

**LINCOLN COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT
BOARD MEETING
USDA Service Center Conference Room – Davenport, WA
Wednesday, April 10, 2024**

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER:

Meeting called to order at 9:06 AM by Chairman, Jeff Schibel. Those attending the meeting in person or by phone were as follows: Chris Laney and Josh Sherwood (phone), LCCD Supervisors; Jo Gilchrist, Lincoln County Commissioners; Elsa Bowen, Delaini Disher, Debra Watson, Elayne Hovde-Knudson, and Dean White - LCCD staff.

A. MINUTES: Additions / Corrections:

It was noted that Elayne's name on page 5 in the Irrigation Water Efficiency grant paragraph needed to be corrected from Elaine to Elayne.

- *1. Chris moved to approve the March 13, 2024 minutes as amended. Josh seconded. There was no further public comment. Motion passed.*

B. TREASURER'S REPORT / TRANSACTIONS REPORT:

- *2. Chris moved to pay and approve vouchers #12368 to #12397, along with 39 EFT's, totaling \$79,571.34. Josh seconded. Motion passed.*
- *3. Chris moved to submit voucher #3 for the 24-39-FH grant in the amount of \$81.74 to the Conservation Commission. Josh seconded. Motion passed.*
- *4. Chris moved to submit voucher #6 for the Adams CD TA grant in the amount of \$351.35 to Adams Conservation District. Josh seconded. Motion passed.*
- *5. Chris moved to submit voucher #9 for the 24-39-NR grant in the amount of \$245.09 to the Conservation Commission. Josh seconded. Motion passed.*
- *6. Chris moved to submit voucher #8 for the 24-39-IM grant in the amount of \$11,954.74 to the Conservation Commission. Josh seconded. Motion passed.*
- *7. Chris moved to submit voucher #9 for the VSP 5 grant in the amount of \$14,345.39 to the Conservation Commission. Josh seconded. Motion passed.*
- *8. Chris moved that the Lincoln County Conservation District VISA statement for February 24, 2024 through March 26, 2024 be approved. The total amount owed was \$2,937.84. Josh seconded. There was no public comment. Motion passed.*
- *9. Chris moved to approve the Lincoln County Conservation District Co-Energy / Pacific Pride gas card statement with a closing date of March 15, 2024. The total amount owed was \$95.73. Josh seconded. Motion passed.*

- **10. Chris moved to approve the Lincoln County Conservation District Co-Energy / Pacific Pride gas card statement with a closing date of March 31, 2024. The total amount owed was \$266.00. Josh 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.

Elsa reported that the District had received the \$13,166.25 bill from the county for processing the 2024 Special Assessment. The 2020 – 2023 Internal Audit was completed following the March 13 Board meeting and no issues were found.

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

C. AGENDA

Building Updates

Elsa reported that the movable cubicle dividers have arrived and have been installed between the cubicles. There are only a few items left to be installed.

Wildfire Preparedness Technician Update

Elsa reported that a total of 10 applicants have applied for the Wildfire Preparedness Technician position and that remote interviews over Zoom have been scheduled for the 4 most qualified applicants.

Elections Update

Delaini reported that the spring 2024 Board Supervisor elections have been completed and that Josh received 1,196 eligible votes out of the 1,245 ballots received. About 15% of the eligible voters in the county voted this year for a 5% increase in ballots received over last year. Forty ballots received could not be counted due to no signature or an address that did not match the official voter's list from the county. The official approval for Josh's election as Board Supervisor will be finalized at the May Conservation Commission meeting.

Delaini noted that having the District outreach and services information on the back of the ballot and in the 1-page ad in the Lincoln Advertiser helped to increase county voter participation in the elections along with significantly increased activity on the District website. Elsa commented that it was nice this spring to have Walt's Mailing print, stuff and mail the election ballots this spring, as it saved much staff time and effort to work on other tasks for the District. The bill from Walts's Mailing will be about \$6,200.

Tree Sale Update

Elsa noted that the 2024 tree sale ended on last Friday with 131 orders and all stock sold out. A profit of \$3,147.65 was made from the tree sale before District staff time is accounted.

VSP Update

Delaini reported that she had teleconferenced yesterday with Ben Floyd, White Bluffs Consulting and Adam Hill with Anchor QEA. Delaini and Adam installed HOBO transducers and Tidbits at Lincoln County VSP monitoring sites in March. Adam has requested that Lincoln County CD purchase a new flowmeter to take streamflow at the VSP monitoring sites. An informational sheet for a flowmeter recommended by Adam was passed around the table. There are Lincoln County VSP funds available to purchase a new flowmeter to use at the monitoring sites. Ben and Adam have been working with the shrub-steppe website information from WDFW to adapt and use this information for rangeland applications in Lincoln County VSP programs.

