



Walla Walla County Conservation District

April 2024 Board Meeting

Date: Apr. 8, 2024

Time: 5:00 p.m.

Place: In person and via Zoom

Presiding Officer: Jim Kent, Chair

Supervisors Present: Alyson Buckley, Jeff Schulke, Don Schwerin, Jesse McCaw

Supervisors absent:

Other Agencies: Alison Carlson, SCC; Corrie Thorne-Hadley, WDFW

Also present: Renee Hadley, Jenny Freer, Grant Traynor, Cat Garza, Joanna Cowles-Cleveland, Eila Chin, Alison Crowley

Members of the Public:

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m. by Jim Kent.

Kent invited the public to comment. No public comments were made.

Minutes: The Board reviewed the Mar. 11th board meeting minutes. **Motion by Jeff Schulke and second by Alyson Buckley to approve the Mar. 11th board minutes as presented, no discussion, motion passed.**

Financial Reports: The board reviewed the ^{March} ~~February~~ Financial Reports. **Motion by Jeff Schulke and second by Alyson Buckley to pay the bills, motion passed.**

As of this date Apr. 8 2024 the Board reviewed the Mar. financial reports with no further discussion: Checks 14914 to 14924, revenues \$31,717.68 and expenses \$87,662.68; total of bank accounts \$384,170.53.

(Total Matches Springbrook)

New Business:

- 1. Partner Reports: Hadley** shared on behalf of NRCS that they have hired a new scientist for Columbia County. **Hadley** shared that there has been a new noxious weed coordinator hired. **Thorne-Hadley, WDFW** shared that there is a voluntary public access grant available relating to corn/wheat stubble retention and was wondering if there was any interest for such a program. In other news, Jackie McCool has been named as Dave Karl's replacement. Dave moved to another position in WDFW **Carlson, SCC** advised the board that monitoring of past projects looks good for Walla Walla County. Right now is the open comment review period for the grant's manual and VSP

monitoring guidelines. The WWCCD's appointments will be heard on May 16th. Don Schwerin was given the one-year certificate for serving on the WWCCD's board.

2. **NRCS Office Lease Quarterly Update: Cowles-Cleveland** shared the lease agreement spreadsheet for the first quarter of 2024. More projects are coming up but as of now the agreement included only a couple of hours of staff time.
3. **Request to review and approve the Annual Plan of Work: Hadley** presented the board with the FY2025 annual plan of work. Noticing that expenses comprise 80% projects and 20% wages. The Annual Plan of work can be found on WWCCD's website.

Motion by Jeff Schulke and second by Jesse McCaw to approve the annual plan of work as presented: motion passed.

4. **Request for a third party to conduct a cyber security assessment: Hadley** had shared network security concerns and is currently working with the State Auditors Office and their free security check. The district may need additional IT help with this matter. Hadley had offered Philantech3 Consulting Group as an alternative, which they are booked out through July.

Motion by Don Schwerin and second by Jeff Schulke to approve the cyber security assessment as presented: motion passed.

5. **Reevaluate single signature/electronic submittal for SIMPLE: Hadley/Freer** shared the regulations from Franklin Templeton that states deposits need to be made within 7 days of employee deductions. The staff are asking for electronic submittal of this information to Franklin Templeton rather than a hard copy check, so that we are on time with our obligations.

Motion by Jesse McCaw and second by Jeff Schulke to approve electronic submittal of SIMPLE payment as presented: motion passed.

6. **Request to change the check deposit frequency policy: Hadley** shared RCW43.09.240 that states: *In case a public officer or employee collects or receives funds for the account of a local government of which he or she is an officer or employee, the treasurer shall, by Friday of each week, pay to the proper officer of the local government for the account of which the collection was made or payment received, the full amount collected or received during the current week for the account of the district.* The district would like to implement this RCW as part of our received check policy.

Motion by Jeff Schulke and second by Jesse McCaw to approve the RCW 43.09.240 as part of the district's policy as presented: motion passed.

7. **Request to approve the RCO and SCC project advancement of funds for Summer 2024: Hadley** requested permission to set up fund advancement for the three large

projects that are happening this July/August. The advance would be for \$1.39 million. RCO will advance 90% of funds available and SRF/NRI will advance 50%.

Motion by Jeff Schulke and second by Jesse McCaw to approve the district manager to request an advancement of funds for projects as presented: motion passed.

Program Updates:

A.) USDA CREP presentation and yearly status update: Cowles-Cleveland shared information below.

