

**LINCOLN COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT
BOARD MEETING
Lincoln County Public Works Meeting Room
Wednesday, June 9, 2021**

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER:

Meeting called to order at 8:39 AM by Chairman, Jeff Schibel. Those attending the meeting in person or by telephone were as follows: Chris Laney, Josh Sherwood (phone), Braidy Haden - LCCD Supervisors; Mike Baden (phone) – Conservation Commission; Mark Stedman, Lincoln County Commissioners; Cari Roepke – NRCS; Elsa Bowen, Connor Nikkola, Delaini Disher, and Dean White - LCCD staff.

A. MINUTES: Additions / Corrections:

- **1. Chris moved to approve the May 12, 2021 minutes as presented. Josh seconded. Motion passed.**

B. TREASURER'S REPORT / TRANSACTIONS REPORT:

- **2. Chris moved to pay and approve vouchers #11473 to #11490, along with 6 EFT's, totaling \$51,424.93. Josh seconded. Motion passed.**
- **3. Chris moved to submit voucher #23 for the VSP 3 grant in the amount of \$14,310.71 to the Conservation Commission. Josh seconded. Motion passed.**
- **4. Chris moved to submit voucher #12 for the 21-39-IM grant in the amount of \$245.33 to the Conservation Commission. Josh seconded. Motion passed.**
- **5. Chris moved to submit voucher #5 for the 20-27-NR grant in the amount of \$1,043.46 to Adams CD. Josh seconded. Motion passed.**
- **6. Chris moved that the Lincoln County Conservation District Visa statement for April 24, 2021 through May25, 2021 be approved. The total amount owed was \$1,567.95. Josh seconded. Motion passed.**
- **7. Chris moved to approve the Lincoln County Conservation District Cenex credit card statement with a closing date of May 10, 2021. The total amount owed was \$379.25. Josh seconded. Motion passed.**

Bank statements were passed around for the board members present to initial.

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

Elsa noted that the District still has not heard back from Ecology if the requested 1 year extensions for both the Direct Seed 2 and Mielke Project grants have been approved.

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

C. AGENDA

COVID-19 Procedures

Elsa reported that L & I is now requiring that employers have all employees who wish to work indoors without wearing a mask to provide proof of being fully vaccinated with the COVID-19 shots. Those employees that have not been fully vaccinated are still required to wear masks. Elsa has collected proof of vaccination for all District employees and so this requirement has been addressed. The front door is still locked to the general public. The NRCS side of the office is still limited to 50% capacity with the number of board members included, so this allows for all NRCS and District employees to continue working in the office at the same time. The FPAC (Farm Production and Conservation) division of USDA will make the decision when the front door will be unlocked again. Governor Inslee is scheduled to make another proclamation on any further lifting of COVID-19 restrictions by the end of June.

CRP Task Order Update

The current CRP task order will end on June 30. District staff have 1 more CRP plan in Adams' and 50 more plans in Lincoln County to complete. It was noted that with the new administration, the original deadlines for the CRP signup work to be completed were removed, but the decision was made to follow the original deadline since the Conservation Commission funding for the task order will end on June 30. There may be some small updates that will be needed for the plans after they are completed.

Elsa and Cari have been working on the components of a new CRP task order for FY 2022 that would run from July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022. A total of 245 CRP field checks would need to be completed, with Lincoln County CD currently tasked to complete 100 of these CRP field checks. Elsa has been in contact with Glen Riehle, NRCS, who completed all of the CRP field checks in Adams County for the current CRP signup. Glen will be retiring soon. Elsa will be meeting with him by the end of June to see if he would be willing to work as a temporary employee for the District to complete the rest of the CRP field checks for the new task order.

Cari noted that current CRP task order with the District has helped the West Palouse Team to catch up with CRP status reviews. Catching up on CRP status reviews will now allow CRP contract holders to know which CRP stand requirements are met on their CRP fields if and when they decide to renew their CRP contract. This will save NRCS and District staff a lot of time and work by not working on plans for existing stands that don't meet the applicable CRP stand requirements.

Lincoln County may not be eligible for emergency haying or grazing on CRP land until at least July 1. Counties need to have been in D2 severe drought conditions for 2 months or already be in D3 extreme drought conditions in order for FSA to be able to open existing stands up for emergency haying or grazing. Dean noted that some farmers have been calling the office already asking for precip information to confirm

how bad the current drought conditions are compared to previous bad drought years such as the 1976 – 1977 crop year.

