

**LINCOLN COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT
BOARD MEETING
USDA Service Center Conference Room – Davenport, WA
Wednesday, April 12, 2023**

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER:

Meeting called to order at 8:35 AM by Chairman, Jeff Schibel. Those attending the meeting in person were as follows: Jim Baye, Chris Laney and Braidy Haden - LCCD Supervisors; Jo Gilchrist, Lincoln County Commissioners; Marika Kearsley, NRCS; Elsa Bowen and Dean White - LCCD staff.

A. MINUTES: Additions / Corrections:

It was noted that on page 3 of the March 8 minutes at the middle of the Elections Update paragraph, the 6,000% increase needed to be changed to “600% increase in visits to the Lincoln County CD website, most likely for elections and also for the current tree sale.” It was also noted that on page 5 in the middle of the County Commissioner Report, “hop residue” needed to be changed to “crop residue” in two places.

- 1. *Chris moved to approve the March 8, 2023 minutes as amended. Jim seconded. There was no public comment. Motion passed.*

B. TREASURER'S REPORT / TRANSACTIONS REPORT:

- 2. *Jim moved to pay and approve vouchers #12026 to #12058, along with 53 EFT's, totaling \$73,113.43. Chris seconded. Discussion was held. Elsa noted that a lot of the EFT's in small amounts were for fees charged to the District for tree sale orders made through the tree sale webpage on the Lincoln County CD website. Motion passed.*
- 3. *Jim moved to submit voucher #20 for the VSP 4 grant in the amount of \$7,521.24 to the Conservation Commission. Chris seconded. Motion passed.*
- 4. *Jim moved to submit voucher #5 for the 23-39-DG grant in the amount of \$860.17 to the Conservation Commission. Chris seconded. Motion passed.*
- 5. *Jim moved to submit voucher #1 for the 23-39-WFF grant in the amount of \$0.00 to the Conservation Commission. Chris seconded. Motion passed.*
- 6. *Jim moved to submit voucher #2 for the 23-39-WFF grant in the amount of \$1,500.24 to the Conservation Commission. Chris seconded. Motion passed.*
- 7. *Jim moved to submit voucher #8 for the 23-39-FR grant in the amount of \$1,600.58 to the Conservation Commission. Chris seconded. Motion passed.*

- **8. Jim moved to submit voucher #20 for the 22-39-NR grant in the amount of \$3,097.88 to the Conservation Commission. Chris seconded. Motion passed.**
- **9. Jim moved to submit voucher #8 for the 23-39-IM grant in the amount of \$19,268.90 to the Conservation Commission. Chris seconded. Motion passed.**
- **10. Jim moved to submit voucher #5 for the 22-27-NR grant in the amount of \$5,285.00 to Adams CD. Chris seconded. Motion passed.**
- **11. Jim moved that the Lincoln County Conservation District Visa statement for February 24, 2023 through March 23, 2023 be approved. The total amount owed was \$337.74. Chris seconded. There was no public comment. Motion passed.**
- **12. Jim moved to approve the Lincoln County Conservation District Co-Energy / Pacific Pride gas card statement with a closing date of March 15, 2023. The total amount owed was \$173.01. Chris seconded. Motion passed.**

Elsa noted that the District is on schedule for spending just about all of the remaining grant funding that expires on June 30, 2023. Much of the remaining funding is for cost share payments to cooperators who are expected to finish work on their projects by the deadline of June 30.

Elsa reported that the District had started to receive the first small amounts for the special assessment in 2023 from the county. Jim asked if Lincoln County ever borrows money to fund its budget. Jo noted that the county does borrow from its own surplus/rainy day fund from time to time and is then obligated to repay the surplus fund back with interest.

Elsa passed around bank statements for the board members to initial.

The Board reviewed the report of the current annual leave/sick leave balances for District employees.

- **13. Chris moved to approve the Treasurer's report and Grant's report as presented. Jim seconded. There was no public comment. Motion passed.**

C. AGENDA

Elections Update

Elsa reported that all of the required elections documents had been submitted. About 10% of the 8,250 registered voters in the county who were mailed ballots returned their completed ballots to the District. Lincoln County also only gets about 10% of the registered voters in the county to vote in a lot of the county general elections held in

November. Elsa and Delaini have been compiling a report about the process that Lincoln County CD staff have experienced with the direct mailing of Board Supervisor elections ballots to registered county voters this spring in preparation for giving presentations on LCCD elections this year to WACD and to the Conservation Commission. Jim proposed that Elsa and Delaini consider giving their elections presentation at the next monthly Conservation Commission meeting to be held in May in the Tri-Cities.

