

**LINCOLN COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT  
BOARD MEETING  
USDA Service Center Conference Room – Davenport, WA  
Wednesday, March 13, 2024**

**MEETING CALLED TO ORDER:**

Meeting called to order at 9:02 AM by Chairman, Jeff Schibel. Those attending the meeting in person were as follows: Jim Baye, Josh Sherwood, Chris Laney and Braidy Haden, LCCD Supervisors; Mike Baden, Conservation Commission; Dick Erickson, NRCS; Ashley Smith, FSA; Elsa Bowen, Delaini Disher, Debra Watson, Elayne Hovde-Knudson, and Dean White - LCCD staff.

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

- **1. Braidy moved to approve the February 14, 2024 minutes as presented. Chris seconded. There was no public comment. Motion passed.**

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

- **2. Jim moved to pay and approve vouchers #12342 to #12367, along with 35 EFT's, totaling \$82,321.37. Josh seconded. Discussion was held. Motion passed.**
- **3. Jim moved to submit voucher #2 for the 24-39-FH grant in the amount of \$0.00 to the Conservation Commission. Braidy seconded. Motion passed.**
- **4. Jim moved to submit voucher #5 for the Adams CD TA grant in the amount of \$0.00 to Adams Conservation District. Josh seconded. Motion passed.**
- **5. Jim moved to submit voucher #7 for the Direct Seed 3 grant in the amount of \$2,733.06 to DOE. Braidy seconded. Discussion was held. Elsa noted that Delaini had submitted a request to Ecology to extend the Direct Seed 3 grant for another year and that there should not be any issues with Ecology agreeing to extend the grant for another year. Motion passed.**
- **6. Jim moved to submit voucher #8 for the 24-39-NR grant in the amount of \$3,836.81 to the Conservation Commission. Chris seconded. Motion passed.**
- **7. Jim moved to submit voucher #8 for the 24-39-IM grant in the amount of \$15,569.45 to the Conservation Commission. Josh seconded. Motion passed.**
- **8. Jim moved to submit voucher #7 for the VSP 5 grant in the amount of \$7,953.29 to the Conservation Commission. Chris seconded. Motion passed.**
- **9. Jim moved that the Lincoln County Conservation District VISA statement for January 25, 2024 through February 23, 2024 be approved. The total amount**

*owed was \$2,434.13. Josh seconded. Discussion was held. There was no other public comment. Motion passed.*

- *10. Jim moved to approve the Lincoln County Conservation District Co-Energy / Pacific Pride gas card statement with a closing date of February 15, 2024. The total amount owed was \$59.86. Braidy seconded. Motion passed.*
- *11. Jim moved to approve the Lincoln County Conservation District Co-Energy / Pacific Pride gas card statement with a closing date of February 29, 2024. The total amount owed was \$43.50. 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 reminded the Board that the District needed to reapply for the Special Assessment report in 2026 and that the current Special Assessment would expire in 2027. Elsa also noted that District had purchased 1 small coffee stand for the remodeled office kitchen and 2 small tables for the conference room to hold coffee and treats in the limited space available.

- *12. 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**

### **Building Updates**

Elsa reported the movable cubicle dividers would be arriving soon. NRCS staff are still about 12-13 weeks out from getting their new office furniture and cubicles installed. Israel Guerrero with Office Continuum Environments visited the office on Monday. He confirmed that the office remodeling crew did not take the old District cubicles apart correctly and had broken the essential cubicle spines. However, because of the extra cubicle that the District had ordered and stored out in the storage building, the extra spines here can be used to reassemble the other District cubicles and so Israel has now agreed to buy back the used District cubicles in the near future and hold them in consignment for a year or two until they are sold. The parking lot fence on the West/FSA side of the office was recently completed and the powered sliding gate mechanism on the south side of the lot has been installed and is working.