9. Chris moved to approve pursuing a new CRP task order. Braidy seconded. Discussion was held. Mike noted that only \$225,000 has been approved statewide for task order funding from the Conservation Commission, and so a new CRP task order should be requested soon to reserve the needed funding to complete it. Josh asked what was happening with surplusing the four-door white pickup. Elsa noted that one of the District vehicles would need to be made available for Glen to drive for CRP field checks, and so it would make sense to hold on to the white pickup for the time being. Motion passed.

Tree Sale Update

Elsa reported that the 2021 tree sale made a profit of \$4,700 with the \$900 cost for renting the refrigerated trailer for 3 weeks included. If staff time is taken into account for the tree sale, the District lost money, but this has never been considered as a loss since District staff would have been paid for staff time in March and early April anyway, whether or not they were working on tree sale or on other tasks.

CIG Grant

Connor and Delaini have been working with Palouse CD on a Conservation Innovation Grant application that is due by June 30. If the application is approved, Palouse CD would be administering the grant and Lincoln County CD would provide conservation technical assistance for Lincoln County producers who are approved for grant funding. A copy of the support letter for the CIG grant application from Lincoln County CD was distributed.

Connor noted that the following comments on the previous CIG grant application that was not approved have been taken into consideration to improve the new grant application:

1. Need to show how underserved farmers would be served
2. Need to show a more itemized budget
3. Need to show a more defined area where the grant would be applied

The new CIG grant application is designed to study the integration of cover crops with livestock grazing in eastern Washington and assess the effects on soil health with soil testing. The project would run for 5 years and would provide cost share to 30 producers. The cover crops would be grazed while they are actively growing.

Chris noted that he removed fences on his farmland due to weeds along the fence lines and due to the installation of divide slopes, and that he would have to reinstall lot of fencing in order to integrate livestock grazing again on his farm. Braidy noted that most farmers would be installing temporary electric fencing to allow livestock grazing like he did on cover crops on his farmland last year. Braidy found that in his own test of grazing on canola as a cover crop/cash crop, there was 30 – 50 % reduction in crop yield after grazing compared to non-grazed canola. Dean noted that installation of temporary water facilities would also need to be implemented in order to allow grazing on cropland, and this may involve hauling water to water troughs in the fields. Chris noted that there could be potential issues with landlords and bank loans approving grazing on cover crops.

It was noted that Jason Bischoff in the Waukon Road area along the east edge of the county is a proponent of integrating grazing and cover crops into cropland areas

and has already worked with this practice on his farmland. The letter of support for the CIG grant application was approved by general consensus.

Landscaping Project for Davenport Pool

Elsa reported that Fred Bell with the City of Davenport had contacted the District and noted there are some issues with the city swimming pool retaining wall and asked if the District would be willing to help with a project to do some landscaping similar to that which was done in the Community Garden. The project is in the preliminary planning process and sources of funding for the project are being sought.

VSP Update

A new Voluntary Stewardship Program contract will be signed at the next County Commissioner meeting on June 21. Funding has been reduced by \$5,000 for the new contract, which will be for \$235,000. Elsa will work with Ben Floyd on contracted assistance for the grant. Jeff noted that the 5 year VSP grant report recently submitted for Lincoln County had many comments from WDFW made on it, and that WDFW had also made a lot of comments on VSP reports submitted by other counties participating in VSP.

The next Lincoln County VSP meeting will be held remotely on Tuesday, June 22.

PNSA Conference in June

Elsa reminded the meeting participants that the Pacific Northwest Direct Seed Association conference will be held in person at the Whitman County Palouse Empire Fairgrounds near Colfax on June 15 and 16. Hotel reservations have already been made. Chris, Braidy, Jeff, Connor, and Delaini are planning to attend the conference.

Cultural Resources Training

Connor and Delaini have taken 2 webinar trainings and recently attended a field training session on cultural resources that is required in order to be certified by NRCS as conservation planners. The field training session included a visit to the North Spokane Farm Museum that has many old and historical farm implements and tractors, and a visit to the Spokane House Interpretative Center which holds the history of the native American tribes in the area. All NRCS certified conservation planners are required to take continuing education training every 3-year certification period and have some completed conservation plans reviewed in order to maintain their certification. NRCS conservation planner certification will allow certified District staff to write EQIP farm plans along with VSP plans.

