

**LINCOLN COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT
BOARD MEETING
USDA Service Center Conference Room – Davenport, WA
Wednesday, June 12, 2024**

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER:

Meeting called to order at 9:08 AM by Chairman, Jeff Schibel. Those attending the meeting in person or by phone were as follows: Jim Baye, Chris Laney and Braidy Haden (phone) - LCCD Supervisors; Dick Erickson - NRCS; Elsa Bowen, Delaini Disher, Elayne Hovde-Knudson, and Dean White - LCCD staff.

A. MINUTES: Additions / Corrections:

Jim noted that his last name in the Meeting Called to Order section was misspelled and needed to be changed from Bay to Baye.

- *1. Chris moved to approve the May 8, 2024 minutes as amended. Jim seconded. There was no public comment. Motion passed.*

B. TREASURER'S REPORT / TRANSACTIONS REPORT:

- *2. Jim moved to pay and approve vouchers #12427 to #12461, along with 12 EFT's, totaling \$121,485.80. Chris seconded. Discussion was held. With the recent resignation of Debra Watson as Financial Administrator, it was up to Elsa and Delaini to process the Treasurer's Report for today's meeting. They also reviewed the financial records to verify that everything was up to date and ready for Brean Nieman, the incoming Financial Administrator. Elsa noted that all District grants expiring on June 30 are on schedule to be all spent. There was no further public comment. Motion passed.*
- *3. Jim moved to submit voucher #4 for the 24-39-FH grant in the amount of \$170.53 to the Conservation Commission. Chris seconded. Motion passed.*
- *4. Jim moved to submit voucher #4 for the 24-39-FH grant in the amount of \$5,625.00 to the Conservation Commission. Braidy seconded. Motion passed.*
- *5. Jim moved to submit voucher #7 for the Adams CD TA grant in the amount of \$646.28 to Adams Conservation District. Chris seconded. Motion passed.*
- *6. Jim moved to submit voucher #8 for the Adams CD TA grant in the amount of \$368.77 to Adams Conservation District. Chris seconded. Motion passed.*
- *7. Jim moved to submit voucher #2 for the 24-39-IE grant in the amount of \$0.00 to the Conservation Commission. Chris seconded. Motion passed.*

- **8. Jim moved to submit voucher #3 for the 24-39-IE grant in the amount of \$43.55 to the Conservation Commission. Chris seconded. Motion passed.**
- **9. Jim moved to submit voucher #11 for the 24-39-NR grant in the amount of \$0.00 to the Conservation Commission. Chris seconded. Motion passed.**
- **10. Jim moved to submit voucher #16 for the Cluster Engineering grant in the amount of \$8,642.29 to Stevens CD. Chris seconded. Motion passed.**
- **11. Jim moved to submit voucher #17 for the Cluster Engineering grant in the amount of \$9,664.80 to Stevens CD. Chris seconded. Motion passed.**
- **12. Jim moved to submit voucher #1 for the DNR Mini grant in the amount of \$8,000 to DNR. Chris seconded. Motion passed.**
- **13. Jim moved to submit voucher #10 for the 24-39-IM grant in the amount of \$0.00 to the Conservation Commission. Chris seconded. Motion passed.**
- **14. Jim moved to submit voucher #11 for the 24-39-IM grant in the amount of \$0.00 to the Conservation Commission. Chris seconded. Motion passed.**
- **15. Jim moved to submit voucher #11 for the VSP - 5 grant in the amount of \$12,874.92 to the Conservation Commission. Chris seconded. Motion passed.**
- **16. Jim moved that the Lincoln County Conservation District VISA statement for April 24, 2024 through May 23, 2024 be approved. The total amount owed was \$6,868.06. Chris seconded. Discussion was held. Elsa noted that most of the VISA spending this month would be reimbursed by FY year end funding from the 24-39-IM grant. Some of the equipment purchased with the FY year end funding included a new Dell laptop for the incoming Wildfire Preparedness Technician and seven 32" Dell monitors for District staff. In addition, Elsa purchased new name and job title tags for all employee cubicles and a new stream flow monitor was purchased for VSP monitoring from VSP grant funding. There was no further public comment. Motion passed.**
- **17. Jim moved to approve the Lincoln County Conservation District Co-Energy / Pacific Pride gas card statement with a closing date of May 31, 2024. The total amount owed was \$180.182. Chris 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 and Delaini reviewed financial records to verify that all employee AL and SL balances were up to date.

