## LINCOLN COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT

## BOARD MEETING

## Lincoln County Public Works Meeting Room

Wednesday, October 13, 2021

# MEETING CALLED TO ORDER:

Meeting called to order at 8:33 AM by Chairman, Jeff Schibel. Those attending the meeting in person or by telephone were as follows: Jim Baye, Chris Laney, Josh Sherwood, and Braidy Haden - LCCD Supervisors; Cari Roepke – NRCS; Elsa Bowen, Connor Nikkola (phone), Delaini Disher, and Dean White - LCCD staff.

1. **MINUTES: Additions / Corrections:**

## *1. Jim moved to approve the July 14, 2021 minutes as presented. Chris seconded. Motion passed.*

# *B. TREASURER’S REPORT / TRANSACTIONS REPORT:*

## *2. Jim moved to pay and approve vouchers #11521 to #11572, along with 33 EFT’s, totaling $146,018.45. Chris seconded. Motion passed.*

## *3. Jim moved to submit voucher #1 for the VSP 4 grant in the amount of $3,377.38 to the Conservation Commission. Josh seconded. Motion passed.*

## *4. Jim moved to submit voucher #2 for the VSP 4 grant in the amount of $3,269.84 to the Conservation Commission. Chris seconded. Motion passed.*

## *5. Jim moved to submit voucher #3 for the VSP 4 grant in the amount of $7,575.93 to the Conservation Commission. Josh seconded. Motion passed.*

## *6. Jim moved to submit voucher #1 for the 22-39-IM grant in the amount of $8,691.42 to the Conservation Commission. Chris seconded. Motion passed.*

## *7. Jim moved to submit voucher #2 for the 22-39-IM grant in the amount of $11,275.06 to the Conservation Commission. Josh seconded. Motion passed.*

## *8. Jim moved to submit voucher #3 for the 22-39-IM grant in the amount of $6,840.21 to the Conservation Commission. Chris seconded. Motion passed.*

## *9. Jim moved to submit voucher #1 for the 22-39-HZ grant in the amount of $0.00 to the Conservation Commission. Josh seconded. Motion passed.*

## *10. Jim moved to submit voucher #2 for the 22-39-HZ grant in the amount of $0.00 to the Conservation Commission. Chris seconded. Motion passed.*

## *11. Jim moved to submit voucher #3 for the 22-39-HZ grant in the amount of $0.00 to the Conservation Commission. Josh seconded. Motion passed.*

## *12. Jim moved to submit voucher #1 for the 22-39-NR grant in the amount of $65.15 to the Conservation Commission. Chris seconded. Motion passed.*

## *13. Jim moved to submit voucher #2 for the 22-39-NR grant in the amount of $154.38 to the Conservation Commission. Josh seconded. Motion passed.*

## *14. Jim moved to submit voucher #3 for the 22-39-NR grant in the amount of $497.65 to the Conservation Commission. Chris seconded. Motion passed.*

## *15. Jim moved to submit voucher #1 for the 22-39-FR grant in the amount of $577.57 to the Conservation Commission. Josh seconded. Motion passed.*

## *16. Jim moved to submit voucher #2 for the 22-39-FR grant in the amount of $130.30 to the Conservation Commission. Chris seconded. Motion passed.*

## *17. Jim moved to submit voucher #3 for the 22-39-FR grant in the amount of $697.25 to the Conservation Commission. Josh seconded. Motion passed.*

## *18. Jim moved to submit voucher #11 for the Direct Seed 2 grant in the amount of $44,858.61 to DOE. Chris seconded. Motion passed.*

## *19. Jim moved to submit voucher #17 for the Well Monitoring grant in the amount of $21,663.07 to DOE. Josh seconded. Motion passed.*

## *20. Jim moved to submit voucher #12 for the Mielke Project grant in the amount of $4,642.13 to DOE. Chris seconded. Motion passed.*

## *21. Jim moved to submit voucher #1 for the 21-39-TP grant in the amount of $77,796.34 to the Conservation Commission. Josh seconded. Motion passed.*

