



Walla Walla County Conservation District

Jan. 2023 Board Meeting

Date: Jan. 9, 2023

Time: 4:00 p.m.

Place: In person and via Zoom

Presiding Officer: Jesse McCaw

Supervisors Present: Jim Kent, Alyson Buckley

Supervisor absent: Jeff Schulke

Other Agencies: Bryce Krueger, NRCS; Lindsey Williams, WWCC; Allisa Carlson, SCC

Also present: Renee Hadley, Audrey Ahmann, Grant Traynor, Joanna Cowles Cleveland, Kayla Peterson

Members of the Public: Don Schwerin, Dan Milden

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 December meeting minutes. **Motion by Alyson Buckley and second by Jim Kent to approve the December minutes as presented, motion passed.**

Financial Reports: The board reviewed the January Financial Report. **Motion by Alyson Buckley and second by Jim Kent to approve the January financial reports and pay the bills, motion passed.**

As of this date January 9th 2023 the Board by a majority vote does approve for payment checks included in the January financial reports and further described as follows: Checks 14563 to 14585, revenues 31,447.24 and expenses 79,067.12 total all accounts \$85,839.47

Partner Reports: Krueger reported the CSP and EQIP frameworks have changed. NRCS is offering a 4-tier program for restoring riparian buffers though the CREP program is still better in terms of compensating producers for land taken out of production. Carlson reported SCC is monitoring bills and the governor's budget which has 100 million for riparian restoration. Hadley reported she met with Vic Reeve (WW Co. Noxious Weed Control Board) who will be attending the annual meeting and participating in one of the Conservation Conversations. Williams reported the WWCC is looking for a new Ag. Business instructor.

1. **Review of Lease: Hadley** explained the lease arrangement by which the district offers technical assistance to NRCS in exchange for rent.
2. **Annual Review of CREP hold-down rates: Cowles Cleveland** presented suggested changes to CREP hold down rates based on conversations with contractors and other factors. In general, there has been an 8 to 10% increase in costs. There are labor shortages. Staff had already observed increases in general costs. The last significant increase was in 2017. She also added some practices to the eligible list such as damaged tarp removal without prior approval. She plans to ask the SCC to consider increasing the per-acre cap. She said smaller projects generally reach the cap but larger ones do not. **Alyson Buckley moved and Jim Kent seconded to approve the new CREP hold down rates as presented, motion passed.**
3. **Request for approval of light refreshments and annual meeting meal: Ahmann** explained the SAO expects boards to approve the purchase of any food items for meetings in advance of meetings. **Alyson Buckley moved and Jim Kent seconded to approve the purchase of light refreshments for the Conservation Conversations and the usual food expenses for the Annual meeting, motion passed.**
4. **Annual Review of 2022 Budget and approval of 2023 Budget: Ahmann** presented a Budget Comparison Fund report that showed the 2022 approved budget, the actual 2022 income and expenses, and the proposed 2023 budget. She explained the 2023 budget will be adjusted and presented for approval after Hadley has time for a more thorough review. Some of the unspent budget items in 2022 (e.g. non-fed RCO funds) are expected to be spent in 2023. Wages were increased to reflect recent increases in staff wages plus an additional staffer. **After review, Jim Kent moved and Alyson Buckley seconded to approve the 2023 budget on a temporary basis pending Hadley's review, motion passed.**
5. **Grant Applications:**
 - a. **Hadley** explained that the RCO resolution form gives RCO assurance the board is aware of a project and gives Hadley signature authority to receive the funds. She then described two proposed grant applications. **Alyson Buckley moved and Jim Kent seconded to approve the Coppei 7 and Cottonwood Pals restoration project application resolution (23-01), motion passed.**
 - b. **Hadley** reviewed the work Tri-State Steelheaders (TSS) are doing on the Bridge to Bridge project Phase C. TSS asked if the district would provide match; they need to identify the source of match in a grant application. Alyson Buckley recused herself from discussion. Hadley said the district could earmark some the 2025 NRI project funds as match. The board expressed approval of the idea.

