Two buffer projects are on the E. Little Walla Walla and Dry Creek. These buffer projects are too small to interest a CREP contractor. Oosterhuis said the buffers will meet CREP standards, which allow for a smaller buffer (30') if there is a water quality issue; VSP is more flexible than CREP. The costs are high due to heavy weed pressure. Staff will maximize volunteer labor (possibly in cooperation with Tri-State Steelheaders) to help control costs. The third project is raptor habitat improvement to establish pollinator habitat on small areas of out-ground on an irrigated organic farm. Krueger mentioned this ground is under an NRCS contract and there may be some complexities



regarding the change of land use that the landowner needs to know before deciding to proceed. After further discussion, **Jim Kent moved and Jesse McCaw seconded to approve the E. Little Walla Walla and Dry Creek projects and table consideration of the Raptor Habitat project until April, motion passed.**

**Public Comments:** Dan Milden asked about solar projects. Krueger said NRCS has an energy efficiency program and Hadley will send Milden information. Two producers asked the board to consider supporting a cost-share program to help with equipment purchases that support resource conservation, specifically Weed-It sprayers. The Spokane CD has a loan program but requires 25% cash down. They mentioned that the price of farm chemicals is rapidly increasing and no-till requires more chemical control. Some producers are returning to conventional tillage to combat weeds as chemical costs climb. Equipment costs have also dramatically increased. The board discussed the idea and Hadley said she would investigate what other districts have done and how they fund equipment purchase cost share.

### **Program Updates:**

**Oosterhuis** referred board members to her report and said WSARE recent progress includes lining up speakers for the June outreach event and completing the brochure. The WW University student group, Engineers without Borders, is working on a prototype irrigation water meter that can handle the unusual conditions here and includes a user-friendly data management system. **Cowles Cleveland** sent out the RFQ for RCO Cottonwood, reported we have some new CREP projects in the works, and it is still too early to identify grasses in CRP but work should begin soon. **Crowley** is teaching Wheat Week in local schools and developing a grant application to extend the Floodplains by Design work. **Traynor** attended the RTT meeting and presented the construction grant application for Touchet 42. He will be meeting with design engineers on Touchet Area 1 and Coppei Area 7. **Hadley** said Cat is working on the spotted lantern moth project and said the host tree, the tree of heaven, is in some local riparian areas. With additional funds through the task order and other work, she needs to hire an intern. She spoke to Andre of BPA about funding and he advised she attend Watershed-NW Power Council meetings.

### **Joint Agency Meetings**

- 1. Snake River Salmon Recovery Board:** Cowles Cleveland said they viewed a presentation by Crowley on her Floodplains by Design grant application

and will send a letter of support. CTUIR is doing a project on the lower Touchet. Folz may set up a regional riparian assessment. Inslee and Murphy are doing a "benefit" study on removing the lower Snake River dams and are taking public comments. [Lower Snake River Dam Options \(zohopublic.com\)](https://www.zohopublic.com) Hadley reported that the 2050 effort is now an advisory committee working on many routes to improve water conditions throughout the basin.

Traynor gave the board a presentation planned for the Snake River Salmon Recover Board and requested comments.

With no further business on the agenda, at 7:30 **Kim Kent moved and Jesse McCaw seconded to adjourn the meeting, motion passed.**

Respectfully submitted,

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

Next meeting: April 11th 2022 at **5:00 p.m.**

Motions:

To approve the February minutes as written,	Motion: Kent Second: McCaw Motion passed
To approve the March financial report,	Motion: Buckley Second: McCaw Motion passed
To approve the voiding of two transactions as described,	Motion: Kent Second: McCaw Motion passed
To approve the burn permit refund policy as presented.	Motion: Kent Second: McCaw Motion passed

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To approve the 2022 Budget as presented	Motion: Kent Second: McCaw Motion passed
To approve the E. Little Walla Walla and Dry Creek projects and table consideration of the Raptor Habitat project until April,	Motion: Kent Second: McCaw Motion passed
To adjourn the meeting,	Motion: Kent Second: McCaw Motion passed