* ***22. Jim moved that the Lincoln County Conservation District Visa statement for June 24, 2021 through July 26, 2021 be approved. The total amount owed was $54.92. Braidy seconded. Discussion was held. Motion passed.***
* ***23. Jim moved that the Lincoln County Conservation District Visa statement for July 27, 2021 through August 25, 2021 be approved. The total amount owed was $206.58. Josh seconded. Discussion was held. Motion passed.***
* ***24. Jim moved that the Lincoln County Conservation District Visa statement for August 26, 2021 through September 23, 2021 be approved. The total amount owed was $51.78. Josh seconded. Motion passed.***
* ***25. Jim moved to approve the Lincoln County Conservation District Cenex credit card statement with a closing date of August 10, 2021. The total amount owed was $171.90. Chris seconded. Motion passed.***
* ***26. Jim moved to approve the Lincoln County Conservation District Cenex credit card statement with a closing date of September 10, 2021. The total amount owed was $350.84. Josh seconded. Motion passed.***

Delaini passed around bank statements for the board members to initial.

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

* ***27. Jim moved to approve the Treasurer’s report and Grant’s report as presented. Josh seconded. Motion passed.***

**C. AGENDA**

**Cost Share Action**

The Cost Share Action spreadsheet was distributed for review and approval. There was 1 request for District cost share payment and 5 applications for Voluntary Stewardship Program grant applications.

***28. Jim moved to approve the Cost Share Action spreadsheet as presented. Josh seconded. Motion passed.***

**NACD Annual Dues**

NACD annual dues for 2022 are now due. The District paid $775 for NACD dues in 2021.

***29. Josh moved to approve the payment of 2022 NACD dues for $775.00, the same amount as for 2021. Chris seconded. Motion passed.***

**Interlocal Agreement Renewal with Adams CD**

The interlocal agreement with Adams CD was up for renewal. Lincoln County CD staff have provided technical assistance for conservation projects in Adams County for the last several years to help implement grant projects that Adams CD could not otherwise finish due to limited staff. The District has then been reimbursed for staff time with grant money received by Adams CD.

***30. Josh moved to renew the Interlocal Agreement with Adams CD to provide technical assistance to Adams CD. Braidy seconded. Motion passed.***

**Summer Update**

Elsa attended a NE Area District Managers meeting to discuss items concerning all five districts. Enduris rates for insurance will be rising in the near future. A proposal has been circulating in WACD/Conservation Commission to have board supervisor elections held every other year instead of year like they are now, and to extend board supervisor terms from 2 years to 4 years. Elsa noted that the supervisor position currently held by Chris will be up for election next year.

Stevens County CD will be submitting a resolution to the NE Area meeting asking Ecology to address a recent change in policy in the Eastern Region that no longer allows livestock producers to withdraw surface water to **new** off channel water facilities that help to protect water quality without first having an underlying appurtenant water right.

**Sprague Lake Flooding Issues in Sprague**

Jeff attended a Lincoln County Water Conservation Board meeting in Sprague. The city of Sprague has continuing concerns about future flooding in the city caused by runoff water being backed up in Sprague Lake due to constrictions in the outflow channel at the southwest end of the lake and/or reduced storage capacity due to siltation in the lake. Meeting attendees went on a field trip to the Cow Creek bridge downstream from the lake and were able to see first hand the grass, weeds and brush that would clog the creek channel and restrict the flow out of the lake during runoff conditions. Lincoln County CD provided technical assistance with a brush cleanout project on this section of Cow Creek 4 to 5 years through the interlocal agreement with Adams CD. Ecology and WDFW will not let vegetation or soil be removed from the creek channel without an HPA permit, and in addition, a cultural resources review must also be done first for any channel cleanout funding provided by the state.

Elsa announced that a Sprague high school senior will be using funds from the Alan Stromberger Memorial Fund to create and install an memorial sign for Alan in Sprague as part of a required high school senior project.

**Ag Burn Permits and Future Requests to Burn CRP Brush**

Dean brought up concerns about future ag burn permit requests to burn thick rabbitbrush and sagebrush in CRP fields next to thick brush in adjacent rangeland fields and the potential for ag burns to escape containment, burn out of control and also produce higher volumes of smoke compared to ag burns in just grass and weeds.