Delaini reported that there were some write in candidates on the returned ballots, but there were only about 2 ballots each for individual write in candidate. As mentioned at the March board meeting, a few of the voters receiving ballots called the office and questioned why Lincoln County CD was spending time and money mailing out the Board Supervisor election ballots this year, especially when there was only one candidate. Some voters expressed concerns about having to sign the back of the ballot return envelope in order for their vote to count.

Elsa suggested that District yearly accomplishments be included in future absentee ballot mailings along with a mini biography of the Board supervisor candidates to let county voters know more about the services that Lincoln County CD provides to local residents and provide some background on the candidates that many voters may have never met and or heard their names.

Tree Sale and Hedreen WRP Riparian Planting Update

The 2023 Tree Sale packing and order pickup were completed last week. Three boxes of Rocky Mountain juniper SuperStock plugs that were not sold during the pre-sale and first day of order pickup were sold to Spokane CD to sell at its surplus tree sale. There were some pollinator packs and succulent packs left over that will be sold to customers looking for any leftover tree sale plants or will be planted at the Davenport Community Garden.

District staff have started laying out the potted stock for the last scheduled Cobb Ranch WRP planting along Crab Creek south of Bluestem Road. Delaini and Debra are out at the site today laying out more of the 6,100 total pots plus willow poles.

Upper Columbia Resource Conservation and Development Council Restart

Vicky Carter, District Manager for Spokane CD, contacted the District and announced that the Upper Columbia Resource Conservation and Development Council is being restarted after being inactive for several years. The Upper Columbia Resource Conservation and Development Council covers the 5 county NE Area. Vicky asked if any of the Lincoln County CD board members would be interested in serving on the Council. Meetings will either be held monthly or every quarter. Elsa noted the District has used the Council in the past to apply for grants or run task orders through it such as the EQIP Energy task order which could not be directly run through the District. Elsa will work with Braidy to see if he might be able to serve on the Council.

2023 WADE Training

The annual WADE (Washington Association of District Employees) Conference will be held at the Sleeping Lady again in Leavenworth on June 12 – 14. Registration for in-person attendance is due by Friday, May 12. The cost for registration for all 3 days is \$600 (\$700 after April 21) and includes 2 nights lodging and all meals during the conference. Registration for only Tuesday, June 13, is \$450 (\$550 after April 21) and

includes lunch and dinner. Elsa noted that the District will apply for several scholarships to help cover the cost of attendance.

Cost Share Update

Hard copies of the Cost Share Action spreadsheet were distributed. Cost share applications for 5 requested projects were received for the Direct Seed 3, VSP 4, Fire Recovery, and NRI grants for varied practices including direct seeding, livestock well installation, Whitney Road fire fence rebuilding, sprinkler system installation, and brush management. The funding for the two NRI grants came from the return of funds from another livestock well installation project that could not be implemented due to the lack of any available well drillers to drill the well before June 30th.

14. Jim moved to approve the Cost Share Action spreadsheet as presented. Chris seconded. There was no public comment. Motion passed.

Soil Health Initiative Grant Update

The Soil Health Initiative grant contract has not yet been received. Delaini, Elayne and Dean attended the required Soil Health Initiative soil sampling training held in the office and in the field at Ellensburg on March 28. Several step probes for collecting soil sample cores from the top 12" of the soil profile in selected sampling fields had to be ordered for soil sampling this spring, as the WASHI program ran out of funding to supply all participating CD's with the probes. Soil Health Initiative soil sampling must be completed by June 30. District staff are planning to conduct the SHI soil sampling at selected fields across the county in May.

Community Wildfire Protection Plan Update and SIMS Table

Elsa reported that the District had received \$66,446 in grant money from USDA and administered by DNR to update the Community Wildfire Protection Plan for the county. Former District staff member Kristen Balko was hired to write the successful CWPP grant application. Once the CWPP plan has been updated, the District can then apply for new implementation grant funding for CWPP projects in communities across the county.

Elsa announced that the District is working with DNR to purchase a fire simulation table known as a Simtable with DNR grant money that will be shared with neighboring conservation districts to demonstrate how wildfire is projected to move through local terrain using a 3D creating substrate to create actual local hill and valley topography with the corresponding aerial photography and road map background projected from below. The Simtable folds up into a 2 full suitcase size container that can be easily transported in vehicles to transport from one demonstration site to another. The cost of a Simtable is \$137,975. The Simtable comes with its own computer and projection equipment and software to create the simulations.

Jo suggested that the Simtable be demonstrated at the Lincoln County Fair. Elsa noted that she had spoken with some but not all of the fire district chiefs in the county about the plan to purchase the Simtable and how it might benefit them when fighting local wildfires.

Board approval was needed to enter into a contract with DNR to purchase a Simtable primarily for wildfire simulation demonstrations with grant funding from DNR.

15. Chris moved to approve a contract with DNR to purchase a Simtable primarily for wildfire simulation demonstrations with \$137,975 in grant funding from DNR. Jim seconded. There was no public comment. Motion passed.