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

C. AGENDA

Resolution 2024 - 01

Elsa noted that with Debra's resignation, a Resolution needed to be approved by the Board to remove Debra Watson as a signer on all District financial accounts, add incoming Financial Coordinator Brean Nieman as a signer on all District financial accounts, and issue a District credit card to Delaini to use primarily for VSP work.

- **19. Jim moved to approve Resolution 2024 – 01 to remove Debra Watson as a signer on all Lincoln County CD financial accounts, add incoming Financial Coordinator Brean Nieman as an authorized signer on all accounts, and issue a District credit card to Delaini for VSP work. Chris seconded. There was no public comment. Motion passed.**

Electronic Signatures

Elsa announced that the Conservation Commission is moving to using electronic signatures for signing documents and is encouraging all conservation districts in the state to switch to using electronic signatures for signing documents such as grant documents from the Commission. Elayne created a draft electronic signature policy document by using the Commission policy document as a template and inserting Lincoln County Conservation District (LCCD) where needed. Hardcopies of the draft electronic signature policy were distributed for review and approval. Discussion was held. It was noted that the third paragraph had a small typo that needed to have RW replaced with RCW.

- **20. Jim moved to approve the draft electronic signature document as amended. Chris seconded. There was no public comment. Motion passed.**

Elections

Elsa announced that the Board Supervisor election for Josh and the Commission appointment of Jeff for another term as a Board Supervisor had been officially approved by the Conservation Commission at its May Board meeting. Elsa also noted that Lincoln County CD with the 880 and then 1,200 votes received back from the approximate 8,000 registered county voters for the last 2 Board Supervisor elections continues to challenge conceptions held by other CD's across the state on how elections can be held for a reasonable cost and still receive many more ballots back compared to the traditional request absentee ballot method. Elsa commented that the use of an outside contractor to print, fold, stuff, address, and mail ballots save money and saved a lot of staff time to for use on other District projects and activities.

2024 State Land Judging Contest

Elsa announced that Lincoln County CD will be hosting the 2024 State Land Judging Contest in the last week of October. Stephen Hayter, an Ag teacher at Prosser, is the primary contact for the Ag teachers of eastern and central Washington high schools who plan to participate in the contest this fall.

The District last hosted the State Land Judging contest at the Keith Schafer farm along Hwy 28 west of Odessa in 2011 and at the John Rustemeyer farm along Hwy 23 between Harrington and Sprague in 2006. Major preparatory tasks for the District include finding a willing landowner with suitable soils and landforms for the contest, a backhoe operator to dig the soil pits up to 60" deep for the contest, and finding a specific site where 3 regular pits with significantly different soil textures, slopes and other soil characteristics and 1 homesite pit are all located within relatively close walking distance for the contest. Dean noted that the previous two state land judging sites in the county were located at the contact zone between upland loess soil sites and adjacent Channeled Scabland soil sites in order to find significantly different soils for the contest within easy walking distance. Sites with wheat stubble on cropland worked well with soil pits that were dug and then filled back in before the next cropping operations. Jim noted that he had a friend with a backhoe that should be able to dig the soil backhoe pits.

Cost Share Action Approval

Hard copies of the June 12 Cost Share Action spreadsheet were distributed. There was one request for cost share payment each for the 24-39-FH fuels reductions and 24-39-NR dairy alleyway grants \$23,250.00. Discussion was held. Elayne noted that the Zeigler dairy farm still needs to have a dairy lagoon installed. Jim and Elsa noted that there are good opportunities to pick up more 24-39-FH (forest health) grant funding for fuels reduction projects if and when new large wildfires get started in Lincoln County. Dean asked if fuels reduction grants would pay for sagebrush beating projects in the more southwesterly parts of the county with no conifer trees, and the answer was yes.

