



# Okanogan Conservation District

1251 S. Second Ave, Room 102

Okanogan, WA 98840

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**TO:** The Record  
**SUBJECT:** October 6, 2020 Board of Supervisors Meeting  
**LOCATION:** Teleconference – (509) 422-0855, ext. 7  
**FROM:** Jess McDaniel, Administrative Assistant

**PRESENT:**

Ivan Oberg, District Chair  
Jerry Asmussen, Vice Chair  
Albert Roberts, District Auditor  
Steve Colvin, Member  
Gerri Oberg, Associate Supervisor  
Bob Clark, Associate Supervisor  
Craig Nelson, Executive Director  
Becky Drenner, Finance Director

Amy Martin, Conservation Director  
Kim Kogler, Education Specialist  
Hannah Coe, Conservation Planner  
Mindy Untalan, Conservation Planner  
Ricardo Angel, Natural Resources Technician  
Jess McDaniel, Administrative Assistant  
Sarah Troutman, NRCS

**Meeting Call to Order:** Ivan Oberg called the meeting to order at 6:01 PM. Ivan completed a roll call of Supervisors, Associate Supervisors, staff, partners, and the public.

**Agenda Approval:** Jerry Asmussen moved to approve the agenda as amended. Steve Colvin seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

**Approval of Minutes:** Albert Roberts moved to approve the September 1, 2020 board meeting minutes as presented. Steve Colvin seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

**Treasurer's Report #809,** which covers the checking account activity from September 2, 2020 to October 6, 2020, inclusive was presented for the Board's approval. The following checks/payroll direct withdrawals/electronic payments were approved for payment:  
Checks – numbers 11661 – 11671 totaling \$30,279.78.

Payroll direct withdrawal - numbers ACH3836 – ACH3865 totaling \$43,106.15.

Electronic payments - numbers EFT2763 – EFT2775 totaling \$30,758.57.

Deposits totaling \$61,196.26 were made.

Albert Roberts moved to approve Treasurer's Report #809. Steve Colvin seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

**Supervisor Reports:**

**Steve Colvin** – Steve reported that they are about 70% done with harvest and going like mad. He added that it is hot, hotter than it has ever been. He went on to say that the crop is looking good, but it would be nice to have some rain.

**Jerry Asmussen** – Jerry reported that he is glad to not be on fire. He went on to say that they are about finished with irrigating and are getting ready to finish weaning the calves. He agreed that rain would be nice.

**Albert Roberts** – Albert reported that if everything goes according to plan, he should be done haying by Friday so he will allow it to rain; it is nice to have hay not rained on. He went on to say that the cows went back out on range after the fire but that they got spoiled on the hay and want to come back every night. Upon questioning, Albert stated that the price of hay is \$180/ton and up. Straight grass hay goes for \$200/ton, which he reported to have pretty good production on. He also has approximately 17 acres of orchard grass hay, which he got about 26 ton out of this morning, which is pretty good, especially for the late season. Albert added that the County Planning Commission is moving on the Recreational Plan, WRIA 49 Plan, and the third one, which he could not recall. Other than that, the electrical inspector signed off on the wiring in the house, so that is good.

**Ivan Oberg** – Ivan informed that if anybody knows a rancher or cattleman that lost tack in the recent fires, he has a saddle that he can get out of storage and would be happy to donate if someone could use it.

**Associate Supervisor Reports:**

Bob Clark had nothing to report.

**Staff Report:**

Craig reported the Okanogan Watershed Planning Unit met on Thursday, October 1 to discuss the comments received for the SEPA review of the plan addendum and to decide on whether to recommend approval of the plan by the Initiating Governments. Initially there were several groups opposed to moving the plan forward but through conversations and revising the draft letter of recommendation, the group eventually agreed by unanimous decision to approve sending the plan forward.

This was after a public comment period that included a signed minority report that was submitted for the record during the SEPA process. The concerns then, and even now, are that several members do not wish to see every project implemented because the amount of water that would be put into a water trust for domestic use far exceeds even the highest growth projections. Then, on Monday, October 5, Craig reported that the Okanogan County Farm Bureau presented a letter to him and at least Okanogan County Planning, requesting that their name be removed from the letter of recommendation that had been approved October 1.

Currently, the Planning Unit awaits decisions from the boards of the three initiating governments. The City of Omak Council, Oroville-Tonasket Irrigation District Board, and Okanogan County Commissioners all need to approve the plan addendum before it can be sent to Ecology before the end of October. The Okanogan County Commissioners will have a hearing on Tuesday, October 13 before taking any potential action.

The District continues to provide technical assistance for fire recovery. Staff is conducting site visits to assess damages and talk with residents about their concerns and potential hazards that

may exist on or near their property. There was a public meeting Tuesday at the fairgrounds that Ben attended, on the District's behalf, to talk with affected residents about many of the same issues and to let them know they can request site visits. He also represented FSA, letting folks know what services they have available to landowners. Smartsheets has helped significantly with tracking assistance requests. There is a need to collect the total damages so a decision regarding request for supplemental budget can be determined. Craig added that he will be attending a BAER meeting this week with the Colville Confederated Tribes. Albert asked about the burned soil. Craig stated that one of the biggest concerns that is being addressed with Ecology is the need to plant some of the affected landowner's fields because all their groundcover is burnt and gone. Craig sent pictures of the recent dust storms in the Okanogan area, and Ecology agreed that there was a significant need for groundcover, though that does not necessarily mean funding will be forthcoming. Regarding the heat of the fire, Craig stated that Ed Townsend considers the Cold Springs Fire to have been one of the hottest fires he has seen. Albert Roberts commented on the concern about getting a heavy rain and how the area would be affected by runoff and debris that will come down the hills. Craig informed that the State is asking for data collection and remains noncommittal about funding needs until the next legislative session.