2023 CRP Task Order

The recent spring 2023 general CRP signup ended on Friday, April 7. Elsa is working with Marika and Cari to develop a task order to write 250 CRP plans for new CRP contracts in Lincoln and Adams counties for \$47,500 by June 30. FSA has received applications for 157 new CRP contracts in Lincoln County and 128 contracts in Adams County. A question has come up concerning whether or not FSA staff would be obtaining signatures for the CRP contracts or if District staff would have to spend significant additional time obtaining the signatures for the contracts. The issue is now at the NRCS State Office level for a decision on who will be working with farmers to obtain signatures for the new CRP contracts.

16. Jim moved to approve a new task order with NRCS to write 250 new CRP contracts in Adams and Lincoln counties by June 30 for \$47,500. Chris seconded. There was no public comment. Motion passed.

WACD Update

Jeff reported that the WACD Board had approved three separate withdrawals of \$100,000 from Banner Bank to invest in the Edward Jones account for WACD that will be yielding 5% interest. The proposal for Skagit CD to move its office to the PMC site is still being discussed. A potential limiting issue with building a new office building at the PMC site is that much of the land is located in a flood plain and would require significant areas of fill, which is contrary to typical conservation practices in a flood plain. The PMC has hired a new farm manager with farm experience to replace the former farm manager who had held the position for 20+ years before retiring.

2023 Pacific Northwest Direct Seed Association Investment

Elsa reported that the annual investment for 2023 in PNDSA had been requested. The District has made an annual investment of \$100 in recent years.

17. Chris moved to approve the annual \$100 investment in the PNW Direct Seed Association (PNDSA). Jim seconded. There was no public comment. Motion passed.

Conservation Commission Report

Mike Baden was not available to give the Conservation Commission report. A letter written in late March on behalf of 18 conservation districts across the state, including Lincoln County CD along with Spokane CD and Pend Oreille CD from the NE Area, was sent to the Conservation Commission concerning recent issues with the leadership and direction of the Commission. The eighteen conservation districts requested that "an open dialogue be developed between the districts and the Commission leadership to identify areas of concern, learn about each other's concerns and ideas, and develop proposed solutions." The conservation districts also requested that a minimum of 2 conservation district managers and/or board supervisors be included on the selection committee to fill the recently vacated Conservation Commission Executive Director position.

The Conservation Commission sent a letter back to the 18 conservation districts in early April that listed 2 Conservation District Managers, 1 Regional Manager and 1 Conservation District Board Supervisor who had been appointed to serve on the 9-person Selection Committee to select the new Executive Director for the Conservation Committee. The other 5 members of the selection committee are regular members of the Conservation Commission Board.

Jeff remotely participated in a Selection Committee meeting yesterday. The Selection Committee is looking for a consultant / "head hunter" to search for viable candidates for the Executive Director position. The committee is also seeking input from CD's around the state for what they want to see in the Executive Director for the Conservation Commission.

It was also noted that at the recent Conservation Commission Board meeting, the Board requested that the State Attorney General be present at the Board meeting to help ensure that all legal requirements were followed. The Board had previously asked the former Executive Director several times to voluntarily resign from the position but had refused. The Board then chose to fire the former Executive Director.

Kirk Robinson has been selected to serve as the Interim Executive Director for the next several months until a new Executive Director has been hired. Kirk is working on developing a code of conduct for the Conservation Commission and for the Executive Director. Elsa suggested that the codes of conduct for conservation districts across the state be consulted as a starting point for any new code of conduct for the Commission.

County Commissioner Report

Jo reported that the investor from Tacoma who had expressed an interest to the county in getting the former biodiesel plant in Odessa up and running again to process crop residues to create biodiesel and/or burn residue to produce electricity has not been found to be a reputable or viable investor and project manager and so this potential project has been dropped by the county.

Jo is now serving as a member of the Office of Columbia River and has noted that a lot of funding is being made available for the Odessa Groundwater Replacement program.

As of April 1, a new broadband office has been established for Lincoln County in the Courthouse building. Margie Hall has been selected as the first director of the broadband office. New materials and equipment for installing the county owned fiber optic line, including an 8 ft. diameter spool of fiber optic line, is being stored at the fairgrounds, with rent being paid to the fairgrounds for storing these fiber optic line supplies. Fiber optic lines are currently being installed between Creston and Almira with the lines being hung on the Avista power poles between the cities. Lines are also being installed between Odessa and Harrington.

IIG is working on installing the private fiber optic line that is running through the county between Yakima and Billings, Montana. The company is installing concrete vaults in fields along the route that are within the right of way, which is within 30 ft. of the centerline of local roads on private lands, or within 45 ft. of the road centerline along public lands. Jim expressed concerns about tractors and farm implements catching the edges of these concrete vaults and ripping them out of the ground.