- ***21. Chris moved to approve the June 12 Cost Share Action spreadsheet as presented. Jim seconded. There was no further public comment. Motion passed.***

Contract for Adams CD TA Grant

Elsa reported that Adams CD had requested technical assistance from Lincoln County CD with the installation of a well pump in a well already drilled for Brandon Spencer. The grant would provide up to \$3,500 reimbursement for District assistance.

- ***22-. Jim moved to approve the \$3,500 Technical Assistance contract with Adams County CD as presented. Chris seconded. There was no public comment. Motion passed.***

VSP Update

The VSP Technical Panel was out for the VSP project field tour in the county on May 23. Elsa, Delaini, Elayne, and Jeff attended the tour. Delaini incorporated comments and suggestions from the Technical Panel tour last year and described how the District has been addressing these concerns. Delaini also shared the VSP newsletter

she creates with information on VSP projects and funding and how the VSP newsletter and LCCD website have been very effective for VSP outreach in the county. Landowners and staff informed Technical Panel staff of the issues affecting their land and how VSP projects and funding have or could address these issues. Jim suggested that some local state legislators be invited to attend the VSP Technical Panel next year to help inform them of important issues on the ground that VSP can help solve.

Soil Health Sampling Update

Elsa announced that all of the soil health sampling for the final year of Washington State Soil Health Initiative (WASHI) sampling has been completed. Delaini is sending out cropping surveys to the owners/operators of the land where the soil health samples were taken. The surveys need to be returned to the District and forwarded on to WASHI in order to finish the sampling effort.

Grant Projects Update

Elsa noted that grant recipients are doing a good job of getting grant projects implemented on the ground. Elayne is working with a livestock producer to install 4,000 ft. of riparian fencing along Crab Creek on DNR land. An irrigation efficiency grant from the Conservation Commission is being used for the first time to pay for the fencing and for the drilling of a new livestock well. With cows drinking 20 – 35 gallons per day and calves drinking 10 – 15 gallons per day, Elayne has calculated that watering the livestock with the new livestock well water will keep an estimated 570,000 gallons of water in the creek channel.

Odessa Groundwater Replacement Tour

Elsa, Delaini and Jeff attended a recent Odessa Groundwater Replacement tour in the Columbia Basin. Other participants included Derek Sandison, Director of the Washington State Department of Agriculture, Tom Tebb, Director of the Office of the Columbia River, Department of Ecology, Representative Mary Dye, county commissioners, and members of CBSWC (Columbia Basin Sustainable Water Coalition). CBSWC had informational fliers available at the first stop. Elsa reported that 5 new RCCP (Resource Conservation Partnership Program) grant applications have been submitted to NRCS to fund more pipeline construction east from the East Low Canal to replace deep well irrigation water with declining groundwater levels. It was noted that the irrigation piping used to move the CBIP (Columbia Basin Irrigation Project) water to the east includes 2 to 8 foot diameter black piping with walls 2" or more thick.

Upcoming Tours/Meetings in June

Another wolf was spotted recently in Lincoln County. WDFW is scheduled to host another public meeting on wolf issues in the county in Davenport next week. Other tours and meetings include the Wilke Field Day on June 20, an upcoming canola tour, Wheat College, and the Highline Grain Growers meeting.

Conservation Commission Addendum

Elsa reported that the Addendum for the 25-39-IM grant from the Conservation Commission needed to be approved and signed. A resolution was needed to update or renew the applicant hourly cost share labor rate along with the cost share reimbursement rate for grant funding from the Conservation Commission. In addition, the list of authorized signers for grant funding needed to be updated and signed by the Chairman of the Board. Elsa recommended \$25/hour for the cost share labor rate because this is the maximum allowed by the Commission. Board members suggested that the cost share reimbursement rate remain at 75% in order to require some buy in and commitment from the grant applicants on their individual projects.