Cost Share Action Approval

Copies of the Cost Share Action spreadsheet were distributed. Requests for cost share payments from the Direct Seed grant and VSP grant were included.

10. Chris moved to approve the Cost Share Action spreadsheet as presented. Braidy seconded. Motion passed.

LCCD Cost Share Funds

Copies of the LCCD Cost Share Information spreadsheet were distributed. The District still only has 4 out of 5 total grassed waterway projects approved for funding in progress. The HPA permit for the Nelson grassed waterway project was not approved by WDFW

due to the designation of Welsh Creek as a fish bearing stream. Connor noted concerns with the long turn around time needed to obtain permits from WDFW for some grassed waterway projects that require them. Elsa reminded the Board that LCCD funding typically runs from January to December but can be extended as needed for much more project completion flexibility compared to outside grant funding. The Scott Miller grassed waterway project in the Sprague area was suggested as a possible replacement grassed waterway project as he has never received grant funding through the District for a conservation project.

11. Braidy moved to approve the Scott Miller grassed waterway project for LCCD cost share funding. Chris seconded. Motion passed.

NRI Cost Share Funds

Natural Resource Investment funding is available through the Conservation Commission. With the current proposed changes in NRI funding, the Commission is now proposing that instead of only 2 NRI projects funded per CD, conservation districts would now receive up to \$80,000 per year and would be able to decide how many projects to fund and how much to spend on each project. Mike noted that the projects to be funded have to be capital projects with at least a 1-year practice life.

Elsa requested direction from the Board on the types of projects it wanted to prioritize for funding from the LCCD Cost Share Information spreadsheet with NRI funding available from the Conservation Commission. With \$80,000 available for NRI projects, up to 4 projects at \$20,000 apiece could be funded. Elsa noted that fuels reduction/brush management, grassed waterway, livestock watering facility, and other types of projects needed on the LCCD Cost Share Information spreadsheet could be funded.

Board members suggested that 1 of each project type be selected, or that 2 livestock watering facility and 2 fuels reduction/brush management projects be selected since LCCD cost share funding is now being used to fund grassed waterway projects. The Scott Samples livestock watering facility project was suggested as a possible NRI funded project because the engineering plans and cultural resources review had already been completed.

12. Braidy moved to approve the Scott Samples livestock watering facility project for NRI funding. Chris seconded. Motion passed.

More discussion was held on selecting 3 more projects for NRI cost share funding. Elsa suggested that the top 3 projects for livestock watering facilities and for fuels reduction/brush management be prioritized, as this would allow for one project each to be held in reserve in case one of the top 2 prioritized projects was not able to be implemented and was dropped by the applicant.

The following top 3 projects for livestock watering facility projects were proposed, starting with the highest priority project:

1. Scott Samples project
2. Lee Deschazer project
3. Paul Valentine project

The following top 3 projects for fuels reduction/brush management were proposed:

1. Don Kurth project
2. Gary Cook project
3. Carrie and Doug Burrus project

13. Braidy moved to approve the rankings for the top 3 livestock watering facility projects and the top 3 fuel break/brush management projects as discussed and proposed for NRI cost share funding. Chris seconded. Motion passed.

Master Contract for 22-39-IM Grant

Elsa announced that the Master Contract for the 22-39-IM grant funding from the Conservation Commission was ready for signing by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman.

14. Chris moved to approve the signing of the Master Contract for the 22-39-IM grant. Braidy seconded. Motion passed.

Well Level Measuring Grant Update

Dean gave a brief update on the well level measuring grant. Most of the work preparing the manual well level measurement for EIM submittal has been completed but there is still some work yet to be done before the data can be submitted. As soon as the manual measurements have been submitted, the next step is to process the transducer results for submittal. Dean assisted GeoEngineers by entering the final March and April 2021 well level data into a draft final report spreadsheet. Geoengineers will be submitting the final report to the Office of the Columbia River before the June 30 deadline so that there will be time to respond to comments before the grant funding ends.