### **Wildfire Preparedness Technician Update**

Elsa reported that only 8 applicants have applied for the new Wildfire Preparedness Technician position so far and that only 2 applicants are qualified for the position. Elsa has notified DNR and Spokane CD of the Wildfire Preparedness Technician opening to

help increase the pool of applicants for the position. The Technician will be working 100% of his/her time for Lincoln County CD and will not be shared with Spokane CD.

### **Elections Update**

The full-page ad in this week's Lincoln Advertiser with the informational back page of the 2024 Elections ballot was passed around for review. Over 1,000 ballots have been returned to the District already, which has exceeded the 800+ ballots received back for the 2023 election, and there is still 2 more weeks for registered voters in the county to return their ballots to the District. Elsa publicized the ongoing District Board Supervisor elections at the Highland Grain Growers meeting last week. Elsa will present the LCCD voting process and results so far at the online WACD Board meeting next week.

The bill from Walt's Mailing in Spokane for ballot printing, envelope stuffing and addressing, and mailing the ballots out to all registered voters in the county will be around \$6,500. The District has to pay an additional cost to the Post Office for every ballot that has been sent back to the District in the no postage required envelope. The full cost to the District for the elections may be around \$7,500, and this can be split up and paid between several different grants. Having Walt's Mailing doing the ballot production and mailing work has saved Lincoln County CD a lot of employee time and expense on the election. The eventual cost may be close to \$0.75 per ballot returned to the District. Only about 15 ballots could not be counted so far due to voters not signing their ballot or having incorrect addresses that could not be confirmed on the list of registered voters from the county.

### **Tree Sale Update**

The refrigerated trailer will be delivered to the fairgrounds next Monday. Many but not all of the tree sale species are already sold out.

### **Conference/Meeting Follow-Ups**

The Local Working Group (LWG) meeting for EQIP was held on February 21 at the WAWG building in Ritzville and 6 producers attended the meeting this time out of a total of 30 participants at the meeting that included NRCS and state agency employees. The LWG is looking into submitting an application to IRA (Inflation Reduction Act) to fund additional contracts for direct seeding in the Adams and Lincoln counties area.

Elayne and Delaini attended the recent Palouse CD Alternative Crops meeting which had about 40 to 50 participants attending in person and on Zoom. Some of the slides shown at the meeting by Palouse CD staff may be borrowed by LCCD staff for future alternative crop presentations. It was noted that WAWG (Washington Association of Wheat Growers), the Cattlemen's Association, and 2 state agencies have applied for and received IRA funding for the next 5 years from NRCS to fill Conservation Technician positions to assist with the promotion, education and implementation of NRCS programs such as EQIP and CSP for the benefit of local producers. Elayne will be attending an upcoming Virtual Fencing Conference. The WADE training conference will be held at the Sleeping Lady in Leavenworth in June.

Elsa attended the third local meeting in the county on the proposal to install windmill farms in several locations in the county. It was noted that the Lincoln County Assessors website is now posting notices of agreements that windmill companies and local county landowners have made for the option to install windmills for selected parcels of the landowner's ground. If windmills are installed on land with active CRP contracts, the

CRP contract will be cancelled and the producers will have to pay back penalty payments.

### **Cost Share Approval**

There was only one cost share request from the Direct Seed 3 grant to review.

- **13. Jim moved to approve the Cost Share Action spreadsheet as presented. Josh seconded. There was no public comment. Motion passed.**

### **Voluntary Stewardship Program Tour**

Delaini will be leading a Lincoln County VSP tour on May 23 with members of state agencies on the VSP Technical Advisory Committee (Conservation Commission, Ecology, WDFW, and Agriculture) invited. This tour is separate from the Conservation Commission tour and is scheduled to run for about 4 hours. A mix of different VSP funded project types will be visited including a watering facility, riparian fencing, bridge site, and water monitoring site. The issue of low flow and the creek site completely drying up in summer and fall with no water to measure during these periods will be addressed. Another issue for discussion will be the absence of salmon bearing streams and the lack of CREP (Conservation Reserve Enhancement Project) projects and funding for VSP in Lincoln County and other affected eastern Washington counties.