NRCS Report

Marika attended the Board meeting today in place of Cari who is currently serving as Acting East Area Conservationist. Marika reported the following program activities being worked on by the West Palouse Team:

EQIP General signup

- Approved Applications
 - Lincoln County – 8 with 1 contract obligated
 - Adams County – 5 with 1 contract obligated
- Pending Applications
 - Lincoln County – 15
 - Adams County – 17

EQIP CIC signup

- Approved Applications
 - Lincoln County – 0
 - Adams County – 4 with 1 contract obligated
- Pending Applications
 - Lincoln County – 5
 - Adams County – 6

The initial funding allocation has been spent. Work is ongoing for obligating contracts, with additional funding trickling in.

EQIP IRA (Inflation Reduction Act)

- Pending Applications
 - Lincoln County – 27
 - Adams County – 10

CSP

- Pending Applications
 - Lincoln County – 23
 - Adams County – 13

CSP IRA

- Pending Applications
 - Lincoln County – 18
 - Adams County – 5

WPT staff is working on ranking EQIP IRA, CSP IRA, and CSP applications along with verifying the EQIP status for IRA.

CRP

- The general signup deadline for this spring was Friday, April 7.
- CRP field stand review training was held on April 7 for WPT staff.
- NRCS is working on a Task Order with Lincoln County CD to write CRP plans for 250 CRP contracts.
 - 157 CRP applications submitted in Lincoln County
 - 128 CRP applications submitted in Adams County
 - 285 CRP applications total submitted

Continuous CRP

- Pending Applications
 - Lincoln County – 6
 - Adams County – 24
- WPT staff will write the continuous CRP contracts.

The Local Working Group meeting for EQIP will be held on May 4, from 9 AM to noon at the Lincoln County Public Works building in the basement meeting room in Davenport. The lease for the Davenport Service Center has been awarded with the updated layout of the building still being discussed. Casey Wren is now working for FSA.

FSA Report

There was no report from FSA.

Vehicle Update

Elsa announced that along with an oil change, lube job and standard maintenance inspections, the silver 4 door pickup recently had a towing hitch installed to be able to tow trailers in the future. Elsa will be sure to have a towing hitch included in the next new pickup ordered.

Request for Public Comment

Jeff asked if there was any more public comment for the meeting. There was no public comment.

Chairman Jeff Schibel adjourned the meeting at 9:55 AM. The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, May 10 as an in-person meeting starting at 8:30 AM in the conference room at the USDA Service Center in Davenport.

Respectfully submitted,



Josh Sherwood, Secretary



Dean White, Minute Taker

SUMMARY:

All 17 motions were reviewed:

- 1. M/S/P to approve the March 8, 2023 minutes as amended.
- 2. M/S/P to pay and approve vouchers #12026 to #12058, along with 63 EFT's, totaling \$73,113.43.

- 3. M/S/P to submit voucher #20 for the VSP 4 grant in the amount of \$7,521.24 to the Conservation Commission.
- 4. M/S/P to submit voucher #5 for the 23-39-DG grant in the amount of \$860.17 to the Conservation Commission.
- 5. M/S/P to submit voucher #1 for the 23-39-WFF grant in the amount of \$0.00 to the Conservation Commission.
- 6. M/S/P to submit voucher #2 for the 23-39-WFF grant in the amount of \$1,500.24 to the Conservation Commission.
- 7. M/S/P to submit voucher #8 for the 23-39-FR grant in the amount of \$1,600.58 to the Conservation Commission.
- 8. M/S/P to submit voucher #20 for the 22-39-NR grant in the amount of \$3,097.88 to the Conservation Commission.
- 9. M/S/P to submit voucher #8 for the 23-39-IM grant in the amount of \$19,268.90 to the Conservation Commission.
- 10. M/S/P to submit voucher #5 for the 22-27-NR grant in the amount of \$5,285.00 to Adams CD.
- 11. M/S/P that the Lincoln County Conservation District Visa statement for February 24, 2023 through March 23, 2023 be approved. The total amount owed was \$337.74.
- 12. M/S/P to approve the Lincoln County Conservation District Co-Energy / Pacific Pride gas card statement with a closing date of March 15, 2023. The total amount owed was \$173.01.
- 13. M/S/P to approve the Treasurer's report and Grant's report as presented.
- 14. M/S/P to approve the Cost Share Action spreadsheet as presented.
- 15. M/S/P to approve a contract with DNR to purchase a Simtable primarily for wildfire simulation demonstrations with \$137,975 in grant funding from DNR.
- 16. M/S/P to approve a new task order with NRCS to write 250 new CRP contracts in Adams and Lincoln counties by June 30 for \$47,500.
- 17. M/S/P to approve the annual \$100 investment in the PNW Direct Seed Association (PNDSA).

