

**LINCOLN COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT  
BOARD MEETING  
NRCS / FSA MEETING ROOM-DAVENPORT WA  
Wednesday, January 29, 2020**

**MEETING CALLED TO ORDER:**

Meeting called to order at 8:30 AM by Chairman, Jeff Schibel. Those attending the meeting were as follows: Jim Baye, Chris Laney and Josh Sherwood - LCCD Supervisors; Sara Cossio, FSA; Elsa Bowen, Val Vissia, Kristen Balko, Connor Nikkola, and Dean White - LCCD staff.

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

- *1. Chris moved to approve the December 11, 2019 minutes as presented. Josh seconded. Motion passed.*

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

- *2. Jim moved to pay and approve vouchers #11006 to #11019, along with 5 EFT's, totaling \$23,375.19, for December 2019. Josh seconded. Motion passed.*
- *3. Jim moved to pay and approve vouchers #11022 to #11047, along with 34 EFT's, totaling \$19,410.53, for January 2020. Josh seconded. Discussion was held. Motion passed.*
- *4. Jim moved to submit voucher #6 for the VSP 3 grant in the amount of \$6,09.00 to the Conservation Commission. Josh seconded. Motion passed.*
- *5. Jim moved to submit voucher #7 for the 20-39-IM grant in the amount of \$4,800.49 to the Conservation Commission. Chris seconded. Motion passed.*
- *6. Jim moved to submit voucher #6 for the 20-39-NR grant in the amount of \$0.00 to the Conservation Commission. Josh seconded. Motion passed.*
- *7. Jim moved to submit voucher #1 for the North 25 grant in the amount of \$1,732.67 to DNR. Chris seconded. Motion passed.*
- *8. Jim moved to submit voucher #11 for the Well Monitoring grant in the amount of \$15,958.43 to DOE. Josh seconded. Motion passed.*
- *9. Jim moved to submit Final Voucher #10 for the CWMA Weeds grant in the amount of \$25,484.88 to NFWF. Josh seconded. Motion passed.*

- **10. Jim moved to submit voucher #5 for the Mielke Project grant in the amount of \$2,094.85 to DOE. Josh seconded. Motion passed.**
- **11. Jim moved to submit voucher #6 for the Direct Seed grant in the amount of \$3,985.21 to DOE. Chris seconded. Motion passed.**
- **12. Jim moved to approve the Lincoln County Conservation District Cenex credit card statement with a closing date of December 10, 2019. The total amount owed was \$190.79. Chris seconded. Motion passed.**
- **13. Jim moved to approve the Lincoln County Conservation District Cenex credit card statement with a closing date of January 10, 2020. The total amount owed was \$131.91. Josh seconded. Motion passed.**
- **14. Jim moved that the Lincoln County Conservation District Visa statement for November 26, 2019 – December 23, 2019 be approved. The total amount owed was \$3,621.48. Chris seconded. Discussion was held. Motion passed.**

After review, the Board initialed each page of the available bank statements for the checking and money market accounts and signed the Treasurer's Report signature page.

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

Elsa noted that Lincoln County CD was able to bring in over \$700,000 in grant money to the District in 2019. Elsa also noted that Mike Baden will be attending the shorter board meeting on February 12 to help complete the Schedule 22 Form and the internal audit.

- **15. Josh moved to approve the Treasurer's report and the Grant's report as presented. Chris seconded. Motion passed.**

## **C. AGENDA**

### **2020 Conservation Commission Calendars**

Dean passed around a copy of the newly received 2020 Conservation Districts of Washington State calendar from the Conservation Commission. One photo from Dean and one photo from Val that were entered in the September 2019 Conservation Commission photo contest were included in the calendar as the full page photo for the months of May and August. In addition, 3 other photos entered by Dean were included in the calendar as small inset photos for the months of February, April and

May. Dean's photo of the small unknown native pollinator on native American plum that was included in the calendar as the full page photo for May was one of the top 3 photos entered in the Conservation Commission photo contest, and won a \$475 full scholarship for a District employee to attend the WADE training in Leavenworth in June.

### **New Bookkeeper Hired**

Delani Disher has been hired as the new Bookkeeper for the District. Along with bookkeeping training, Elsa will also be introducing Delani to other District project work so that she can also help out with these tasks during the year.

