LINCOLN COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT BOARD MEETING

USDA Service Center Conference Room – Davenport, WA

Tuesday, January 14, 2025

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER:

Meeting called to order at 9:05 AM by Chairman, Jeff Schibel. Those attending the meeting in person or by phone were as follows: Jim Baye, Josh Sherwood, Braidy Haden, and Chris Laney - LCCD Supervisors; Jo Gilchrist, Lincoln County Commissioner; Ashley Smith, FSA; Elsa Bowen (by Zoom), Delaini Disher, Elayne Hovde-Knudson, Brean Nieman, Matthew Rosman, and Dean White - LCCD staff. Note: The January meeting, which was originally scheduled for Wednesday, January 8 was rescheduled to Tuesday, January 14 due to the lack of a quorum.

A. MINUTES: Additions / Corrections:

• 1. Braidy moved to approve the November 26, 2024 minutes as presented. Josh seconded. There was no public comment. Motion passed.

B. TREASURER'S REPORT / TRANSACTIONS REPORT:

- 2. Jim moved to pay and approve vouchers #12594 to #12632, along with 21 EFT's, totaling \$134,269.15, for November 23 December 31, 2024. Josh seconded. Discussion was held. There was no further public comment. Motion passed.
- 3. Jim moved to pay and approve voucher #12633 along with 22 EFT's, totaling \$5,956.07 for January 1 January 7, 2025. Chris seconded. Discussion was held. There was no further public comment. Motion passed.
- 4. Jim moved to submit voucher #11 for the 24-39-FH grant in the amount of \$4,882.97 to the Conservation Commission. Braidy seconded. Motion passed.
- 5. Jim moved to submit voucher #12 for the 24-39-FH grant in the amount of \$7,636.70 to the Conservation Commission. Chris seconded. Motion passed.
- 6. Jim moved to submit voucher #14 for the Adams CD TA grant in the amount of \$177.89 to Adams Conservation District. Josh seconded. Motion passed.
- 7. Jim moved to submit voucher #15 for the Adams CD TA grant in the amount of \$877.99 to Adams Conservation District. Braidy seconded. Motion passed.
- 8. Jim moved to submit voucher #9 for the 24-39-IE grant in the amount of \$711.09 to the Conservation Commission. Chris seconded. Motion passed.

- 9. Jim moved to submit voucher #10 for the 24-39-IE grant in the amount of \$364.88 to the Conservation Commission. Josh seconded. Motion passed.
- 10. Jim moved to submit voucher #1 for the CBCD ILA grant in the amount of \$473.20 to Columbia Basin CD. Chris seconded. Motion passed.
- 11. Jim moved to submit voucher #2 for the CBCD ILA grant in the amount of \$0.00 to Columbia Basin CD. Josh seconded. Motion passed.
- 12. Jim moved to submit voucher #3 for the CBCD ILA grant in the amount of \$629.98 to Columbia Basin CD. Braidy seconded. Motion passed.
- 13. Jim moved to submit voucher #4 for the CBCD ILA grant in the amount of \$654.89 to Columbia Basin CD. Chris seconded. Motion passed.
- 14. Jim moved to submit voucher #17 for the 24-39-NR grant in the amount of \$20,346.28 to the Conservation Commission. Josh seconded. Motion passed.
- 15. Jim moved to submit voucher #18 for the 24-39-NR grant in the amount of \$203.30 to the Conservation Commission. Chris seconded. Motion passed.
- 16. Jim moved to submit voucher #3 for the 25-39-SFF grant in the amount of \$1,026.81 to the Conservation Commission. Braidy seconded. Motion passed.
- 17. Jim moved to submit voucher #4 for the 25-39-SFF grant in the amount of \$254.13 to the Conservation Commission. Josh seconded. Motion passed.
- 18. Jim moved to submit voucher #5 for the 25-39-IM grant in the amount of \$21,011.48 to the Conservation Commission. Chris seconded. Motion passed.
- 19. Jim moved to submit voucher #6 for the 25-39-IM grant in the amount of \$21,100.35. to the Conservation Commission. Braidy seconded. Motion passed.
- 20. Jim moved to submit voucher #17 for the VSP-5 grant in the amount of \$11,240.98 to the Conservation Commission. Josh seconded. Motion passed.
- 21. Jim moved to submit voucher #18 for the VSP-5 grant in the amount of \$16,457.07 to the Conservation Commission. Chris seconded. Motion passed.
- 22. Jim moved to submit voucher #1 for the 25-39-PFR grant in the amount of \$0.00 to the Conservation Commission. Braidy seconded. Motion passed.
- 23. Jim moved to submit voucher #2 for the 25-39-PFR grant in the amount of \$0.00 to the Conservation Commission. Josh seconded. Motion passed.

