

**LINCOLN COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT  
BOARD MEETING  
USDA Service Center Conference Room – Davenport, WA  
Wednesday, March 12, 2025**

**MEETING CALLED TO ORDER:**

Meeting called to order at 9:02 AM by Chairman, Jeff Schibel. Those attending the meeting in person or by phone were as follows: Jim Baye, Josh Sherwood, Braidy Haden, and Chris Laney - LCCD Supervisors; Mike Baden, Conservation Commission (phone), Jo Gilchrist, Lincoln County Commissioners; Ashley Smith, FSA; Dick Erickson, NRCS; Jason Echelbarger, guest; Elsa Bowen, Delaini Disher, Brean Nieman, and Dean White - LCCD staff.

**A. MINUTES: Additions / Corrections:**

- 1. Braidy moved to approve the February 12, 2025 minutes as presented. Josh seconded. There was no public comment. Motion passed.*

**B. TREASURER'S REPORT / TRANSACTIONS REPORT:**

- 2. Jim moved to pay and approve vouchers #12662 to #12682, along with 38 EFT's, totaling \$47,203.60. Josh seconded. Discussion was held. Motion passed.*
- 3. Jim moved to submit voucher #14 for the 24-39-FH grant in the amount of \$3,877.26 to the Conservation Commission. Braidy seconded. Motion passed.*
- 4. Jim moved to submit voucher #16 for the Adams CD TA grant in the amount of \$0.00 to Adams CD. Josh seconded. Motion passed.*
- 5. Jim moved to submit voucher #17 for the Adams CD TA grant in the amount of \$136.94 to Adams CD. Braidy seconded. Motion passed.*
- 6. Jim moved to submit voucher #12 for the 24-39-IE grant in the amount of \$1,212.14 to the Conservation Commission. Josh seconded. Motion passed.*
- 7. Jim moved to submit voucher #5 for the CBCD ILA grant in the amount of \$0.00 to Columbia Basin CD. Braidy seconded. Motion passed.*
- 8. Jim moved to submit voucher #6 for the CBCD ILA grant in the amount of \$0.00 to Columbia Basin CD. Josh seconded. Motion passed.*
- 9. Jim moved to submit voucher #1 for the USBR Well Monitoring grant in the amount of \$14,751.85 to USBR. Braidy seconded. Motion passed.*

- **10. Jim moved to submit voucher #20 for the 24-39-NR grant in the amount of \$191.71 to the Conservation Commission. Braidy seconded. Motion passed.**
- **11. Jim moved to submit voucher #6 for the 25-39-SFF grant in the amount of \$474.66 to the Conservation Commission. Chris seconded. Motion passed.**
- **12. Jim moved to submit voucher #8 for the 25-39-IM grant in the amount of \$22,785.72. Josh seconded. Motion passed.**
- **13. Jim moved to submit voucher #20 for the VSP-5 grant in the amount of \$26,697.50 to the Conservation Commission. Chris seconded. Motion passed.**
- **14. Jim moved to submit voucher #4 for the 25-39-PFR grant in the amount of \$0.00 to the Conservation Commission. Braidy seconded. Motion passed.**
- **15. Jim moved to submit voucher #5 for the 25-39-PFR grant in the amount of \$0.00 to the Conservation Commission. Josh seconded. Motion passed.**
- **16. Jim moved to submit voucher #5 for the 23-DG-11062752-163 CWPP grant in the amount of \$3,542.58 to DNR. Chris seconded. Motion passed.**
- **17. Jim moved that the Lincoln County Conservation District VISA statement for January 24, 2025 through February 24, 2025 be approved. The total amount owed was \$0.00 due to the new balance of \$695.20 credit. Josh seconded. Discussion was held. Elsa noted that she had applied for the Cash Rewards from the District VISA card from US Bank. In addition, there was also a refund from Spokane CD back to the District due to an EQIP ponderosa pine tree planting project in the Sand Flats area that had been cancelled. Motion passed.**
- **18. Jim moved to approve the Lincoln County Conservation District Co-Energy / Pacific Pride gas card statement with a closing date of February 15, 2025. The total amount owed was \$47.61. Josh seconded. Motion passed.**
- **19. Jim moved to approve the Lincoln County Conservation District Co-Energy / Pacific Pride gas card statement with a closing date of February 28, 2025. The total amount owed was \$48.84. Braidy seconded. Motion passed.**

After reviewing the statements, the Board members initialed each page of the bank statements for the checking and money market accounts.