### **Legislative Days**

Jeff thanked District staff for producing the packets he used to speak with legislators at the recent Legislative Days in Olympia. Jeff only had 15 minutes to speak with individual legislators, and due to public disclosure laws that would require legislators to produce copies of handouts given to a legislator by constituents upon any public disclosure request, most legislators refused to accept any handouts from CD Board members attending Legislative Days and instead would only look briefly at the handouts and listen to issues brought forth by the Board members.

Jeff met with several legislators, including Representative Dent, Representative Dye, and Senator Warnick, and with Derek Sandison, Director of the Department of Agriculture. Everybody liked the maps showing well sampling locations and preliminary results from the well level monitoring grant. Issues that were discussed included rangeland fire district proposals, special purpose districts and elections, carbon storage and soil health, water right transfers between WRIA's, implementation of the second half of the Columbia Basin Irrigation Project, and the Columbia River Treaty. Jeff brought up concerns with the estimated \$40,000 cost per election that Lincoln County CD would incur if conservation districts across the state would ever be required to run supervisor elections in with the general election ballot in fall. The \$40,000 in additional election costs could be better used to leverage another \$200,000 in grants to get conservation on the ground in the county.

Chris mentioned his concerns with getting the Wheat Life magazine published by the Washington Association of Wheat Growers to also be sent to absentee landlords along with wheat producers to keep absentee landlords up to date on important current issues.

### **2018 to 2019 Calendar Year Precip Comparison Map**

Dean briefly described the 2018 to 2019 Calendar Year Precip Comparison map and spreadsheet that were distributed. All but one of the 22 cooperator precip stations across the county showed decreases in the 2019 calendar year precip compared to the 2018 calendar year precip. The average decrease in precip was 2.41", with 4.67" as the highest decrease in calendar year precip seen.

### **Drone Video**

Connor showed a drone video on the conference room wall that he took with one of the new District drones of the Dewald waterway cleanout project just north of Davenport. The project was cost shared with District cost share funding and Conservation Commission engineering design assistance, but the project got off

course due to over-excavation by the first contractor. The excessive spoils mounds were spread out again to create a much broader, lower slope, narrower channel grassed waterway that once seeded and fully established, will serve as a much more functional grassed waterway and narrow water channel that will reduce erosion while conducting and water flow down the middle of the waterway.

### **Election Cancellation**

Val announced that the upcoming election for the District Board Supervisor position had been cancelled because there were no other applicants who had applied for this elected position besides Jim. With Jim as the incumbent and the only applicant for the position, no election is required by state law. Val has already made all of the formal announcements of the election cancellations as required.

### **VSP Update and Cost Share List**

Val reported that the local VSP workgroup had decided to allocate \$50,000 of the currently available VSP funds for Lincoln County for 5 VSP cost share projects capped at \$10,000 each with 75% cost share. The VSP work group also gave the final approval for the selection of the 5 top ranked applications for VSP funding. The 5 top ranked VSP funding applications along with one application each for LCCD funding and 20-27-NR Adams CD funding were included on the Cost Share Action list that was distributed for approval from the Board.

**16. Josh moved to approve the list of cost share applicants as presented on the Cost Share Action list. Jim seconded. Discussion was held. Motion passed.**

Jim asked if the District was receiving a good response back for the VSP flyers that had been mailed out to selected areas of the county so far. Connor noted that while the District had received some good responses back, more responses back would be appreciated. Connor is currently working on his getting his Linc Pass application approved so that he will be able to look up the entire acreage of land being farmed by a given producer so that it will be easier to identify the ground and develop VSP Stewardship plans as requested. Val and Connor will be attending the 3 Highline Grain grower meetings in the county this February to give presentations on the VSP program in Lincoln County.

### **CRP Task Order, EQIP LWG**

Elsa is scheduled to meet later this week with Rich Edlund, the new acting DC for the West Palouse Team on developing a CRP task order for up to \$200,000 to help NRCS with completing the tasks involved in getting new applications and expiring CRP contracts re-enrolled into CRP contracts as requested by the producers. District staff would only be assisting on those new or re-enrollment applications that are accepted for new CRP contracts.

The EQIP Local Work Group meeting held in Ritzville in January was attended by a relatively large number of about 30 producers this time. A follow-up meeting may be required. The LWG meeting will be held in Davenport next January or February.