- c. Hadley** explained that the USDA has a Fertilizer Production Expansion grant that supports vermiculture soil amendments. She will monitor the opportunity and report to the board.
- 6. Discussion of Board goals: Hadley** asked the supervisors for direction on setting goals. Currently funding is driving the district to focus on riparian and stream restoration. McCaw asked what other districts are doing. Hadley reported that Pierce CD has food gleaning and water quality programs. Whatcom CD has quarterly meetings with different ag-focus groups such as livestock and oyster-farming. Rock Lake CD is working on Commodity buffers. Asotin has a precision-ag program. Carlson said there is a link to each [districts' page of accomplishments](#) at the SCC website. Columbia CD has a soil testing program and uses NRI funds to help producers deal with pH. Spokane CD has a program with Bio-farming.
- 7. Summary of manual updates: Hadley** explained over the past 18 months the board has approved several changes to the Internal Procedure and the Personnel manuals. These have been incorporated into the respective manuals and she requested the board sign them.

Program Updates: Traynor presented an extensive review of the VSP program. The history of VSP (as an alternative to the Critical Areas Ordinance of the Growth Management Act) was explained. Challenges include the scale of the work, the resources involved (e.g., 470 miles of river) and privacy concerns. It is a balancing act between respecting landowner privacy and demonstrating to regulatory agencies (and others) that voluntary conservation works. Staff continue to focus on reporting district work and partnering with USDA and groups like TSS to include their work in the reporting. **Hadley** reviewed recent and planned outreach work including Conservation Conversations and 8 Wheat Weeks in areas schools. She then discussed on the Cottonwood PALS project. The original plan was to install post assisted log structures (PALS) which are small, minimally engineered structures intended to address concerns in smaller waterways and to degrade naturally, providing large woody debris. Engineers determined that these were insufficient to address the issues of the reach. The current design is to add structures to slow flows and allow sediment deposits to support riparian habitat. The design will need to include the no-rise analysis. WDFW wants to see the work done as the landowners currently have to fix issues after every high-water event. The Tetra-tech design has engineered structures plus some more robust PALS.

Public comment: Don Schwerin's application to fill the remainder of the vacant appointed member term is being considered by the SCC.

Executive Session: Hadley announced at 6:41 that the board would go into executive session for 30 minutes to discuss employee reviews, as per RCW 42.30.110 (1) (g) "to ...review the performance of public employees." The board returned to open session at 7:15.

Performance Recognition: After discussion, **Jim Kent moved and Alyson Buckley seconded to provide each employee a \$500.00 performance award, plus a polo-shirt with the district logo, and to reimburse employees up to \$100.00 for additional logo-marked apparel; motion passed.**

With no further business on the agenda, at 7:30 **Jim Kent moved and Alyson Buckley seconded to adjourn the meeting, motion passed.**

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 Dec. minutes as written,

Motion: Buckley
Second: Kent
Motion passed

To approve the January financial report,

Motion: Buckley
Second: Kent
Motion passed

To approve the new CREP hold down rates as presented,

Motion: Buckley
Second: Kent
Motion passed

To approve the purchase of light refreshments for the Conservation Conversations and the usual food expenses for the Annual meeting,

Motion: Buckley
Second: Kent
Motion passed

To approve the 2023 budget on a temporary basis pending Hadley's review,

Motion: Kent
Second: Buckley
Motion passed

To approve the Coppei 7 and Cottonwood Pals restoration project application resolution,

Motion: Buckley
Second: Kent
Motion passed

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To provide each employee a \$500.00 performance award, plus a polo-shirt with the district logo, and to reimburse employees up to \$100.00 for additional logo-marked apparel,

Motion: Kent
Second: Buckley
Motion passed

To adjourn the meeting,

Motion: Kent
Second: Buckley
Motion passed