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

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

## **C. AGENDA**

### **Review of 89.08 RCW – Conservation Districts**

Hard copies of Chapter 89.08 RCW – Conservation Districts were distributed. Elsa reminded Board members of the required annual review and introduced 89.08 to Jason. There are no known recent revisions to 89.08, and if there were any new revisions, they would have to be approved first by the state legislature.

### **Surplus Computer Equipment**

Elsa mentioned that one of the District Lenovo laptops now has a cracked monitor screen that can not be easily or economically repaired. Elsa requested that the Board move to decommission this laptop so that it can be properly disposed of in the near future.

***21. Jim moved to approve the decommissioning and disposal of the Lenovo laptop with a cracked monitor screen. Braidy seconded. Motion passed.***

### **5-Year Plan Update**

Hard copies of the Lincoln County CD 5-Year Plan (FY2026 to FY2031) were distributed. The 5-Year plan needs to contain all possible priorities and activities that the District may address over the next 5 years. Priority 7: Fire Prevention has been added to the plan now that Matthew is working as Wildfire Preparedness Technician for the District. Elayne and Elsa worked on updating the 5-Year plan since the February Board meeting and noted that while there are a lot of activities and lofty goals included in the plan, all of these activities will only be completed if there is funding, staff and time to complete them. The 5-Year Plan is also a living document and can be updated as needed.

***22. Jim moved to approve the updated 5-Year Plan as presented. Braidy seconded. Motion passed.***

### **Lincoln County CD 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

Elsa announced that March 28 marks the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Lincoln County CD as a county wide conservation district formed by the consolidation of the previous 4 subdistricts into one conservation district in 1975.

District staff would like to compile the history of Lincoln County CD from the available archives, including the pre-1975 history of the 4 sub districts using photos and files from storage, and submit an article to the local newspapers and Wheat Life magazine for publication. Later on in fall after most farming activities are done for the year, a public celebration day at the fairgrounds or at Memorial Hall could be held with a PowerPoint presentation and displays, a catered meal, and with as many former board members and employees as possible contacted and invited to join the celebration. With proposed celebration day in later fall close to winter, a county tour of District projects would probably not be feasible. Jo noted that a Lincoln County department held a similar 50 year celebration and included a logo used from 50 years ago.

Elsa asked if the Board would be in favor of staff moving ahead with the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary activities as described. The Board agreed by general consensus for staff to move ahead with the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary activities as described.

### **Elections Update**

Delaini reported that the elections ballot return period is about half over and that about 600 ballots have been received by mail and about 40 ballots have been dropped off at the office. Another surge in ballots is expected this week ballots mailed over the weekend.

Delaini noted that with the Tree Sale and road address signs mentioned on the election ballots, there was a temporary increase in tree sales and a big jump in requests for road address signs, with over 90 more address sign requests received so far and all of the road numbers already attached for 90 new road signs to pick up at the office.

Overall, the Supervisor elections process has gone smoother this year with the Post Office and with Walt's Mailing taking care of the large workload of preparing and mailing the 8,000+ elections ballots to registered voters. Significant staff time and effort have been saved again, and with the cost of the 2025 elections estimated at \$6,000, about \$24,000 has been saved to use on conservation projects compared to the \$30,000 cost that would have been incurred if the Supervisor elections were added to the county general elections ballot in November.

Delaini handed out I Voted buttons and noted that Supervisor Elections signs from the Conservation Commission have been placed at office, at the Davenport Community Garden, and the Wilke Farm. Jeff commented that Lincoln County CD is now recognized across the state as leading the way with the most economical and feasible, higher ballot return process for conservation district Supervisor elections.