### **Direct Seed Conference Report**

Jim commented that the new buzzword at the Direct Seed Conference this year was "regenerative agriculture." Cover cropping was emphasized a lot with "something green and always growing." Josh noted that one problem with cover cropping is

planting the cover crop in the previous year and then trying to sign up for crop insurance between the established early and late signup dates. Jim noted that his cover crops only successfully suppressed weed growth in his fields about one out of every 3 years. Josh noted that the Direct Seed Association is recommending \$25 – \$30 per acre cover crop seed mixes to reduce seeding costs, but the amounts of the more expensive legume seed in the mixes such as winter peas are so small and the plants scattered so widely that they won't do a lot of good fixing nitrogen for the soil. Another emphasis at the conference was carbon credits and carbon storage. Chris noted that microbial life in the soil was also emphasized, but that there are issues with soil moisture reduction and green bridge disease and pest issues. Connor noted that he enjoyed attending the meeting and took a lot of notes.

### **Soil Health Workshop Report**

Dean gave a brief report on some of the presentations given at the January Soil Health workshop held in Pullman and hosted by WSU and Washington State Farmers Network (WSFN). Dr. Lynne Carpenter-Boggs spoke about inoculants and if and when producers should use inoculants. In summary, Dr. Carpenter-Boggs noted that most inoculant organisms that producers apply to their fields will soon die out if there is no enhanced habitat for them to occupy. In addition, she emphasized that inoculants will not compensate for poor soil habitat. An enhanced habitat has the correct environment, correct foods, correct symbionts, and the correct neighboring organisms. To improve the habitat, producers need to minimize soil stress as much as possible, including drought or saturated soil moisture conditions, too low or too high soil pH, and excessive electrical conductivity/soil salts in solution. Soil organic matter content should be increased as possible, and soil disturbance should be reduced, soil protection should be increased, and feeding the soil with longer growing and more diverse plantings should be increased as outlined by the 4 NRCS principles for soil health.

Dr. Dave Huggins noted that the Solvita test had some value for him, but that the Haney test had failed to show any differences in soil health between the direct seeded Cook Agronomy Farm and the conventionally tilled field across the road. Dr Huggins also selected a threshold of 3% soil organic matter or more in the surface horizons to be recommended as a minimum goal for agricultural soils in the Palouse.

Dean passed around a copy of the recently released "Understanding and Measuring Organic Matter in Soil" bulletin from WSU Cooperative Extension and recommended that anyone interested in the newer concepts of soil organic matter and some suggestions on how to increase SOM levels in their soils to read this free bulletin available as printouts from the office or downloaded from the Internet.

### **WACD Update**

Jeff gave a report on the WACD Board of Directors meeting held at Olympia in January. It was noted that the return above costs earned by WACD for the annual conference this year was much lower than the profit goal and for the returns from the conference in recent years with the meeting held in the Tri-Cities. The WACD annual conference will be held in Tacoma next year, but the location for the 2021 and 2022 conference has not yet been selected. Elections, and especially the King County CD move to voting by Internet for Board Supervisors was a hot topic at the meeting. The new WACD Executive Director Tom Salzer had gotten off to a good start with his new

job. A copy of Tom's focus and priorities for the next 12 months was distributed along with copies of the post 2019 Annual Conference survey.

### **May 2020 Conservation Commission Tour and Dinner**

Elsa reported on progress for the May 2020 Conservation Commission Tour and Dinner that will be hosted by Lincoln County CD on May 19. The caterer has been secured and the dinner location has been secured at the Lincoln County Fairgrounds kitchen. Davenport Memorial Hall had previously been reserved for another activity on May 19. The other days for the Commission Tour will be held at the Enduris building by the airport in Spokane on May 20 and 21. Ideas and locations for what to show on the tour still need to be identified and finalized. District staff are expected to attend and all Board supervisors are encouraged to attend.

### **Ag Expo and Awards Lunch**

Elsa showed the wrapped packages with the Yeti mugs and LCCD logo that are ready to be presented to the retired board members at the Appreciation Lunch during Ag Expo in Spokane in February. The Board agreed by general consensus to hold the lunch on February 5<sup>th</sup> at 12:30 PM. The nearby Spencers Steakhouse restaurant is a possible lunch location. Elsa will look into restaurant reservations. It was noted that the current board members and the three honored retired board members (Keith, Mike and Alan) have already purchased their wrist bands to attend Ag Expo.