23-. Chris moved to approve Resolution 2024 – 02 to set the Conservation Commission grant applicant hourly labor cost share rate at \$25 per hour and maintain the cost share reimbursement rate at 75%. Jim seconded. There was no public comment. Motion passed.

County Well Water Issues

Dean reported that Harrington is having some serious well water supply issues. The pump motor for the new well, Well #3, is now “toast” according to Mayor Joe Armand, and the pump shaft and bowls are also probably worn out and need to be replaced. The current plan to get Well #3 pumping water again is to pull the old motor, shaft and bowls as soon as possible and install a new submersible pump and not try to rebuild the old pump which would take more time, assuming all needed parts are still available.

In the meantime, the old well, Well #1, had not been used over winter as usual due to some air bubbles in the pumped well water starting late last summer and complaints from city residents about the air in the water. With Well #3 not operational, the city had no choice but to turn Well #1 back on to refill the water tower and put emergency water restrictions into place. The mayor and city staff were asking what the well level was for Well #1 and if the well level had fallen so much the pump was starting to pump air. Dean noted that he had taken well level measurements earlier this spring as part of the NE Lincoln County Well Level grant and that the well water levels were close to the surface, as typical for the City of Harrington, and that there should be no issues with running out of well water to pump anytime soon.

Dean distributed hardcopies of a condensed well summary spreadsheet and all 3 well summary charts for the Harrington area wells. Also included was the well summary for the Lakeview Heights community well just east and uphill of the Seven Bays area along Lake Roosevelt. The spreadsheet and charts show that the Etape well water measurements for the well water level below the land surface was 14.71 ft. for Well #3 and 4.70 ft. for Well #1 earlier this spring. There has been some discussion about whether or not there might be a tiny hole in the well casing/column close to the base of pump motor for Well #1 or some other part of the piping system for the well, but nobody really knows yet where the air bubbles may be coming from for Well #1. There have also been questions about whether or not the adjacent Harrington Golf Course well may be affecting the city wells. The spreadsheet and chart show that the springtime peak well level measurements in recent years have been pretty consistent at about 97 ft. below land surface, which is only 10 ft. below the

static water level (SWL) when drilled of 87 ft. back in October 1963 for this 300 ft. deep well.

Following the June Board meeting, Dean measured Well #1 again later in the afternoon at the request of Mayor Armand and found that the well level with the pump running was only down 1.12 ft. from the measurement taken on April 15. The water was still easily visible in the vertical pipe in the concrete floor next to the pump, and the level was still a ways above the apparent elbow in the pipe that connects to the well casing. The Mayor decided that since the well level had not dropped that much and since it was still above the level of the pipe elbow, he was going to rescind the outside water use restrictions in Harrington for the time being. Dean asked the City Superintendent to run some water from the shop faucet next to Well #1 to see how many air bubbles were in the pumped water. Quite a few tiny air bubbles were seen in the water sample initially, but after sitting for a minute, most of the bubbles had disappeared and the water looked to be useable for most purposes. The City Superintendent also noted that the tiny air bubbles were present in the water when Well #1 was turned back on again, but that the amount of air bubbles in the water had noticeably decreased since then.

A resident of the Lakeview Heights community had also called the office and asked if the community well could be measured again, especially in August, when local residents have noticed air bubbles in the water at this time of year and have wondered if the well water level may be getting down close to the pump intake in their well. The Lakeview Heights well was measured from July 2018 to April 2021 as part of the earlier county wide well level grant. The chart showed that the well level when measured varied from about 171 to 188 ft. below land surface, which is still well above the effective well depth of 279 ft.