- 24. Jim moved to submit voucher #3 for the 25-39-PFR grant in the amount of \$0.00 to DOE. Chris seconded. Motion passed.
- 25. Jim moved that the Lincoln County Conservation District VISA statement for October 24, 2024 through November 25, 2024 be approved. The total amount owed was \$1,747.58. Braidy seconded. Discussion was held. There was no further public comment. Motion passed.
- 26. Jim moved that the Lincoln County Conservation District VISA statement for November 26, 2024 through December 23, 2024 be approved. The total amount owed was \$2,004.08. Josh seconded. Discussion was held. There was no further public comment. Motion passed.
- 27. Jim moved to approve the Lincoln County Conservation District Co-Energy / Pacific Pride gas card statement with a closing date of November 30, 2024. The total amount owed was \$247.48. Josh seconded. Motion passed.
- 28. Jim moved to approve the Lincoln County Conservation District Co-Energy / Pacific Pride gas card statement with a closing date of December 15, 2024. The total amount owed was \$54.38. 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 she had recently assisted Fred Vosper, a long-time independent energy audit consultant who has worked in the county before, by taking project photos and getting signatures from several Adams County cooperators who had submitted EQIP energy applications to NRCS. It only took several hours and the District got paid \$1,500 for Elsa's services.

Jeff thanked Commissioner Gilchrist for the County Auditor's office work on the special assessment collection for the District.

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

C. AGENDA

Extended Leave Approval

Elsa reported that she needed Board approval for her upcoming annual leave exceeding 10 consecutive work weekdays in late January.

30. Chris moved to approve more than 10 consecutive work weekdays of annual leave for Elsa for her upcoming vacation time in late January. Josh seconded. Motion passed.

Public Records Index Resolution

Hardcopies of the draft Lincoln County CD Public Records Index Resolution 2025-01 were distributed. Elsa reported that Mike Baden helped to draft the language of the resolution to follow the content of RCW 42.56.070 (4), which addresses the maintenance of an index for public records. In summary, the resolution noted that because the creation and maintenance of an index for all public records held by the District would be unduly burdensome and would be nearly impossible to create or maintain, Lincoln County CD is not required to maintain an index of public records, as allowed by the RCW. The District shall make public records available for public inspection and make copies of such records upon request as covered by the RCW.

31. Jim moved to approve Public Records Index Resolution 2025-01 as presented. Josh seconded. Elsa noted that Jeff as Chairman needed to sign and date the Resolution with today's date. There was no further public comment. Motion passed.

Elections Update

Delaini reported that the plan for implementing Supervisor elections will be the same as last year and that Walt's Mail out of Spokane would be used again to handle the large workload of stuffing, labeling and mailing the ballots to the approximate 8,000 registered voters in the county. The goal is to get the ballots mailed out to registered voters a full 2 weeks before the deadline for the ballots to be returned to the District.

Braidy is up for reelection to his elected position this spring. Delaini needs a brief sentence or two from Braidy to introduce himself to county voters who do not know him. A draft ballot will be presented at the February board meeting for board members to review. This time, front and back page content will only be three quarters of the full page so that when voters cut out the ballot part to mail back to the District, none of the background information on District programs and services will be lost to voters. The District will be paying less funds on Post Office permits now that staff have a better understanding of just what permits are needed for mailing the ballots. About 13-14% of the election ballots were returned last year to the District.

Elsa noted that Jason Echelbarger has expressed interest in becoming a new board member and may attend the February board meeting. The appointed position currently held by Chris is up for reappointment in spring.

Tree Sale

Brean noted that the majority of tree sale orders have been made online and that 41 orders have been received as of yesterday. A few of the orders have been large enough for these customers to receive a discount. Some customers are still using the tree sale flyer to make their orders. Most of the tree sale customers this year are repeat buyers from previous years. Spirea pots from Plants of the Wild sold out early and more pots have recently been ordered. Selling individual potted stock has been popular with customers. Blue elderberry bareroot stock is also close to being sold out.