Status of CREP in Walla Walla County

Number of active contracts: 111

Number of Acres: 2,500.71

Maintenance projects in 2023: 16

Contracts visited in 2023: 41

Contracts up for re-enrollment in 2024: 6

Active CREP inquiries: 2

Contract modifications

2 partially burned contracts

12 thinning projects

1 parcel adjustment

1 contract termination

Program updates

National Acreage Caps: as of 2023 the national number of acres enrolled in CRP was at 24.8 million with a cap of 27 million. CREP is included under the national CRP cap

State Acreage Caps:

- Wetland CREP contracts (CP23, CP23A, and CP30): 230-240 acres out of 250 acre cap. All contracts need state office approval.

- Riparian (CP22): No close to 93,750 acre cap

- Grass (CP21): Not close to 4,000 acre cap

Program Changes and New Requirements

Communication and agency roles

- Required monthly meetings between local NRCS, FSA, and CD staff to stay on the same page

- FSA required to update both the CD and SCC with ANY changes to a CREP contract

- Required conceptual level meeting with the COC for new projects

- Moving forward both NRCS and Conservation Districts will be required to sign off on CREP conservation plans regardless of which agency designs the plan

Buffer Requirements

- Required justification for any width above the minimum. Additional information will be provided in a separate webinar scheduled for May 8th.

- Replanting will no longer be paid for on re-enrollments.

- No CREP adjacent to a road.

- No conversion of continuous CRP to CREP

- CP21 grass buffers cannot include stems, even if the landowner puts them in themselves. If stems are present when up for re-enrollment it will no longer be considered eligible for that practice.

Misc. Program Clarifications

- The 1998 listed stocking rate of 500 stem/acre for CP22 contracts still applies for both Western and Eastern WA. Rachel Maggi with NRCS is looking into this for Eastern Washington.

- Wetlands – A full delineation not technically required, but is needed to establish ratios of upland to wetland as per practice requirements. This is a very sensitive topic due to the Food Security Act requirements for wetlands. There was extensive discussion around this issue.
- Marginal pastureland cannot be converted back to cropland, so be careful of making that change for new contracts.
- DNR has claimed jurisdiction over CREP thinning in some areas. Reach out to local DNR contacts prior to doing significant thinning.
- Need to complete cultural resource review prior to contract signing, or at least beginning of contract so don't need to cancel or return funds in case of non-concurrence.
- Include township, section, and range on project maps
- Mid contract management must be specific on requirements. They can be changed later but the funds are already allocated from day 1.
- The state will pay 50% of mid contract management based on hold down rates, even though FSA doesn't pay. Can get an 848A to document
- Status reviews 2 years before end of contract
- NRCS is looking into establishing guidance for weed tolerance level on CREP contracts.
- A variance is required for any maintenance work done outside of the establishment period listed on the conservation plan, which is typically 12 months.

State CREP Audit

Very little information was provided related to the audit. It is currently on hold while they pull together a team of out-of-state staff. Any county audits may also include some out-of-county staff if additional information is necessary. We were told that more information related to the audit should be provided within the next several weeks.

With the current situation, all new CREP contracts, including re-enrollments, are required to go through the state FSA office for approval until further notice.

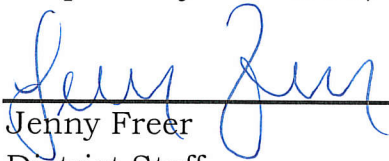
B.) District Operations: Hadley gave notification of District Manager vacation Summer of 2024 that will be exceeding one week. Hadley requested either a board member or staff member be temporary delegate during this time. The Board postponed selecting a delegate to a future board meeting. Grants approved include two Terry Husseman grants and four District project as shared SRSRB rankings. Touchet 35 Restoration was above the cut off line. Both Riparian projects are also likely to be funded by the SRSRB. Internal Audit needs to be scheduled with two board volunteers (Schwerin and McCaw)

Joint Agency Meetings:

Nothing to report at this time

The meeting was adjourned at 7:00 without a formal motion.

Respectfully submitted,


Jenny Freer
District Staff


Board member

Next meeting: May 13, 2024 at 5:00 p.m.

Motions:

To approve the Mar. 11th board meeting minutes as written,

Motion: Schulke
Second: Buckley
Motion passed

To review the Mar. Financial Reports and approve paying the bills, as presented

Motion: Schulke
Second: Buckley
Motion passed

To approve the Annual Plan of Work, as presented

Motion: Schulke
Second: McCaw
Motion passed

To approve a third party to conduct cyber security. check, as presented

Motion: Schwerin
Second: Shulke
Motion passed

To approve electronic submittal of SIMPLE, as presented

Motion: McCaw
Second: Schulke
Motion passed

To approve updating check deposit policy, as presented

Motion: Schulke
Second: McCaw
Motion passed

To approve asking for project advances, as presented

Motion: Schulke
Second: McCaw
Motion passed