A resident of the Hawk Creek Ranch Estates community who also had her well measured as part of the county wide well level grant and is also a real estate agent called the office and asked if the District would be able to take an air test water flow GPM measurement on a new well drilled in the SW corner of Hawk Creek Ranch Estates close to the bends in Miles-Creston Road at the top of basalt hill above the grade. As it turned out, the potential buyer for the parcel of land for that well paid \$1,800 to have a contractor measure the well flow over several hours at 10 GPM, which isn't too bad for a domestic well and is a lot better than some other Hawk Creek Ranch wells which are only rated at 1-2 GPM on the well log. The real estate agent noted that she is now recommending that any potential buyers of parcels in the county who are intending to build a house and live in it have the well production GPM measured before buying the parcel to save money and frustration in the long run. The real estate agent also noted that the typical Hawk Creek Ranch Estates parcel runs about \$100,000, and that after building a house with the required infrastructure, buyers should plan on spending \$500,000!

Elsa reported that District staff have been working with Hawk Creek Ranch Estates and Davenport Fire District #5 to have fire trucks fill up the swimming pool at the lodge at the top of the basalt hill to serve as an emergency water reservoir as needed for wildfire control. The well at the lodge is no longer able to fill up the swimming pool anymore.

WACD Update

Jeff reported that the recent WACD Board meeting focused on the NW area of the state. Discussions were held on the Climate Commitment Act (CCA) and canary grass issues. Kitsap County tried a different method for the Board Supervisor elections this spring by using the Democracy Live website for voting, but only 105 votes were received. WACD was \$279,000 in the black for finances as of the end of May. Jeff attended the strategic planning conference in Yakima on May 29. WACD has 81 resolutions approved from past annual meetings to process. The long-term financial sustainability discussions started back in 2016 still have not produced any good solutions for the issue. WA-NRCS now has 168 employees across the state, up from 142 staff last year. A large amount of turnover for state legislators is predicted in the near future. One problem with including CD Board Supervisor elections on the general ballot in a county is that their names will most likely be listed at the bottom of the ballot, and there are voters out there that will not read down to or fill out the bottom of the general ballot. Administration for the CCA is being transferred from Ecology to the Department of Commerce on September 1. CD's with current CCA grant funding may only get \$4,500 more for the CCA grant funding from Ecology after September 1.

NRCS Report

Dick reported that the West Palouse Team has finished 17 EQIP contracts and is working on 3 new contracts. Six more CSP regular contracts have been finished and staff are working on 3 or 4 more contracts. However, for the second CSP signup funded by IRA (Inflation Reduction Act), 51 applications have been received and will create a large workload in the near future. NRCS is working on CRP work with its expanded staff and the District has not been contracted to do any CRP work this year. The new office furniture for Davenport NRCS staff will not be arriving until August – December.

Elsa noted that the remodeled Davenport office recently failed state inspection and ADA (Americans with Disabilities) inspection. There is little to no sound insulation for the conference room and the men's bathroom toilet tank hose connection is leaking. There is no wheel chair button for the main front door and additional signs and handles need to be installed for the ADA Act.

FSA Report

There was no report from FSA.

County Commissioner Report

There was no report from the County Commissioners

Conservation Commission Report

There was no report from the Conservation Commission

Ag Burn Task Force Meeting

Dean participated in the recent Ag Burn Task Force meeting by Zoom on June 5. The research grant presentation was on the use of finely shredded apple wood chips used as a moist bed for earthworms to filter out excess nutrients from dairy waste water and to reduce PCB's and now perhaps even PFAF's from municipal waste water sources. Apple wood chips are well tolerated by the earthworms, but ponderosa pine chips

have been shown to kill about 75% of the earthworms added to it, and so pine slash piles are not suitable for this use.

The National Weather Service is not predicting an increased wildfire risk for Eastern Washington in spite of recent dry conditions, but increased fire danger has been predicted for northern Idaho and the Cascades due to drought. Lincoln County only burned less than 300 acres for Ag Burn permits this spring, but other southeast counties such as Walla Walla, Garfield, Columbia, and Whitman counties have burned thousands of acres this spring. The strawboard plant at Starbuck went bankrupt and is being dismantled and is no longer an option for SE Washington farmers to dispose of excess wheat straw.