Soil Health Initiative Sampling Update

Delaini reported that she and Elayne will start soil sampling for the 2024 Soil Health Initiative next week. 2024 is the last scheduled year for soil sampling sponsored by the Washington Soil Health Initiative (WaSHI). Only 12 fields total can be sampled in the county and the sampling sites this year will be on different fields farmed by the same producers in order to help spread soil health results over a larger area in the county. The types of fields sampled will include direct seeded, conventional till and pasture fields. Delaini also assisted Palouse CD with FLOURISH (Farmers Leading Our United Revolution In Soil Health) soil health sampling last week for several Lincoln County producers with land along the eastern edge of the county.

Cost Share Action, Cost Share Reallocation, & 2024-2025 LCCD Funded Projects

Hardcopies of three cost share and related project funding sheets were distributed. The Cost Share Action sheet included two applications for funding from the 24-39-FH grant and 1 application for the 24-39-IE (Irrigation Water Efficiency grant) for a total of \$31,250.00.

The Proposed Projects for Remaining Funds sheet listed projects to be funded by Lincoln County CD for a total of \$50,000 and projects funded by Lincoln County VSP for a total of \$40,000, along with the projects which need Cultural Resources EZ1 reviews to be done. Elsa noted that one applicant who applied for VSP funding was not able to complete the planned fencing and livestock watering facility project by the end of 2024. Another applicant who had applied for both VSP funding and NRI funding for livestock watering facilities had not responded at all to multiple phone calls, texts or emails from District staff for the status of any progress done on the watering facility projects. Elsa proposed that funding for these projects be cancelled and reallocated to other new VSP projects as listed on the sheet that included 3 grassed waterway projects and 1 spring development project, all for \$10,000 VSP grant funding per project.

The 2024 – 2025 Projects sheet listed the 5 proposed grassed waterway projects to be funded with Lincoln County CD funding for \$10,000 apiece for a total of \$50,000.

- **12. Chris moved to approve the Cost Share Action, Proposed Projects for Remaining Funds, and the 2024 – 2025 Projects to be Funded with CD Funding**

sheets as presented. Josh seconded. There was no public comment. Motion passed.

Conservation Commission End of Fiscal Year Funding Grants

Elsa announced that the Conservation Commission is offering fiscal year end grant funding again that allows 3 funding requests from a list of 9 different funding categories for a total of \$20,000 maximum per CD. FY year end grant applications from CD's must be received at the Conservation Commission by May 3 and all funds must be spent and all equipment ordered must be in hand by June 30. Elsa will be submitting a FY year end grant application in the near future.

2024 Columbia Basin Development League Investment Request

A request from the CBDL for continued annual investment funding was just received by District staff. Lincoln County CD has sent annual investment funding to the CBDL at the \$175 Friend/Individual level since 2019. This year the CBDL has asked the District to make a \$325 Friend/up to 4 employees level investment. Jo mentioned that Lincoln County is investing at the \$1,000 Affiliate level every year.

- ***13. Chris moved to send a \$175 investment again to Columbia Basin Development League for 2024. Josh seconded. There was no further public comment. Motion passed.***

Waukon Rd / Hwy 2 Tree & Shrub Planting Project

Elsa announced that the District has received the 3,600 conservation trees and shrubs in 1-gallon pots plus some 40 cubic inch plugs at the Lazy YJ Farms planting site at the Waukon Rd/Hwy 2 east of Reardan. District staff will be laying out the pots at the site tomorrow with the help of 5 Pathways Students from Davenport who will be spending 5 hours acquiring the required job shadowing and educational path education for school this year. Lazy JY will be providing several gators to help move the pots to their planting location. A DNR work crew will be doing the planting of the trees and shrubs. Lazy YJ obtained funding from EQIP for the project.

WACD Update

Jeff noted that the next WACD Board meeting will be held next Monday online. The PMC has not sold all of its tree and shrub stock yet this spring. A significant portion of the stems grown by the PMC is west side stock which is not suitable or winter hardy for planting in eastern Washington. Jeff asked meeting participants if anybody had any ideas on how the PMC could find new niches and expand tree and shrub sale income to help support WACD operations.