Delaini requested that all Board members remain in the conference room right after the meeting is adjourned so that some photos of the Board members can be taken to use on future Elections ballots and to post to the District website.

### **Tree Sale Update**

Brean reported that the Tree Sale has been going well with 95 orders received so far. Some species have been sold out, including blueberry, common lilac, golden currant, mock orange, quaking aspen, serviceberry, thinleaf alder, and western larch. Delaini is planning on working on an advertising effort to help sell the remaining species. Several Stevens County CD staff visited the office recently for training on using Springbrook software and Square for tree sale accounting and future online sales for the Stevens County tree sale.

Brean is also working on the annual report that is due at the end of May. Brean and Elayne will be attending an SFF (Sustainable Farms and Fields) grant meeting at 10:30 AM today.

### **Cost Share Action**

Hard copies of the Cost Share Action spreadsheet were distributed for review and approval. There was one payment request for payment from the Direct Seed 3 grant for \$7,000 and one grant application for \$385,000 from the 24-39-IE (Irrigation Efficiency) grant.

Elsa noted that a proposal for a temporary 2-month loan from available District funds to an irrigation cooperator was being explored as a possible option to help the cooperator pay for part of the extensive upfront expenses (estimated at \$500,000) for the purchase and installation of new mainline to replace several miles of leaking irrigation mainline. The cooperator has already reserved around \$100,000 from

available farm finances to help pay for upfront costs and is planning on installing the new pipeline without a contractor to help save project costs.

The process for all other District cost shared conservation projects has been that the cooperator pays for all of the project cost upfront, completes the project, has the project inspected for completion, and then submits a request for cost share reimbursement before the District will reimburse the cooperator for the agreed amount of grant funds and/or District funds.

Extensive discussion was held on whether or not Lincoln County CD would potentially be violating a state ban on gifting public money by making a short term 2-month loan to the irrigation cooperator to help pay for upfront costs.

It was noted that other public agencies typically charge interest on similar loans. Board members noted that any such loan from the District would need to be on a fast loan process, as the money is needed fast this spring to complete the project soon so that the irrigation water could be turned on by April or May at the latest. The District should take out a lien on the pipeline in case the cooperator isn't able to complete the project. It was also suggested that the District would need to ensure that due diligence would need to be done on any such loan and project. Another concern raised was that such an upfront loan might create a precedent for the District to make similar loans in the future.

Phone calls were made from the meeting to Ryan Baye and Tom Salzer, WACD, and to Mike Baden, the local region director for the Conservation Commission, for additional input on this issue. Ryan deferred the question to Tom. Tom commented that the proposed loan sounded like gifting public money from his point of view, but advised the Board to speak with Mike and listen to his viewpoint on the proposed loan. Mike helped to summarize the issue by noting that the state statute might allow for an upfront loan as proposed, but that the District would need to establish a policy for such loans beforehand in order to protect public money in case the cooperator would default, and that a lawyer who works on loans should be consulted before proceeding ahead on the proposed loan in order to protect the District's interests.

The Board agreed by general consensus that the proposed short-term loan was not feasible because it could be considered as gifting of public funds and was too involved and too risky for Lincoln County CD to pursue any further. Elsa noted that the irrigation cooperator has already placed an order for the mainline and will continue to move ahead with the mainline project as far District staff know at this time.

***23. Jim moved to approve the Cost Share Action spreadsheet as presented. Chris seconded. There was no further discussion. Motion passed.***

### **CRP Field Check Task Order**

Elsa announced that a CRP field check task order had been developed with NRCS and needed to be approved by the Board. The task order covers 140 field checks in Lincoln County and 140 field checks in Adams County to be completed by June 30, 2025 for a total of \$134,251 and \$479 for each field check. Three former NRCS employees who have already worked with CRP field checks in Lincoln and Adams counties along with a new employee to CRP field checks have already been contacted and have agreed to work for the District as temporary employees from now up through September 30.

