

Walla Walla County Conservation District

May 2023 Board Meeting

Date: May 8, 2023

Time: 5:00 p.m.

Place: In person and via Zoom

Presiding Officer: Jesse McCaw

Supervisors Present: Don Schwerin, Jeff Schulke

Supervisors absent: Jim Kent, Alyson Buckley

Other Agencies: Bryce Krueger, NRCS; Allisa Carlson, SCC; Ryan Baye, WACD

Also present: Renee Hadley, Audrey Ahmann, Jenny Freer, Grant Traynor, Annie Byerley

Members of the Public: Dan Mildon, Christa Wilkinson

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m. by Jesse McCaw.

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

Minutes: The Board reviewed the April 10th board meeting minutes. **Motion by Jeff Schulke and second by Don Schwerin to approve the April 10th board minutes as presented, motion passed.**

Financial Reports: The board reviewed the May Financial Report. After further review, **motion by Jeff Schulke and second by Don Schwerin to approve the May financial reports and pay the bills, motion passed.**

As of this date May 8th the Board by a majority vote does approve for payment checks included in the May financial reports and further described as follows: Checks 14671 to 14702, revenues 68,508.64; expenses 95,152.28; total all accounts \$128,865.19

- 1. Partner Reports: Krueger** said the Snake River team (Franklin, Garfield, Asotin, Walla Walla, Columbia) met in Dayton and set funding priorities; among these were range, forestry and soil health. **Hadley** mentioned WSU has filled the Agronomist position and Ecology hired Jenny Weathered as their water quality lead; she has a conservation district and NRCS background. John Foltz, lead of the Snake River Salmon Recovery Funding Board, is leaving his position. **Ryan Baye** of WACD told the board the legislature has approved a “big, bold, historic” level of funding for districts. Sustainable Farms and Fields is a new source of funds and the SW part of the county might see some livestock funding. The Implementation grant may go up to 120,000 (currently at 111,000). Hadley added that project

development is usually funded by the Imp grant. Baye said there is budget proviso language restricting some of the funds. For example, the Salmon Recovery Funding may require coordinating work with other agencies prior to commencing projects. A measure to put all supervisors on the general election ballot failed. The legislature is funding a study to determine the costs of doing so. He also mentioned there is a vacancy at the WACD Southeast area representative for a board supervisor.

2. **Review of board meeting standards:** Alyssa Carlson noted that a King Conservation District board meeting was Zoom bombed. Hadley said Traynor has set up methods of dealing with this type of activity while still meeting open public meeting requirements.
3. **Internal Audit: Ahmann** said the internal audit was completed. The audit committee recommended approving the annual financial report. Ahmann said the only remaining tasks are uploading documents like the bank statements and copies of grant contracts. After further review of the report, **Jeff Schulke moved and Don Schwerin seconded to approve submittal of the Annual Financial Report to the state auditor's office as presented, motion passed.** It was noted that due to switching to Springbrook the reconciliation was not always completed by Klundt (due to time needed to learn the system and hitches along the way). The committee suggested an action plan: that the person reconciling the account sign and date the resulting report. **Jeff Schulke moved and Don Schwerin seconded that bank reconciliations be signed and dated by the person completing the process, motion passed.**
4. **Review and Approve Annual Plan of Work: Hadley** presented the draft annual plan of work. It is oriented toward riparian and irrigation efficiency work. In response to a question about soil health, Hadley stated this is in the Long-Range Plan and will be pursued as funding becomes available. (The plan does not limit what the board and the district may pursue in the upcoming year.) **Jeff Schulke moved and Don Schwerin seconded to approve the 2023 Annual Plan of Work as presented, motion passed.**
5. **Discussion of nonprofit status: Hadley** explained the district needs to pursue new sources of funds to continue Wheat Week and other outreach. Some grants require the applicant be a 501c3 non-profit (not a special purpose district). If the district joins the Washington Conservation Society, we can apply for grants using this group as the recipient, and the society will pass-thru the funds to the district at a 3% charge. Joining costs \$150.00 annually. **Jeff Schulke moved and Don Schwerin seconded to join the Washington Conservation Society, motion passed.**


- 6. New meter project:** Traynor presented a new meter project on Yellowhawk for approval. The landowner has a surface water right dating from 1859. The previously installed meter functioned for 13 years. **Jeff Schulke moved and Don Schwerin seconded to approve a meter project on Yellowhawk Creek using VSP funds, motion passed.**

Program Updates: **Hadley** explained staff are investigating the purchase of a small no-till drill to rent to local producers. The intent is to expand our services to producers and facilitate low-disturbance tillage. Issues discussed include liability, transporting the drill, storage, how to recoup costs, etc. The drill could be purchased with Sustainable Farms and Field funds so rental cost would be nominal; the district would not be seeking to profit. The board expressed support and encouraged staff to continue to develop this idea.

Byerley gave an in-depth review of her recent work. The biggest project is the Walla Walla River 35.5 in-stream and riparian restoration project beginning in August. Construction will be done by R6, a firm based in Union, Oregon. She is also steering a bridge project on the Coppei to eliminate an equipment crossing (fording the creek). NRCS is funding most of the project and there are plans to use NRI funds from the Commission. In general, there are concerns about the amount of time it has been taking to get a permit from the county. The board suggested staff invite a county commissioner to the next meeting to discuss ways to expedite the process. Byerley also mentioned some proposed changes to the Irrigation Efficiency program that may benefit local irrigators. Traynor provided a report showing over the past decade, Walla Walla county producers continued to adopt more efficient irrigation systems. **Hadley** gave staffing updates: all openings have been filled. Jenny Freer has been hired as bookkeeper, Cat Garza (returning) and Eila Chin hired as conservation scientists, and Nicole Kelly as a summer intern. Hadley said staff provided the Wa. Dept. of Ag. with 10 soil samples; producers will receive copies of the test results. She also mentioned that due to substantial cost increases, staff are working with Ecology staff to reduce the scope of the Floodplains by Design project to fit the budget. Finally, Hadley reviewed the recent tree planting event held on Caldwell Creek. This event showed appreciation for the landowners and agencies that supported the work.

With no further business on the agenda, at 6:45 the meeting was adjourned without a formal motion.

Respectfully submitted,


Audrey Ahmann


Jesse McCaw


Jim Kent

District Staff

Chair

Vice-Chair

Next meeting: June 12th, 2023 at 5:00 p.m.

Motions:

To approve the April 10 th board meeting minutes as written,	Motion: Schulke Second: Schwerin Motion passed
To approve the May financial report	Motion: Schulke Second: Schwerin Motion passed
To approve the Annual Financial Report as presented,	Motion: Schulke Second: Schwerin Motion passed
To approve an action plan regarding signing reconciliations,	Motion: Schulke Second: Schwerin Motion passed
To join the Washington Conservation Society,	Motion: Schulke Second: Schwerin Motion passed
To approve the Yellowhawk meter replacement using VSP funds,	Motion: Schulke Second: Schwerin Motion passed