Surplus Items

A hard copy list of the bids made on surplus computer equipment items was distributed. The majority of items receiving bids included laptop computers, iPads, and Surface pro tablets. Josh noted that the 2012 iPads that he bid on are now mostly out of date because the latest Apple software can not be loaded on them, but he can still use on his drills. Elsa noted that there were multiple used keyboards that did not receive any bids, and she is looking into contacting schools and offering to donate these keyboards to any interested schools.

32. Jim moved to approve the list of surplus item bids as presented. Chris seconded. Motion passed.

Grants Update

Elsa reported that all of the District grants are progressing well. District staff are still working with Ecology on components of the Drought Planning grant. Elayne is working on a \$22,000 CWR grant with a cooperator in the Lone Pine Road area who was impacted by the 2020 Whitney Road fire. Matthew is working on the update of the CWPP (Community Wildfire Protection Plan) grant. Matthew recently attended fire mitigation best practices training in Renton hosted by DNR and also attended the annual Inland Tree Conference in Spokane Valley that was hosted by Spokane CD.

Delaini noted that there is a new mini grant available from the Sustainable Farm and Fields Program with the Conservation Commission that will provide cost share for soil lab sampling conducted by conservation districts. Applications must be received by January 31. Up to \$1,000 per CD is available to pay for soil health analysis or more traditional soil lab analysis, along with staff time, travel time, and mileage involved with the soil sampling. The WASHI (Washington State Soil Health Initiative) soil sampling program ended last year and no longer has funding to cost share soil sampling. It was noted that \$1,000 cost share for soil sampling and lab tests would not go very far with a typical soil test now costing \$100.

The Direct Seed 3 grant will expire on June 30. Delaini is working on obtaining a new Direct Seed grant for 2026 through Ecology. At this time only 4 producers have expressed interest in signing up for a new Direct Seed grant. For the 2024 Direct Seed 3 grant, producers new to direct seeding could sign up 250 acres maximum and receive \$30/acre cost share. The cost share per acre rate may be increased for 2026.

Hard copies of the Cost Share Action spreadsheet were distributed. There was one cost share application for irrigation main line replacement through the 25-39-IE grant and one cost share payment request for concrete pads for weaned calf pens through Lincoln County CD and VSP grants.

33. Josh moved to approve the Cost Share Action worksheet as presented. Chris seconded. Motion passed.

2025-2027 & 2025 Supplemental Governor's Proposed Budgets

Hardcopies of the 2025-2027 Proposed Governor's Budgets were distributed. Elsa noted that the Governors proposed budget listed a \$1 million dollar reduction for Forest Health compared to current funding. Josh noted that the Conservation Commission request for \$30 million in Water Conservation Irrigation Efficiencies was met with a proposed \$7 million allocation on the Governor's proposed budget. This allocation is still much larger than the current \$2.5 million budget for irrigation efficiencies. Elsa noted that overall, the Governor's proposed budget is slightly larger than the previous

biennium budget, but that not all requests from the Conservation Commission were addressed.

Draft Lincoln County CD 5-Year Plan (FY2026 to FY2031)

Hardcopies of the draft 5-year Lincoln County CD plan were distributed. Elsa noted that Elayne had recently compiled this draft plan, and that all potential programs and activities for the next 5 years need to be included in the 5-Year Plan. Elayne noted that she followed Ray Ledgerwood's suggestion to write down every possible program/activity that the District might want to do in the next 5 years.

Jeff had a question on Priority #6, Energy. Would Lincoln County CD want to take a position on projects like wind turbine or solar panel farm installation? Elsa suggested that the District remain neutral on these projects. Jo reminded the Board that the County Commissioners position on energy projects is to allow property owners the right to have energy projects installed on their land, as long as the projects don't adversely affect their neighbors or cause undue issues with the county.

Questions were also raised on Priority #9, Training and District Operations. A general consensus reached was that Elsa and Elayne should get together in February to discuss the draft 5-Year Plan and bring recommendations back at a future Board meeting. There is no immediate deadline for the 5-Year Plan to be updated and approved.