Once the first task order is completed on June 30, another Task Order will be developed to conduct another 300 CRP field checks in Lincoln County and 260 field

checks in Adams County that need to be completed by September 30. For 2026, an estimated 510 CRP field checks total need to be done in both counties.

**24. Josh moved to approve the 25-39-TP1 CRP Field Check Task Order with NRCS for \$134,251 and to hire the 4 temporary employees as discussed to conduct 280 total field checks in Lincoln and Adam counties by the June 30 deadline. Chris seconded. There was no further discussion. Motion passed.**

### **PFAS Study Request**

Chris noted that the National Academy of Science in Washington D.C. is working with NRCS to study the impacts of PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl) chemicals or “forever chemicals” on agriculture lands across the country. Chris’s daughter works with the National Academy of Science and would like to speak with local District Conservationists and ask what impacts and concerns they have with PFAS chemicals in their area. Carolyn Edenbo is the District Conservationist to contact for the West Palouse Team, which includes Lincoln and Adams counties.

There are municipal biosolids from some cities that show no PFAS contamination while PFAS contamination is more common in industrial biosolids or municipal sewer systems affected by runoff from nearby airports where PFAS firefighting foams have been used for years. Jason noted that there have been reports from cattle producers in Texas that their livestock are now showing signs of poisoning from PFAS chemicals due to the biosolids that were applied to their pastureland. These producers thought that they were applying an environmentally friendly treatment on their land with the biosolids, but now it appears that they have applied toxic PFAS forever chemicals that weren’t being monitored or flagged in the biosolids, and it will be difficult to remove the PFAS from their land.

### **Reardan FFA Debate Team Presentation**

Elsa announced that the Reardan FFA Debate Team will be giving two presentations at the office on Monday, March 17 at about 9:30 AM in the conference room. The Reardan FFA Debate Team was not able to schedule their presentations for the Board meeting this morning as was originally planned. Board members who are in the area on Monday morning are invited to attend the presentations given by groups of 5 members each, which will debate the pros and cons of livestock grazing for wildlife along with the recommended widths for riparian setbacks.

### **Delayed Grant Project Implementation**

Elsa and Elayne mentioned that the District has been having continuing issues with grant cooperators implementing 2 grant funded projects that are scheduled to expire soon on June 30, 2025. These cooperators have not been responding to Elayne’s attempts to contact them to get an update on project progress and schedule field visits that are needed to help complete the projects.

One of these projects is a livestock watering facility project with \$20,000 in grant funding. Board members suggested that the son be contacted as soon as possible and inform him of the looming deadline to contact the District and complete the project. The other project is an irrigation efficiency project with \$59,000 in grant funding. A part of the overall project includes having an irrigation efficiency plan completed, which takes a fair amount of time on its own. Conservation Commission funding has already been spent on the required cultural resources review and the engineering plan for the

irrigation efficiency project, but this could all go to waste if the project work is not started and completed.

Board members advised that a final project termination letter be sent to both of the cooperators by certified, return receipt mail which notifies them that the District grant project and grant funding will soon be terminated if the grant cooperators do not get in contact with the District and do not get their project finished by June 30.

Elsa and Elayne will continue their efforts to contact the grant cooperators, but if no contact is made and the projects can't be completed by June 30, the District will have to return the grant money to the Conservation Commission before June 30, and this does not look good for Lincoln County CD returning grant money and the planned conservation projects not implemented.

### **WACD Update**

Elsa reported that the West Palouse Team LWG (Local Working Group) meeting in Davenport turned out pretty well with more producers than agency staff this time. Most of the producers were from Adams County. Local project rankings and local funding pools were established, including IRA (Inflation Reduction Act) funding.

Jeff reported that the monthly online WACD Board meeting was held on February 24 and the emphasis this time was on the NE Area. Elsa described the Lincoln County CD elections process. Vicky Carter noted that Spokane CD recently spent \$300,00 for the primary election and \$200,000 for the November election to have the Supervisor's election added to the general ballot. Dean Hellie noted that wolf packs chasing elk down into crop fields were causing significant damage in Stevens County.