Mark reported that another well level grant proposal has been forwarded to Tom Tebb to review and he will be interested to view the final report from the current grant and see how the results may affect opportunities for future funding.

Fire Recovery Funds

The Conservation Commission has received \$3 million in fire recovery funding from the legislature for replacing existing structures that were damaged or destroyed by the fires in early fall 2020 that include fencing, watering facilities and other structures. Half of the funding will be available for FY2022 and the other half for FY 2023, and will be spread out between 4 counties including Lincoln County, so there will be some but not a lot of fire recovery money available for local livestock producers and landowners. The limit for each applicant will be \$50,000, which won't go very far if miles of fencing need to be repaired/replaced. Quite a few livestock producers have already applied for emergency funding from FSA to replace damaged fencing. It was noted that fences, corrals and watering facilities will have to be rebuilt to NRCS standards and specifications with new materials used, but that the Conservation Commission is looking into approving a variance to allow steel fence posts to be reused to help extend the funding. Elsa will be attending a Lincoln County Cattlemens Association meeting this month to listen in on fire recovery concerns and provide information on the available Conservation Commission fire recovery funding.

Elsa met recently with Andrew Engels, legislative assistant to Representative Cathy McMorris-Rodgers, on fire recovery support in Eastern Washington. Representative McMorris-Rodgers is looking for other fire recovery funding options for fires such as the September 2020 Whitney Road Fire in Lincoln County that had a fire perimeter of over 127,000 acres but did not have enough damage to structures to make it eligible for FEMA disaster funding from the federal government.

WACD Update

Jeff reported that Executive Director Tom Salzer continues to send out his weekly reports on Friday, and that the next WACD Board meeting will be held remotely on Monday, June 21 at 6 PM. The DEI (Diversity, Equality and Inclusiveness) Committee met for the first time last week. Recommendations from both the DEI and elections reform committees are scheduled to be given at the annual WACD meeting in late fall.

NRCS Report

Cari reported that West Palouse Team has 7 approved EQIP contracts and is working on getting the contracts signed and obligated. CSP continues to be the highest workload with 36 applications in Adams County and 39 applications in Lincoln County given a high ranking. The deadline for ranking CSP applications is this Friday.

Cari and Elsa have attended recent meetings on lease issues for the office. The current office building in Davenport was recently sold. NRCS, FSA and the District are scheduled to remain working in the building into 2023, but bids are also scheduled to be advertised for office space next month to see if there are any other possibilities for USDA Service Center office space in Davenport in the near future. It is hoped that the new building owners will be more receptive to requests for needed building repairs and renovations so that NRCS, FSA and the District can continue to work in the current building, as there is not and may never be any other useable office space opportunities in Davenport. Some renovations have already been requested for the NRCS side of the office.

Conservation Commission Report

Mike reported that the Conservation Commission has recently received funding for the NRI grant to provide \$78,866 to each CD across the state for NRI funding. The legislature has allocated \$2 million to the Conservation Commission to provide Conservation Technical Assistance funding to CD's. The Commission has also allocated \$117,823 in 2022 Implementation grant funding to each CD across the state. There will also be opportunities for CD's to access Sustainable Farm to Field and pollinator funding as applicable in their District.

Fiscal year end work for conservation districts to complete include final vouchers due July 9, the Orca/Salmon recovery report, and the approval of updated cooperator labor rates. Mike noted that the Conservation Commission will be watching for changes on the COVID-19 restrictions to the Open Public Meetings Act as the state begins to fully reopen in July and will keep CD's informed on what changes need to be made for district board meetings. Governor Inslee had sent a new directive out for Cultural Resources. Conservation districts are advised to continue on as before with cultural resources procedures until informed of any needed changes from the Conservation Commission.

The updated elections manual is out for comments that are due by July 9 and contains detailed examples for elections advertising and for using absentee ballots in upcoming elections. Spending on the FY 2022 Implementation grant can begin on July 1, but the Implementation Grant Addendum also needs to be signed by the Board. Mike reported that he has started investigating the possibility for Lincoln County CD and Adams CD to hire a shared employee in the future for the benefit of both Districts, but at he can not speak for Lincoln County or Adams CD's on this proposal.