There are CRP fields in the county that have failed CRP stand requirements due to brush crowding out the required density of CRP grass plants in the field, especially in the lower precip areas of the county. The thick stands of rabbitbrush and sagebrush in these areas are to challenge to brush beat. A lot of wheat producers are not willing to risk damaging their mowers built for mowing wheat stubble and weeds on thick brush in CRP fields. There are also few if any available contractors or heavy duty mowers designed to brush beat thick stands of brush for CRP contract holders to hire or rent. If the brush stands can be brush beat, then there is the potential issue of needing a suitable rangeland drill to be able to reseed CRP grass and forbs through all of the brush stems left on the ground by brush beating.

For all of the above reasons, CRP contract holders wishing to re-enroll a field overgrown with brush may find it a lot easier to seek an ag burn permit and light a match to remove the brush. Once the CRP contract has expired in a field, Ecology and FSA do not have any special restrictions that would prevent CRP contract holders from obtaining an ag burn permit to remove the brush. The local fire district does have the final say on allowing or not allowing an ag burn permit to be conducted. The local fire district may not approve the ag burn permit due to concerns with containing the fire or may require that an adequate fire break area be brush beat around the perimeter of the CRP field to help contain the ag burn within the CRP field.

Board members suggested that CRP contract holders with fields overgrown with brush and wishing to burn should seek an ag burn permit in spring to burn these brushy areas.

**Drought Recovery Grant**

Elsa reported that the District had received $15,500 in 22-39-DR grant funding from the Conservation Commission to help with Drought Recovery efforts in the county. Grant applications have mostly been for assistance to help pay for livestock producers who have had to haul water/more water to provide water to livestock in place of ponds, springs, or wells that have dried up and failed due to the drought. This grant expires at the end of 2021 and does not affect any drought recovery funding available from FSA.

***31. Braidy moved to approve the Drought Recovery grant of $15,500 from the Conservation Commission. Josh seconded. Motion passed.***

**22-39-IM and Direct Seed 3 Grants**

Elsa announced that the District had received $117,823 in grant funding from the Conservation Commission. The District is also close to finalizing the new Direct Seed 3 grant from Ecology.

**Well Monitoring Request for Hawk Creek Ranch Estates**

Elsa noted that some residents in the Hawk Creek Ranch Estates area had contacted the District and requested that well level monitoring be continued on 7 of their wells twice a year in early spring and fall. The estimated cost for staff to measure these wells twice a year and provide well level reports to well owners would be $1,200 or about $171 per well owner. The well owners noted that they were willing to pay the estimated costs for the well level measurements.

Jim expressed concerns on possible liability issues for the District to conduct the well level measurements on the 7 requested wells. Elsa will contact Enduris with questions on liability and will provide information back to the Board at a future meeting.

**VSP Update**

Elsa noted that the Lincoln County VSP Advisory Board had just approved the biennium funding for VSP in the county. Ben Floyd with White Bluffs Consulting has been hired again to serve as facilitator for VSP in Lincoln County.

**WaterSMART Grant Approval**

Elsa reported that the $100,000 WaterSMART grant application submitted to the Bureau of Reclamation by the District for the Columbia Basin Sustainable Water Coalition had been approved. Elsa is working with Claire Miller with the Department of Commerce to help facilitate the grant, which is intended to establish the Columbia Basin Sustainable Water Coalition as a working and viable organization to seek sustainable water supplies for the former GWMA area covered by Adams, Franklin, Grant and Lincoln counties.

**WDFW Proviso Grant**

Elsa noted that WDFW Proviso grant funding had been made available to landowners impacted by the Whitney Fire in Lincoln County and the Pearl Hill Fire in Douglas County. This grant money is available for building wildlife friendly fences, replanting pasture and rangeland, and obtaining replacement hay for livestock feed. It was noted that many livestock producers in the county had already obtained emergency funding from FSA to replace fencing damaged or destroyed by fire and had already rebuilt their fences.