WACD Report

Delaini presented a pin and certificate from WACD to Chris in recognition of his 5 years of service as a Board Member for Lincoln County CD.

Board members commented on the Annual WACD meeting recently held at the Northern Quest Casino in Airway Heights. The nearby location of the meeting at Northern Quest was appreciated and attendance and participation in the annual meeting was also up for the meeting. Braidy would like to see Supervisor Handbooks on hand for the annual meeting. Chris would like information on serving as an Associate Supervisor for his information in case he chooses to retire as Board Member in the near future. Delaini volunteered at the registration desk and met a lot of CD Board and staff members along with WACD staff that she had never met in person. Jim heard a lot of good comments for Delaini's and Ryan's work at the meeting. The 2026 Annual Meeting will also be held at Northern Quest Casino and WACD staff have requested that Delaini and Elsa serve at the registration desk again.

The most controversial breakout session by far was the session on wildlife issues with wolves and bears. Dean noted that the audio for breakout sessions that he watched online by Zoom was not good and it was hard to understand due to the echoes in the smaller meeting rooms.

Amy McKay from Whitman CD was selected as the new President for WACD. Jeff was selected as WACD Vice-President and will be involved with this position for the next 5 years, which will include 6 meetings a month including Lincoln County CD Board meetings. Elsa is looking into travel reimbursement for Jeff as WACD Vice-President.

Legislative Day will be held on February 5, 2025. Elsa will make hotel reservations for Board members planning to attend and Ryan will make appointments with local legislators. Delaini will be making information packets again to hand out to legislators. Jeff is planning to attend and Braidy and Chris may attend. Suggested talking points with legislators include fire resiliency along with wind turbine and solar panel farm

ordinances. Jo reminded Board members that the recent updated county ordinances were borrowed from nearby counties with wind turbines and solar panel farms such as Adams and Whitman counties, and the only real difference for Lincoln County is that somewhat larger setbacks were established, and these may be updated again in the future.

Conservation Commission Report

There was no Conservation Commission Report from Mike Baden. Elsa noted that Mike is in the final stages of recovery from surgery and will be available to attend the February Board meeting on February 12. Mike will also be available after the meeting to assist with the annual Internal Audit. Jim noted that he will not be available to attend the February Board meeting. Mike Poteet has been selected as the new VSP Coordinator and will begin meeting with CD VSP staff in April with the VSP Tech Panel meetings.

November – December Precip Update

Dean handed out hard copies of the recent calendar year end precip email sent to county precip cooperators along with the latest US Drought Monitor Map.

The November and December 2024 precip gave Lincoln County a miraculous catch up on precipitation for the otherwise dry year of 2024. For example, the South Fork precip station in the far south-central part of the county had only received 48% of the long term precip average by the end of October. But after receiving 6.25" of precip for nearly twice the long-term average for November plus December, South Fork ended up with 102% of the long-term crop year precip average, and almost all of this precip has been absorbed into the soil profile with very little or no runoff at all. The precip amounts received by Eastern Washington this November and December were truly historic. The Q6 TV weather news recently noted that the 2024 November plus December precip total recorded at the Spokane Airport was the second highest amount recorded since 1900.

USGS has a rainfall calculator website (howmuchrain.php) that calculates the gallons of water received by each acre for inches of rainfall received. Another quick way to estimate the gallons of water received for each acre is to multiply 27,154 gallons by the inches of rainfall received. These calculations show the large amounts of rainfall water received by Lincoln County for November plus December and the very good growth potential for cropland, rangeland and forestland starting in spring 2025.

For example, if the north and eastern portions of Lincoln County received an average of 7" of rainfall that all went into the soil profile, this is the equivalent of each acre here receiving an estimated 190,078 gallons of water. Landowners and operators need to keep in mind that every <u>acre</u> contains 43,560 square feet, covers an area that is about 208.7 ft. on each side, and that one full cubic foot of volume holds 7.480519 gallons of water.

Even after receiving the historic amounts of precip for November plus December and precip stations getting much closer to yearly average precip amounts for 2024, the December 31, 2024 U.S. Drought Monitor Map for Washington showed that the southern and western 2/3rds of Lincoln County were still displayed as being in the yellow D0 Abnormally Dry status.