Aaron Esser is now a member of the Ag Burn Task Force and expressed concerns about the increased difficulty for farmers to afford to buy and spray herbicides on direct seeded cropland, which may very well lead to some farmers having to revert back to tillage to control weeds and also for more farmers in Adams and Lincoln counties requesting ag burn permits to deal with weeds.

Miscellaneous

Dean attended a recent **SWAC (Solid Waste Advisory Committee) meeting** at the Public Works meeting room. There are no feasible options for county producers to recycle bale twine due to the twine having to be cleaned first and due to the inconsistent availability of twine that could be delivered to recyclers on a regular basis. The transfer station is now accepting paperboard again (egg cartons, cardboard paper towel rolls, Kleenex boxes, etc...) as a part of "mixed office paper." Plastics #3 through #7 are also now being accepted as 3 -7 mixed plastics, which includes #5 polypropylene found in the large volume of margarine/butter and yogurt containers being purchased at local grocery stores.

Delaini and Elayne attended the recent **Ag Viability Conference** in Ellensburg hosted by the WA Department of Agriculture and WSU. About 1/3 of the participants were from the east side of the state but Lincoln CD show sent staff to attend. Topics included Labor & Industry issues, migrant worker issues, labor, water and cost inputs, and the possibility of Lake Roosevelt being listed as a Superfund site.

Elayne attended a recent **virtual fencing conference and field tour** in Ellensburg. Virtual fencing with GPS tags on livestock allows the producer to really see where the livestock are moving around in pastures. Carbon sequestration money is now available for producers to implement virtual fencing. Elayne noted that cows and calves need to be trained first with the neck collars and tags within a 100 acre barb wire fenced pasture before being released to a virtually fenced area. Each tag/collar costs \$40 and each tag battery costs \$10, and there are issues with the neck collars falling off or being broken. Each antenna station for communicating with the collars within its reception range costs about \$10,000. Elayne noted that virtual fencing is still too expensive for many livestock producers to adopt at this time.

PFAS contamination in well water in the Airway Heights area caused by firefighting foam used by Spokane International Airport and Fairchild Airport is now being recognized more and more as a serious well water contamination issue for residents living in the area. In addition, recent local TV news have noted that PFAS contamination has now been found in poultry and livestock being watered with the contaminated well water through bioaccumulation and that consumers are being advised not to eat or drink contaminated eggs, milk or meat. Farmers growing and

selling poultry and livestock for their livelihood in the Airway Heights area are now in a difficult situation that may require them to destroy their contaminated animals that they can't sell.

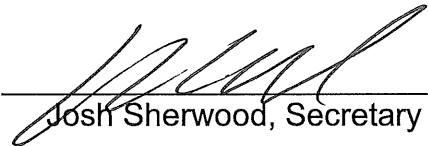
Wikipedia notes that PFAS stands for per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances that are a group of organofluorine chemical compounds with multiple fluorine atoms attached to an alkyl chain. PFAS have been produced for consumer products for decades, do not break down through natural processes and can persist in the environment for a very long time. The potential health risks of these "forever chemicals" on human beings is being assessed.

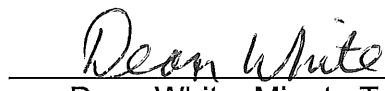
Request for Public Comment

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

Chairman Jeff Schibel adjourned the meeting at 12:25 PM. The next regularly scheduled meeting and last meeting for summer is on Wednesday, July 10 starting at 9:00 AM

Respectfully submitted,


Josh Sherwood, Secretary


Dean White, Minute Taker

SUMMARY:

All 23 motions were reviewed:

- 1. M/S/P to approve the May 8, 2024 minutes as amended.
- 2. M/S/P to pay and approve vouchers #12427 to #12461, along with 12 EFT's, totaling \$121,485.80.
- 3. M/S/P to submit voucher #4 for the 24-39-FH grant in the amount of \$170.53 to the Conservation Commission.
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