***17. Josh moved to approve the purchase of wrist bands for District staff to attend Ag Expo for District staff, and to pay for lunch expenses for the Appreciation Lunch on February 5 at a nearby restaurant in Spokane for the honored retired Board members as allowed in the Policy Manual for Award Banquets. Jim seconded. Motion passed.***

### **Moving the November 11 Board Meeting Date**

Elsa noted that the regularly scheduled Board meeting date of November 11, 2020 falls on the Veterans Day holiday, and asked if board members could suggest a better alternative date in November. No suggestions were made and no actions were taken.

### **FSA Report**

Sara reminded everybody that the deadline for selecting ARC or PLC for 2019 is March 15, and that even if 25 producers per day from today until March 15 signed up for appointments for ARC/PLC selection, there still might not be enough time for everybody to get an appointment in time. Failure to make an ARC/PLC selection by the end of March 15 will cause the selection to default to the 2018 selection, and no payments will be made for 2019. A new requirement for the ARC/PLC program is that producers will now have to ensure that noxious weeds are controlled for all land on their farm(s) are controlled. If complaints are made to FSA or random spot checks are made and there are problems with noxious weeds on the land, the producer will end up paying a penalty.

The general CRP signup ends on February 28. A lot of changes have been made to the program. Rental rates have fallen again, and there will no longer be cost share payments made for mid-management practices for new CRP contracts. SAFE has been part of the continuous CRP signup, but now is now part of the General CRP signup, and so local producers will now have to compete for contracts with all

applicants across the country. Current CRP contract holders are reminded that they must apply for special permission from the County Committee to spot spray or mow weeds during the nesting period (April 1 – July 1). If producers have expiring CRP contracts that they know will be returning to production cropland, they need to request to FSA that the base acres for these CRP contracts be returned to their overall base acre total for FSA programs.

### **County Commissioner Report**

There was no County Commissioner report.

### **NRCS Report**

An email from the new acting District Conservationist for the West Palouse Team, Rich Edlund, was distributed for the NRCS report. NRCS staff and some conservation partner staff recently received training on the new “Conservation Desktop” software for NRCS which replaces the old Toolkit program for conservation planning work. Another new software released is CART (Conservation Assessment and Ranking Tool) which will be used for ranking 2020 EQIP applications. The General CRP signup began December 9 and will run to February 28. WPT staff have been busy working on CSP, CSP-Grassland Conservation Initiative, and RCPP-CSP contract evaluations and annual payments.

Elsa noted that a new and extensive 13 page long paper document from NRCS known as the Conservation Planning Intake Summary will now be required to be completed by producers to apply for any NRCS programs such as EQIP and CSP. Elsa would like to make producers aware of and make PDF's of the Conservation Planning Intake Summary available to producers before they head to the field this spring.

### **Well Level Grant Update**

In addition to producing 3 updated maps in ArcGIS for well level use type, well level measurement type, and well level fluctuation assessment for the 77 wells that have been actively measured, Dean reported that he had been busy reviewing the 1,200+ rows of data in the well level grant results spreadsheet for data entry errors and overall consistency, along with corresponding updates to the well level locations spreadsheet. Both spreadsheets need to be finalized as much as possible before working on entering the data by cut and paste into the EIM data submission spreadsheets so that the data can be submitted into the EIM database as part of the well level monitoring grant requirements. Dean also noted that he went out to the field in early January before the snow to download the 5 transducers for a second time since they were installed in October 2019.

### **Executive Session**

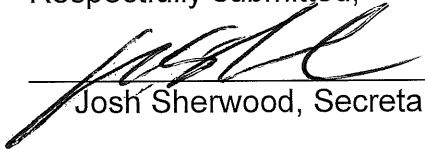
The Board went into executive session under option 1(g) of RCW 42.30.110 at 11:30 AM to review and discuss personnel issues for about 15 minutes. The Board came back out of executive session at 11:45 AM. No actions were taken as a result of the Executive Session.

## Public Comment

There was no Public Comment.

The meeting was adjourned by Chairman Jeff Schibel at 11:50 AM. The next board meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, February 12 starting 8:30 AM in the conference room here in the USDA Service Center in Davenport.

Respectfully submitted,

  
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Josh Sherwood, Secretary

  
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Dean White, Minute Taker

### SUMMARY:

All 17 motions were reviewed:

- 1. M/S/P to approve the December 11, 2019 minutes as presented.
- 2. M/S/P to pay and approve vouchers #11006 to #11019, along with 5 EFT's, totaling \$23,375.19, for December 2019.
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