Dean also handed out hard copies of the updated well level and precip chart for well BIU506. The chart showed the November and December precip totals that were way

above the average precip totals for these months, but also showed that recovering well levels displayed no sudden increases due to the recent and historic high rainfall amounts. The well levels appeared to be slowly recovering from water already in aquifer, and that with the vast majority of the November and December precip being absorbed by the soil profile and little or no runoff occurring yet during this winter season, there has been little or no recharge of the local shallow aquifer along with little or no significant recharge of the local small streams so far either. The chart also suggested that if there continues to be little or no runoff at all for the rest of winter and early spring, there may not be any significant recharge of the well aquifer or local streams and that surface water quantity conditions across the county may be very diminished again for summer and fall 2025.

NRCS Report

There was no NRCS Report. NRCS staff were tied up with CSP program appointments with cooperators. The deadline to sign up for CSP this year is this Friday, January 17. Future workload will include meetings with producers concerning their EQIP signups.

County Commissioners Report

Jo reported that the County Commissioners have been dealing with declining revenues and ever-increasing expenses, leading to an initial \$1.2 million budget deficit for 2025. The county has been able to use \$1.13 million in COVID-19 reserve funds to help close the budget gap. Property taxes are limited to 1% increases per year and can not help to fill the budget gap. Even if the property tax in the county was raised by 3 percent a year, this still would not raise much tax money due to the relatively small population in the county. Motor vehicle fuel taxes received back from the state have been slowly declining in recent years due to more and more fuel-efficient vehicles being driven along with more hybrid and all electric vehicles. Online sales taxes have also been declining since the COVID-19 pandemic has ended.

Additional costs weighing down on the county budget include unfunded mandates from the state, such as the requirement to appoint a full-time County Coroner and to hire 3 Public Defenders plus a secretary to meet state requirements. The county may end up having to lay off some employees in 2026

The county planning board has recently finished updating the zoning ordinance and setbacks for wind turbine farms in the county. County Commissioners are still looking to change the classification of wind turbines on private land from real property to personal property in order to reduce the large drop off in tax revenues over the lifetime of wind turbines.

Adam Walser has been elected as the new Superior Court Judge and Ty Albertson has been appointed by the County Commissioners as the new County Prosecutor. Ashley Smith (<u>not</u> Ashley Smith, Lincoln County FSA CED) has been appointed as the new County Coroner.

Broadband fiber optic cable installation for communities in Lincoln County is moving forward and on track for completion. Harrington was the first town where the fiber optic cable was installed, and Odessa will be the last town for cable installation. Fiber optic cables are currently being installed in Davenport. The original \$300 million Federal match to install fiber optic broadband in the county has been reduced to \$10 million.

FSA Report

Ashely reported that the annual ARC/PLS signup period will open next Tuesday and producers must choose either ARC or PLS by April 15. Due to the Davenport office staff now down 2 employees, producers are highly encouraged to sign up soon and not wait until the deadline. Office staff just finished up the signup for specialty crops last Friday. Work is continuing on CRP. Ashley will be running ads in March to refill the 2 open positions in the office.

Miscellaneous

Braidy announced that the annual PNW Canola Association meeting will be held on January 29.

Delaini reported that WSU Extension Lincoln/Adams Counties will be hosting the Lincoln County Wheat Producer Meeting and lunch in the morning and then SoilCon 2025 in the afternoon at the Lincoln County Fairgrounds on Thursday, January 30th. Delaini will be hosting a booth again featuring Lincoln County CD programs and activities. Full agendas are available on the WSU Extension Lincoln/Adams website and attendees are requested to RSVP by Friday, January 24.

Elayne and Delaini will be attending a grazing land training session at the WDFW office at Swanson Lakes on Wednesday, January 29.

Request for Public Comment

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

Jeff adjourned the meeting at 11:04 AM. The next scheduled Board meeting will be held on Wednesday, February 12.

Respectfully submitted,

Josh Sherwood, Secretary

Dean White, Minute Taker

SUMMARY:

All 33 motions were reviewed:

- 1. M/S/P to approve the November 26, 2024 minutes as presented.
- 2. M/S/P to pay and approve vouchers #12594 to #12632, along with 21 EFT's, totaling \$134,269.15, for November 23 December 31, 2024.
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- 32. M/S/P to approve the list of surplus item bids as presented.
- 33. M/S/P to approve the Cost Share Action worksheet as presented.