WACD now has \$704,000 cash on hand but only made \$452 on the annual meeting held at Northern Quest casino this fall. Lifting of tree seedlings at the PMC was delayed for 3 weeks due to frozen ground in late winter. The PMC has dug 1.5 million plants and has already shipped 653,000 stems so far this winter/spring season.

The Legislative Workshop is planned again for April or May. Twenty-six participants from Washington attended the recent NACD meeting, and 3 resolutions from WACD, including the Lincoln County CD resolution on opting out of signing CRP contracts from FSA, were reviewed at the meeting. Sara Schlake with Spokane CD, one of the two current NE Area Directors, is resigning from her position. The District Board Chairmen from all 5 NE Area CD's will meet in the future to appoint the new NE Area Representative.

### **Conservation Commission Report**

Mike reported by phone that not a lot has been heard yet about the final state budget. The state revenue forecast should be available by March 18 and the House and Senate operating budgets should be available by March 24. The Conservation Commission does know that Governor Ferguson's budget doesn't touch the CTA (Conservation Technical Assistance) fund, but funding has been reduced for the Science Hub and supplemental funding for the engineering fund has also been cut.

### **County Commissioners Report**

Jo reported that the county suffered considerable damage to roads and bridges from the recent runoff event in late February. The town of Edwall was severely flooded and now there is only 4 feet of clearance underneath the bridge in Edwall over Canby Creek

due to the additional sediment deposition. Chris noted that there were no flooding issues in Sprague this time.

A meeting to discuss the flooding issue in Edwall is scheduled on March 19 in Edwall at 10 AM. County Commissioners, Public Works staff, District staff, DOT, DOE, WDFW, and the Army Corps of Engineers have signed up to attend the meeting.

The bridge on Mohler Rd in Mohler was closed and multiple other roads such as Hardung Rd were also temporarily closed. The County Commissioners made an Emergency Declaration to seek state and federal funding to help Public Works pay for all the road and bridge repairs.

The County has been watching several bills in the Legislature. House Bill 1098 would have enacted a competitive grant program at the CRAB Board (County Road Administration Board) that would have provided an opportunity to obtain funding to maintain/improve the thousands of miles of local county roads which otherwise have no established funding source. However, the bill did not pass by the March 12 cutoff date, and will not progress forward unless the Legislature considers this bill necessary to implement the Budget.

Another bill the County is watching is House Bill 1647, which would establish surface mine reclamation fees and could cost the County a huge amount of money for the 78 County gravel pits across the county.

Broadband fiber is being strung up in Davenport and there are 6 service providers available to choose from for installation at individual homes and businesses. Lincoln County owns the county wide broadband fiber cable, with the fiber hub office located in the basement of the Sheriff's office building. The County needs a 50% participation rate in all 8 incorporated towns receiving the fiber optic cable service in order to break even on the costs of operating the fiber cable system in the county.

Jo also noted that Lincoln County now has a new county website up and running at: [lincolncountywa.com](http://lincolncountywa.com)

### **FSA Report**

Ashley reported that the deadline for the ARC/PLC signup is April 15. Most producers have already signed up. There is no news yet on when the next CRP signup may be scheduled. Livestock producers need to document any significant calf losses if they want to be eligible for future emergency funding. July 15 is the deadline for spring crop acreage reporting. Ashley does not know when the FSA office will be making the next payments. The hiring freeze is still on so Ashley does not know when she will be able to advertise next to fill the 2 open positions in the Davenport office.

### **NRCS Report**

Dick reported that all 73 preapproved contracts with IRA funding will be paid. However, all EQIP applications with IRA funding that do not have approved contracts yet have been frozen, after staff in the Davenport office had spent a lot of work and time on getting all of the latest 120 EQIP IRA applications completed and submitted. Heidi Hennings is now working in the Davenport office for the District on CRP field checks. Dick will soon start calling CSP application cooperators. Jim and Dick noted that there is a big emphasis on planting cover crops for the latest EQIP signup. There is an issue with planting tillage radish as a cover crop in fall because it dies out over winter due to the sub-freezing temperatures. Another issue is whether or not planting winter wheat can be considered as planting a cover crop if this wheat will not be harvested for grain.