### **Drought Planning Grant Application**

The Columbia Basin Sustainable Water Coalition is applying for a \$150,000 grant from the Department of Ecology to help local cities with Municipal Group A and/or Group B water wells to develop drought plans that will allow them to apply for future grant funding to improve well water systems to address future drought conditions. District staff will be submitting the grant application on behalf of CBSWC later today.

### **Transducer Well Level Charts**

Dean distributed hardcopies of well level charts with continuous transducer measurements and the manual Etape measurements taken in the retired Davenport Well #1 and in the ERO706 piezometer tube in the Dreger Observation well south of Creston from mid-2018 through early November 2023. Both wells show the drawdown of well water levels in summer and fall during the irrigation season and the recovery of well water levels over winter and early spring. There is no well pump in either well and so the well water drawdown is related to well water pumping in some other nearby well(s), such as the currently pumped Well #6 in Davenport.

Dean noted that spring well level peaks in Davenport Well #1 have dropped about 3 feet and that summer/fall well level troughs have dropped about 4 feet in recent years. The audible intensity of the cascading water in Well #1 has also decreased, especially in the last several years. The jagged and “noisy” transducer well level curve in Well #1 also appears to be related to the constant sub-foot drawdowns and recoveries of the well water level on consistent multi-hour intervals that appear to reflect the turning on and turning off of the well pump in nearby Well #6, which is the main well for the City of Davenport.

The spring well level peaks in ERO706 have dropped up to 8 feet. The transducer well level curve shows that there are four peaks and four troughs during the irrigation season that are not captured by the manual Etape measurements. Dean noted that

there are no other irrigation wells visible from the well site but that the typical 4 peaks and troughs show an apparent nearby well being turned off and turned back on again for crop production which could result from 4 cuttings of an irrigated alfalfa crop during the irrigation season. Board members noted that there are irrigated alfalfa fields in the area.

Dean proposed that since both Davenport Well #1 and ERO706 well levels recover in spring and both wells are relatively shallow and apparently open to modern recharge, these wells have the potential for their well levels to recover higher and closer back to the 2018 levels with several consecutive years of above average precip like that which was received by eastern Washington in late 2016 through early 2018.

### **Irrigation Water Efficiency Grant**

The Conservation Commission is offering an irrigation efficiency grant to conservation districts that provides 75% cost share and up to \$100,00 in funding per landowner and two projects per year for CD's. In addition, this grant money can also be used to help develop livestock watering facilities and drill new wells as needed for livestock producers. Elayne submitted a grant application and the District has received irrigation efficiency grant money to develop a livestock watering facility for a local livestock producer.

### **WACD Update**

Jeff noted that Elsa will give a report on Lincoln County CD activities at the upcoming March WACD Board meeting. The recent Board meeting was held on February 26 and focused on CD's in the SE area of the state. The land acquisition proposal by CD's was discussed. Roylene Comes at Night, State NRCS Conservationist, discussed EQIP and IRA grant funding. Jon Weiss with FSA discussed CRP rental rates. The average CRP rental rate in Lincoln County may be increased from \$45 to \$69 per acre.

Thirty-one participants from Washington attended the recent NACD Convention. Jim Brown noted that PMC tree and shrub sales are down some this year from last year. Jeff has been appointed to PMC Task Force Committee and noted that 31 CD's responded to the recent PMC survey. An All-CD meeting will be held on March 26 & 27 at the Yakima Convention Center and will discuss the Conservation Commission / CD relationship, Conservation Commission and CD strategic planning, the Climate Commitment Act, and the 2025 – 2027 biennium budget.