County Commissioners Report

Commissioner Stedman noted that every county is required to print voter pamphlets, and if junior taxing districts do not want to be listed in the pamphlet, they need to contact the Washington State Auditor. County Auditor Shelly Johnston is retiring. Tomorrow June 10 is the deadline for new applicants to apply for the County Auditor position. The county is working with the Office of Civil Rights to increase protection for people's data following the cyber-attack on the county last year. There has been an increase in COVID-19 cases in Lincoln County recently in spite of the vaccinations that have given in the county so far. The Columbia Basin Sustainable Water Coalition is not active and is still on hold until funding to establish the coalition from the BOR WaterSMART grant might be approved.

Ag Burn Task Force Update

Dean gave an update on the recent 109th Ag Burn Task Force meeting that was held remotely on Skype. About twice as many ag burn acres have been burned this spring in 2021 compared to 2020, with most of this increase burning in Whitman and Columbia counties. An interactive phone menu for the statewide smoke complaint line will be installed soon and will help to immediately route smoke complaints to the appropriate clean air agency or Ecology area office. The vast majority of smoke complaints come from outdoor burning and not ag burning. Ecology will also be implementing an online ag burn permit application webpage by December 2021 that will allow producers to fill out the ag burn permit themselves and pay immediately for their permit by credit card. The online ag burn permits will still be sent to their local conservation district or clean air agency responsible for issuing permits for review and approval before forwarding the permits to Ecology. Producers will still have the option to use the current hard copy application for ag burn permits and submit them to their local CD or clean air agency to enter into the current AQPPS ag burn permitting system.

The Task Force meeting also include a presentation on an ag burn smoke reduction research project application to further investigate the option of using unwanted orchard trees that have been ground into chips and then transported to dairies to use in bioreactors to process and clean up dairy waste in place of dairy lagoons and to help reduce ag burn smoke from torn out orchard tree piles in the orchard growing areas of the state. Worms are added to the wood chips and the dairy waste is sprayed by sprinklers on top of the wood chips to help break down the chips into vermicompost that can then be spread as fertilizer on cropland fields.

FSA Report

There was no report from FSA.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

15. Braidy moved to adjourn the meeting at 11:05 AM. Chris seconded. Motion passed.

The next board meeting has been scheduled as an in-person meeting on Wednesday, July 14, 2021 starting at 8:30 AM at the Lincoln County Public Works downstairs meeting room. A telephone call in number will be available for those people wishing to participate by phone. This will be the last meeting in summer with no meetings in August or September due to harvest and seeding. The Implementation Grant Addendum and the updated cooperator labor rate will need to be approved at the July meeting.

Respectfully submitted,



Josh Sherwood, Secretary



Dean White, Minute Taker

SUMMARY:

All 15 motions were reviewed:

- 1. M/S/P to approve the May 12, 2021 minutes as presented.
- 2. M/S/P to pay and approve vouchers #11473 to #11490, along with 6 EFT's, totaling \$110,014.08.
- 3. M/S/P to submit voucher #23 for the VSP 3 grant in the amount of \$14,310.71 to the Conservation Commission.
- 4. M/S/P to submit voucher #12 for the 21-39-IM grant in the amount of \$245.33 to the Conservation Commission.
- 5. M/S/P to submit voucher #5 for the 20-27-NR grant in the amount of \$1,043.46 to Adams CD.
- 6. M/S/P that the Lincoln County Conservation District Visa statement for April 24, 2021 through May25, 2021 be approved. The total amount owed was \$1,567.95.
- 7. M/S/P to approve the Lincoln County Conservation District Cenex credit card statement with a closing date of May 10, 2021. The total amount owed was \$379.25.
- 8. M/S/P to approve the Treasurer's report and Grant's report as presented.
- 9. M/S/P to approve pursuing a new CRP task order for FY 2022.
- 10. M/S/P to approve the Cost Share Action spreadsheet as presented.
- 11. M/S/P to approve the Scott Miller grassed waterway project for LCCD cost share funding.

- 12. M/S/P to approve the Scott Samples livestock watering facility project for NRI funding.
- 13. M/S/P to approve the rankings for the top 3 livestock watering facility projects and the top 3 fuel break/brush management projects as discussed and proposed for NRI cost share funding.
- 14. M/S/P to approve the signing of the Master Contract for the 22-39-IM grant.
- 15. M/S/P to adjourn the meeting at 11:05 AM.