NRCS staff have been told to submit their time by Friday noon in case the Federal government is shut down. Elsa reported that the Dayton, Puyallup, Renton, and Olympia NRCS offices have currently been selected to be closed down permanently. All federal agencies are scheduled to develop employment reduction plans by March 14 and have them in place by April 14. The probationary USDA employees that were laid off may be rehired in the near future.

### **Recent Runoff Observations in South Central Lincoln County**

Dean handed out hard copies of an 11 X 17" photo page that compared the recent runoff flows at Crab Creek at Rocky Ford from February 22 through March 9. Saturday, February 22 had turbid water but only a small increase in flow.

Significant rainfall of around 0.50 to 0.60" occurred from late Saturday night through Sunday morning. This rainfall fell on ground with varying amounts of snow cover (zero to several inches) and varying depths to topsoil frost from the bridge and upstream to the upper Crab Creek watershed in the county that resulted in a large runoff event by Sunday morning, February 23. The runoff flow was estimated as best as possible at about 1,000 CFS (cubic feet per second) from the 6.10 feet. reading of the runoff water on the old USGS upper stream gauge and the 2011 stream gauge curve spreadsheet received by the District in 2015 that is probably a bit out of date now due to some changes in creek channel since 2011.

By Monday morning, February 24, a very large runoff event roughly estimated at 2,000 CFS was running down the Crab Creek channel at the bridge on Rocky Ford Rd. The runoff flow was only about 1 foot below the creek bank on the north side of the creek and filled the vast majority of the channel. This level of flow was about as high as runoff flow is ever seen here at the bridge, and was much higher than the last significant runoff event here back in March of 2019. The water level was above the top of the upper stream gauge ruler at 8.10 feet by another one half to 1 foot. of water. This extra 2 to 3 feet depth of water and the extra width in the upper portion of the creek channel was used to justify the rough guess of about 2,000 cubic feet per second at the bridge.

Starting with the standard measurements of 7.480519 gallons of water per cubic foot and 448.83 gallons of water per CFS, the 1,000 CFS flow on 2/23 was equated to 448,830 gallons per minute and 26,929,800 gallons per hour flow.

For the rough estimate of 2,000 CFS flow on 2/24, this equated to 897,660 gallons per minute and 53,859,600 gallons per hour flow. The 26 + million to 53+ million gallons of water flow per hour down Crab Creek at Rocky Ford Rd was a very large amount of water to be flowing down the creek. The large increase in direct seeded cropland in the upper Crab Creek watershed most likely prevented an even larger flow down the creek, and the lack of a strong ammonia smell along with the relatively low amount of foam in the runoff water suggested that there was less ammonia nitrogen and phosphorous in the runoff water compared to runoff events from many years ago.

By Sunday, March 9, the flow level had decreased a lot and most of the runoff turbidity had disappeared. The 2.10 foot measurement of post runoff water on the lower stream gauge estimated the March 9 flow at about 140 CFS, which was still pretty high for post runoff flow.

### **Miscellaneous**

Braidy will be attending the PNW Canola Association Meeting tomorrow.


Elsa requested that the April Board meeting be pushed back on week to Wednesday, April 16 due to District staff coordinating a large planting of ponderosa pine plugs on April 9 near Medical Lake. The Board agreed by general consensus.

### **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 11:55 AM. The next scheduled Board meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 16.

Respectfully submitted,

  
Josh Sherwood, Secretary

  
Dean White, Minute Taker

### **SUMMARY:**

All 24 motions were reviewed:

- 1. M/S/P to approve the February 12, 2025 minutes as presented.
- 2. M/S/P to and approve vouchers #12662 to #12682, along with 38 EFT's, totaling \$47,203.60.
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