



Walla Walla County Conservation District

Feb. 2023 Board Meeting

Date: Feb. 13, 2023

Time: 4:00 p.m.

Place: In person and via Zoom

Presiding Officer: Jesse McCaw

Supervisors Present: Jeff Schulke, Don Schwerin

Supervisor absent: Jim Kent, Alyson Buckley

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

Also present: Renee Hadley, Audrey Ahmann, Grant Traynor, Joanna Cowles Cleveland, Lynda Oosterhuis

Members of the Public: Dan Milden, Darren Goble

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m. by Jesse McCaw.

McCaw invited the public to comment; there were no comments.

Minutes: The Board reviewed the January meeting minutes. **Motion by Jeff Schulke and second by Don Schwerin to approve the January minutes as presented, motion passed.**

Financial Reports: The board reviewed the February Financial Report. Ahmann informed the board a previously approved check was written for the wrong amount and needed to be voided. **Motion by Jeff Schulke and second by Don Schwerin to approve the voiding of check 14568; motion passed.** After further review, **motion by Jeff Schulke and second by Don Schwerin to approve the February financial reports and pay the bills, motion passed.**

As of this date February 13th 2023 the Board by a majority vote does approve for payment checks included in the February financial reports and further described as follows: Checks 14586 to 14614, revenues 117,860.61 and expenses 111,548.21 total all accounts \$96,369.81

Partner Reports: Krueger reported the Inflation Reduction Act has increased their budget; NRCS will have ample funds in 2024 and encouraged producers to apply. Current programs are completing ranking and contracting will follow. There is a new riparian buffer program.

Carlson mentioned a Friday deadline to apply for additional NRI funds; projects must be completed by June 30th. HB 1567 funds a study to determine the cost of putting all 5 supervisors on the general ballot.

1. **Meeting time switch: Hadley** reminded the board the next meeting will begin at 5 p.m. per our normal schedule for daylight savings time.
2. **Outreach Summaries: Hadley** summarized the recent Annual Meeting. Other recent outreach events include Conservation Conversations (Riparian, Water Rights, Soil Health) and of these, soil health had the most attendees. Upcoming is an irrigation event featuring Jack Myrick of the SCC. Participants have requested the district host a conservation tour or soil health workshop.
3. **Discussion/Guidance on Upcoming Projects** Hadley presented several projects for board discussion.
 - **Cottonwood Creek:** At issue is the downstream section of the recent design project which has stymied the engineering design firm. There is no clear solution due to factors such as the current channel being perched above surrounding property (flood areas). Dredging seems to be needed but may not address future flooding. The board discussed liability, the extended timeline, the uncertainty of the engineers' solution, and impact of continued development. After considerable discussion, the board directed staff to focus on the area upstream which can be restored and have WDFW take the lead with landowners and the USACE on the lower reach. A screen project is also in the problem area and needs additional work. The board directed staff to continue working on the screen project (pending RCO recommendations).
 - **"Anchor Projects"** Hadley explained there are plans to develop two major irrigation infrastructure projects: a pump exchange (piping water from the Columbia) and a Warm Springs Reservoir. The reservoir would be sited in Oregon. The District has been mentioned as a potential lead agency to develop and maintain these projects. Discussion points included these are construction management and engineering projects; applied technology projects, not natural resource conservation. Board members directed staff to work with landowners to mitigate the consequences of the projects, not to take on the projects themselves. A suggestion was to have the state agencies coordinate to create a new PUD or manage a project on their own.
 - **Bridge Project, Coppei:** NRCS is cost-sharing a bridge project on the Coppei to help producers access fields without fording the river with heavy equipment. Hadley explained the district could use NRI funds to match the NRCS contribution; the landowners would still need to pay about 50,000 out of pocket. **Jeff Schulke moved and Don Schwerin seconded to approve the Coppei Bridge Project, motion passed.**


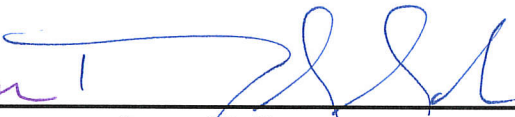
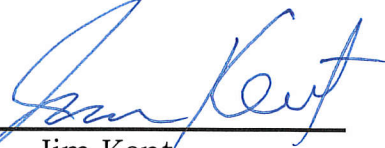
- **Bridge to Bridge Project:** Tri-State Steelheaders are requesting that the district offer matching funds for the 3rd phase of their work which, if funded, will be installed in the summer of 2025. After discussion, **Jeff Schulke moved and Don Schwerin seconded to approve the offering NRI cost-share for the TSS Bridge to Bridge project in 2025, motion passed.**

4. Discussion Ag. Forestry for CD staff: **Hadley** explained that several staff members are interested in taking the Ag. Forestry course. This has been likened to earning a master degree in terms of time commitment and the resulting expertise. The district generally offers staff 1,000 a year for professional development; of this 500 is set aside for WADE training. Ag. Forestry helps participants develop a more global view of conservation. Participants may have a state or corporate sponsor or self-pay. The cost is \$6,000 plus travel (two-week international) and about 25% of a person's time for 18 weeks spread over 18 months. The board recognized this could be a strong incentive to continue with the district and requested a firm cost estimate plus a source of those funds. The board asked to postpone a decision until the March 2023 board meeting.

Program Updates: **Cowles Cleveland** presented an extensive review of the CREP. CREP is a national FSA program supported by NRCS. States determine the focus for CREP, and in Washington CREP is limited to salmon bearing streams; the state covers 10% of the installation and 5 years of buffer maintenance. Most parameters for the program as set by FSA, not the state legislature. Practices are Riparian Forest Buffers on salmon streams, Grass Filter strips on any waterway connected to a salmon bearing stream, and Hedgerows or Wetlands for smaller parcels. Walla Walla and Whatcom have the most active CREP programs in the state; our projects average 20 acres. Current FSA cost share rates do not cover the full cost of installation though that is the program stated intent; landowners are making up the balance. Recently, removal of the tarps (moisture retention, weed control) has been added as a practice, and landowners report that native roses and elderberry quickly spread to the uncovered areas. **Hadley's CD operations** report included that we were moving toward a new email provider as Ionos lacked some needed functions. She mentioned the DiSC training would be proceeding in March with a cost of 3375.00 plus 72 per user. The grant applications for SCC sustainable farms and fields (see Hadley board report) were declined for funding. She will be meeting with the county to review our mutual roles in VSP and burn permitting. The Shoreline Protection plan in the county is up for review and a meeting schedule will be released.

With no further business on the agenda, at 7:30 the meeting was adjourned without a formal motion.

Respectfully submitted,

		
Audrey Ahmann	Jesse McCaw	Jim Kent
District Staff	Chair	Vice-Chair

Next meeting: February 13, 2023 at 4:00 p.m.

Motions:

To approve the Jan. minutes as written,

Motion: Schulke
Second: Schwerin
Motion passed

To approve voiding check 14568,

Motion: Schulke
Second: Schwerin
Motion passed

To approve the February financial report,

Motion: Schulke
Second: Schwerin
Motion passed

To approve the Coppei Bridge Project,

Motion: Schulke
Second: Schwerin
Motion passed

To approve using NRI cost-share for the TSS Bridge to Bridge project in 2025,

Motion: Schulke
Second: Schwerin
Motion passed