### **Conservation Commission Report**

Mike reported that the Conservation Commission has found out how much of the supplemental budget request to the legislature has been approved. Overall, the results were good with the Conservation Commission being one of the few state agencies receiving supplemental funding this year, but not all of the supplemental budget requests were approved. For the 2025 fiscal year, a one-time funding of \$3.5 million has been approved for Implementation Grant funding and will be divided among all CD's across the state. One time funding has also been approved for CREP funding. At the upcoming All CD meeting in Yakima, the Conservation Commission will address its request for the legislature to provide regular budget allocations in place of one-time allocations. There is no money left for fire resiliency funding.

There will be up to \$1,000 per CD to help pay for District Board members and staff to attend the upcoming All-CD meeting at the Yakima Convention Center on March 26

& 27. The Climate Commitment Act will be addressed at the meeting. Forest health and riparian grants are examples of grant monies that are funded by the CCA. Mike noted that it needs to be advertised when grant funding comes from the Climate Commitment Act to help keep this source of funding appreciated and viable. CD's need to keep in mind that the Climate Commitment Act could be overturned by voters this fall. The Conservation Commission has to consult with the tribes across the state with regards to CCA programs and funding.

The Annual Plan and annual financial reports are due at the end of May. Delaini thanked Mike for all of his assistance with the spring Board Supervisor elections.

### **FSA Report**

Ashley reported that the wall mounted smart TV in the office conference room currently doesn't work. FSA has ordered a replacement remote control and cable for the TV. The ARC/PLC program signup deadline is this Friday. The acreage reporting deadline is July 15. The ongoing general CRP signup ends on Friday, March 29. A temporary job opening at the Davenport office will close on Friday and a permanent Program Technician can be hired in 90 days.

### **NRCS Report**

Dick reported that the West Palouse Team has 17 EQIP applications preapproved and 16 CSP applications to process. There will probably be another CSP signup this year due to the additional CSP funding that is available.

### **County Commissioners Report**

There was no County Commissioners report.

### **Miscellaneous**

Elsa noted that Ag Burn permits can now be entered and paid for on the Ecology Ag Burn website. Producers wishing to use the online Ag Burn website must first go through the process of getting a Secure Access Washington (SAW) account and set up their own password.

The Internal Audit / CAP / Schedule 22 form completion will be conducted immediately after the regular Board meeting has been adjourned today.


### **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 10:45 AM. The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 10 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 February 14, 2024 minutes as presented.
- 2. M/S/P to pay and approve vouchers #12342 to #12367, along with 35 EFT's, totaling \$82,321.37.
- 3. M/S/P to submit voucher #2 for the 24-39-FH grant in the amount of \$0.00 to the Conservation Commission.
- 4. M/S/P to submit voucher #5 for the Adams CD TA grant in the amount of \$0.00 to Adams Conservation District. Josh seconded.
- 5. M/S/P to submit voucher #7 for the Direct Seed 3 grant in the amount of \$2,733.06 to DOE.
- 6. M/S/P to submit voucher #8 for the 24-39-NR grant in the amount of \$3,836.81 to the Conservation Commission.
- 7. M/S/P to submit voucher #8 for the 24-39-IM grant in the amount of \$15,569.45 to the Conservation Commission.
- 8. M/S/P to submit voucher #7 for the VSP 5 grant in the amount of \$7,953.29 to the Conservation Commission.
- 9. M/S/P that the Lincoln County Conservation District VISA statement for January 25, 2024 through February 23, 2024 be approved. The total amount owed was \$2,434.13.
- 10. M/S/P to approve the Lincoln County Conservation District Co-Energy / Pacific Pride gas card statement with a closing date of February 15, 2024. The total amount owed was \$59.86.
- 11. M/S/P to approve the Lincoln County Conservation District Co-Energy / Pacific Pride gas card statement with a closing date of February 29, 2024. The total amount owed was \$43.50.
- 12. M/S/P to approve the Treasurer's report and Grant's report as presented.
- 13. M/S/P to approve the Cost Share Action spreadsheet as presented.