Some suggestions included growing more fire-resistant plant stock, cooperating with school greenhouses on the east side of the state to grow more east side stock, growing plug -1 Austrian pine and blue spruce stock which no nursery seems to be growing now, and growing some potted stock along with the bareroot stock.

WACD has scheduled a 2025 Planning meeting in Ellensburg on May 29 & 30 at the Hal Holmes Center. The meeting will be in person but will also offer remote participation through Zoom. Topics to be covered include sustainable funding, CD elections, CD rates and charges, and the large list of project applications at CD's across the state that are waiting for funding in order to be implemented.

Elsa noted that Mike Baden will be attending the May Board meeting and will be conducting some Conservation Commission funded project visits in the field after the meeting.

Yakima All CD Meeting

Jeff attended the March 26 & 27 All CD meeting at the Yakima Convention. Few CD staff attended meeting that had mostly District managers, Board Supervisors, and some Conservation Commission staff attending. Sarah Wilcox is the now the new director for VSP at the Conservation Commission. Bill Eller will now be in charge of disaster cost share funding.

Jeff noted that the meeting was intentionally designed as an in person meeting to help address the relationship between the Conservation Commission and CD's across the state, which has declined some in recent years.

Climate Commitment Act (CCA) funding was discussed. This funding comes from the additional taxes on gas which voters across the state may vote to rescind this fall. If the CCA is rescinded, this will leave a big gap in funding from the Commission to CD's.

County Commissioners Report

Commissioner Gilchrist reported that a lot of county residents have been speaking with the County Commissioners lately about the **proposed wind turbine projects in Lincoln County**. Most of the comments received so far are in opposition to the proposed large wind turbine projects. Triple Oaks, the third wind turbine company to seek the installation of wind farms in the county, gave a presentation at the recent County Commissioners meeting. Triple Oaks reported that it has already obtained contracts with local landowners for up to 18,000 acres for potential wind turbine installation north of Davenport. Overall, wind turbine contracts with 17 landowners in the Davenport and Reardan area and 5 landowners in the Harrington area have been signed with the 3 wind turbine companies seeking wind turbine installation in the county.

The County Commissioners position on wind turbine installation in Lincoln County is that the Commissioners support the right of individual landowners to sign contracts to have wind turbines installed on their land and to receive payments from the wind turbine companies. In the meantime, the county has been working hard on reviewing and updating county zoning and planning regulations to help address the potential adverse effects of wind turbine installation in the county and help preserve the rural way of life in the county. The County Commissioners have been speaking with other counties in Eastern Washington where wind turbines have already been installed to gain more information on the issues they have had to deal with the installation and operation of the wind turbines in their county.

Elsa noted that USDA has said that it has the right to take some to all of any CRP land on which wind turbines are sited out of existing CRP contracts and penalties may have to be paid by the CRP contract holders. Commissioner Gilchrist noted that the typical wind towers will most likely be 400 to 450 ft. tall and that the concrete and rebar bases that secure them will be 60 ft. in diameter, 15 ft. deep into the ground and weigh 60 tons. Elsa reiterated that the wind turbine companies will only remove the top 4 feet of the concrete bases after the wind turbines have been decommissioned 30 years in the future.

Chris asked what happens if the wind turbine companies go broke. Commissioner Gilchrist noted that the County Commissioners are seeking to have bonds required before wind turbine installation begins in order to address this possible adverse event. Chris noted that wind turbines are now designed to start turning with wind speeds as low as 6 MPH. Commissioner Gilchrist noted that the contracts signed with landowners require the wind turbine companies to pay landowners about \$27,000 per year per wind turbine, whether the wind turbine is spinning and generating electricity all the time or not. It was also noted that the local energy companies such as Avista may already have enough electricity generation contracted in the local area and may not be interested in buying any more power from new wind turbines.

The potential **listing of Lake Roosevelt as a Superfund site by EPA** is another issue facing the County Commissioners. EPA is proposing that the entire 150 mile stretch of Lake Roosevelt from the Canadian border to Grand Coulee Dam be listed as a Superfund site due to lead, arsenic and other heavy metals from the Teck Cominco Metals smelter at Trails B.C. along the Columbia River and close to the Canada/US border. The state of Washington and the Colville Tribes took Teck Cominco to court back in 2004 to ask that the company be held liable for the heavy metals pollution and cleanup costs. Teck Cominco stopped discharging slag into the river in 1995, but the company had been discharging about 400 tons of slag daily into the river between 1930 and 1995. Teck Cominco has invested about \$1.5 billion in reducing air and water pollution from the smelter starting in the 1970's and has also invested \$85 million towards the study of heavy metal pollution in the upper Columbia River and shoreline under the oversight of EPA.