**Upcoming Pacific Northwest Direct Seed Association Conference**

The next PNDSA Conference is scheduled as an in-person event for January 11 & 12 at the Three Rivers Convention Center in Kennewick, with the Advanced Soil Health Day training on January 13 (separate registration required). The cost per room at Springhill Suites is $119.00 per night. Elsa asked if anybody was planning on attending the PNDSA Conference. Board members asked to be reminded again at the November board meeting. There is a conflict with the regular date for the January board meeting on Wednesday, January 12, 2022. There is no funding left in the Direct Seed 2 grant to pay for conference registration or hotel rooms, but funding from the 22-39-IM grant could be used.

**NE Area Meeting**

The annual NE Area meeting will be held remotely by Zoom on Wednesday, October 20th from 8:30 AM to 12:45 PM. Elsa has reserved Memorial Hall in Davenport for Board and District staff to attend.

Elsa distributed hard copies of a resolution from Lincoln County CD to Establish Area Cost Share Rates and be presented at the upcoming NE Area meeting. The need for the resolution comes from the lack of updated equipment rental rates from local FSA offices, resulting in conservation districts attempting to get three local equipment rental rates, which is time consuming and sometimes not feasible when not all equipment on conservation projects is able to be rented locally. The NE Area District Managers have agreed on establishing local equipment rates for the NE Area. Approval by the Board was needed in order to forward the resolution on to the NE Area meeting for review and approval.

***32. Braidy moved to approve the Establish Area Cost Share Rates resolution from Lincoln County CD as presented and to forward this resolution on to the NE Area meeting for review and approval. Chris seconded. Motion passed.***

Jeff noted that Doug Rushton would probably be attending the NE Area meeting to propose a resolution to have the WACD President work on developing stable and sustainable sources of funding for all CD’s across the state.

**WACD Annual Meeting**

The WACD Annual Meeting will be held on Zoom again, with separate sessions spread out over multiple days starting on November 2.

**NRCS Report**

Cari reported that with current COVID-19 conditions in Lincoln County, only 25% capacity for office staff is allowed and only 5 NRCS plus District staff are able to work in the office at the same time. An Executive Order from President Biden requires that all federal employees and all co-located contractors and other staff such as District staff working in federally operated buildings are required to be vaccinated with the COVID-19 vaccine. This requirement is also supposed to apply to District board members but is not likely to be enforced at this time.

The West Palouse team is working on CSP interviews and processing CSP payments that are requested by the end of the year. The WPT in now down to working on 117 CSP contracts for Adams and Lincoln counties combined. The recent EQIP signup ended on October 18 with 17 applications in Lincoln County.

Brandon Davis has agreed to accept a new Soil Conservationist position in the Davenport office. Lauren Samaniego, a Soil Conservationist in the Ritzville office, will be transferring to work in the Davenport office. Eric Choker, a former long time employee with Spokane County CD, is now working as a Soil Conservationist for NRCS in the Ritzville office.

Debbie Sweet will be retiring at the end of November from the Davenport FSA office after 30 years of working for FSA in the office.

**County Commissioner Report**

There was no County Commissioner report.

**Conservation Commission Report**

Mike was on vacation and not available to give the Conservation Commission report. Elsa noted that Mike was pleased the NE Area District Managers were meeting occasionally and working together to solve shared issues. It was noted that the Conservation Commission is in the process of searching for a permanent replacement for the Executive Director position that has been vacated by former Director Carol Smith. Kirk Robinson has been selected as Interim Executive Director.

**FSA Report**

There was no report from FSA.

**Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**Executive Session**

The Board went into executive session under option 1(g) of RCW 42.30.110 at 10:50 AM for an estimated 30 minutes to address personnel issues. The Board came back out of executive session at 11:25 AM. No motions were made as a result of the Executive Session.

Chairman Jeff Schibel adjourned the meeting at 11:27 AM. The next board meeting is scheduled as an in-person meeting on Wednesday, November 10, 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.

Respectfully submitted,

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Josh Sherwood, Secretary Dean White, Minute Taker

SUMMARY:

All 32 motions were reviewed:

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* 2. M/S/P to pay and approve vouchers #11521 to #11572, along with 33 EFT’s, totaling $146,018.45.
* 3. M/S/P to submit voucher #1 for the VSP 4 grant in the amount of $3,377.38 to the Conservation Commission.
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* 28. M/S/P to approve the Cost Share Action spreadsheet as presented.
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