The County Commissioners are against the listing of the entire 150 stretch of Lake Roosevelt above Grand Coulee Dam due to the adverse effects on recreation and the declining private property values along Lake Roosevelt in Lincoln County. The Commissioners don't believe that there are enough adverse effects from heavy metals as reflected from soil and water testing already done in the Lincoln County stretch of Lake Roosevelt, and that the full 150 mile listing is more of a money grab by EPA from Congress to do more testing and remediation work.

Dean noted that he had collected water samples from 10 wells for the WRIA 53/Lower Lake Roosevelt Watershed Planning study back in 2013. The 8 wells up on the basalt plateau away from Lake Roosevelt had no detectable arsenic levels but the 2 wells next to and in hydrologic connection with the reservoir tested at 3 parts per billion and 12 parts per billion. The EPA lowered the standard for arsenic in drinking water from 50 parts per billion to 10 parts per billion in 2001. Dean also noted that while working on the WRIA 53 watershed planning grant, he had heard from the hydrogeologist contractor that the Hanson Harbor water system located about 18 miles upstream from Grand Coulee Dam and along the south side of Lake Roosevelt had spent a significant amount of money on the arsenic filter that it was required to install to provide water to the Hanson Harbor community in northwest Lincoln County.

Commissioner Gilchrist also brought up the additional adverse effects that a Superfund designation might have on the Columbia Basin Irrigation Project, which uses water pumped out of Lake Roosevelt at Grand Coulee to fill Banks Lake to supply irrigation water used to grow millions of dollars of irrigated crops in the Columbia Basin. The County Commissioners are also concerned about the adverse effects that a Superfund designation might have on the ongoing Columbia River treaty negotiations

with Canada, which is essential to maintain current water levels in the Columbia River in Washington.

Commissioner Gilchrist also reported that **county road improvements** are planned this year for Mile-Creston Road from Hwy 2 and 4 miles in, and road improvements are also scheduled for Duck Lake Road. Newly installed fiber optic cables are now starting to be hooked up for 183 residents in Almira, Creston and Harrington who have already signed up for new broadband access through the county. There are 15 ISP providers available to provide hookups, with 4 providers as the major providers for internet hookups in these areas. Seven Bays and Deer Meadows have been scheduled next for broadband hookups.

FSA Report

There was no report from FSA.

NRCS Report

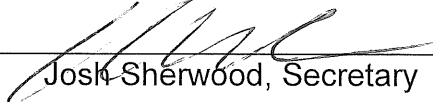
There was no report from NRCS.

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 11:05 AM. The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, May 8 starting at 9:00 AM.

Respectfully submitted,



Josh Sherwood, Secretary



Dean White, Minute Taker

SUMMARY:

All 13 motions were reviewed:

- 1. M/S/P to approve the March 13, 2024 minutes as amended.
- 2. M/S/P to pay and approve vouchers #12368 to #12397, along with 39 EFT's, totaling \$79,571.34.
- 3. M/S/P to submit voucher #3 for the 24-39-FH grant in the amount of \$81.74 to the Conservation Commission.
- 4. M/S/P to submit voucher #6 for the Adams CD TA grant in the amount of \$351.35 to Adams Conservation District.

- 5. M/S/P to submit voucher #9 for the 24-39-NR grant in the amount of \$245.09 to the Conservation Commission.
- 6. M/S/P to submit voucher #8 for the 24-39-IM grant in the amount of \$11,954.74 to the Conservation Commission.
- 7. M/S/P to submit voucher #9 for the VSP 5 grant in the amount of \$14,345.39 to the Conservation Commission.
- 8. M/S/P that the Lincoln County Conservation District VISA statement for February 24, 2024 through March 26, 2024 be approved. The total amount owed was \$2,937.84.
- 9. M/S/P to approve the Lincoln County Conservation District Co-Energy / Pacific Pride gas card statement with a closing date of March 15, 2024. The total amount owed was \$95.73.
- 10. M/S/P to approve the Lincoln County Conservation District Co-Energy / Pacific Pride gas card statement with a closing date of March 31, 2024. The total amount owed was \$266.00.
- 11. M/S/P to approve the Treasurer's report and Grant's report as presented.
- 12. M/S/P to approve the Cost Share Action, Proposed Projects for Remaining Funds, and the 2024 – 2025 Projects to be Funded with CD Funding sheets as presented.
- 13. M/S/P to send a \$175 investment again to the Columbia Basin Development League for 2024.