The WACD Area meeting is next Tuesday, October 13 from 8:30 to 12:30. Becky and Craig are planning to attend. Craig asked if anyone else would like to take part in the meeting and Albert Roberts and Ivan Oberg said they would attend.

Craig reported that he and Amy developed a letter to NRCS to request a new SNOTEL site in the Loup Loup Creek watershed. The letter was co-signed by the Colville Tribes and Washington Water Trust. All of the signing agencies have been working with irrigators and other landowners in the watershed to improve flows and habitat for Steelhead. The District will be working with NRCS to get information for evaluation of sites moving forward.

Becky reported that she is finishing up the 2021 budget process. She will be meeting with Craig on Thursday and will have the budget ready for board review in November and approval in December. She added that the District received the amendment for the Barkley Irrigation project, so there is approval to use that funding source. Becky added that she attended a webinar and a meeting regarding elections and will begin working through the elections process over the next couple of weeks, getting dates set and on paper. She concluded by informing that she has received a notice about BARS updates and webinars regarding annual financial reporting so that is on her radar as well.

Amy gave a brief update on the Barkley Irrigation project reporting that that the District had received a letter from Aaron Penrose with Trout Unlimited stating that work on the project will begin next week.

Mindy informed the Board about the City of Okanogan chipping event scheduled this month with 17 participants signed up. She added that the funding source for these events ends at the end of December so she will be looking for more funding to be able to continue the program.



Hannah expanded on the Ecology grant applications she mentioned in her staff report. The first application includes three riparian restoration projects along Chiliwist, Loup Loup, and No Name Creeks. As well as water quality monitoring of major tributaries to the Okanogan River along with water quality TA and other assistance to producers interested in pursuing Salmon Safe certification. There is also a component of K-12 education. The second application is for water quality monitoring of Palmer Lake and outreach to community members along with water quality TA and project development for landowners impacted by the Cold Springs and Palmer fires.

Kim reported that she met with Tonasket and OHA as well as Educational Service District for the area, who received a grant to do a field day within the service district so they are working out the details of how that will be accomplished in the spring. She added that things are moving forward with gardens and supplies are coming in so projects can get started.

### **Review, Approve and Sign Contracts and Conservation Plans**

**UCSRB 2020-2021 Contract** – The District was awarded \$5,000.00 from UCSRB to complete outreach and education in Okanogan County. Specifically, the District will: 1. Support a student-led outreach event with the Okanogan High School’s “Ecology of the Okanogan” elective course. 2. Conduct adult outreach along Antoine and Johnson Creeks, which Hannah will help with by starting conversations about salmon habitat recovery and restoration. 3. Attend two community events with UCSRB materials. UCSRB has proposed to roll these funds into the existing agreement and extend the deadline of the grant to June 2021. So, the current contract totals the last award of \$9,080.00, which has already been spent out, and the current award of \$5,000.00. Albert Roberts moved to approve the UCSRB 2020-2021 Contract and authorize Ivan Oberg to sign it. Jerry Asmussen seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

**Brothers Fire LLC Personal Services Contract** – Part of the EPA grant is to reduce backyard burning by creating chipping events. Staff has been working with Sun Mountain Ranch and Pine Forest HOA community members in the Methow Valley to plan a chipping event within their community. Each participant has agreed to have their woody debris near the road for the chipper to drive to. The participants have a choice of either having the chips dispersed back onto their property or put in a pile. The expectation is that the chipping event will take place in the first part of November. Jerry Asmussen moved to approve the Brother’s Fire LLC Personal Services Contract and authorize Ivan Oberg to sign it. Albert Roberts seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

**WSDA Specialty Crop Block Grant Contract** – Staff applied for a WSDA Specialty Crop Block grant titled, “Air, Soil and Pollinators: Outreach and Opportunities for Okanogan County Orchardists.” The total grant amount awarded is \$226,304.00. Grant performance period is September 30, 2020 to September 29, 2023. The grant focuses on providing services such as cost-share for orchard chipping, bee boxes, and pollinator planting for fruit growers. Staff plan to develop user friendly pollinator planting guides for upland and riparian areas and help with the Salmon-Safe certification process, as well as planning a workshop, farm tour, and attending horticulture meetings. Jerry Asmussen moved to accept the WSDA Specialty Crop Block Grant Contract and authorize Ivan Oberg to sign it. Steve Colvin seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

**Stina Booth Cost-share Contract** – The goal is to establish native, flowering pollinator plants on approximately half an acre of land on Stina Booth’s organic orchard between Twisp and Carlton. The plan will help attract and provide habitat for pollinator species, provide weed suppression and wildlife habitat. Irrigation will be installed to help establish the flowering plants. Mulch will be used to help suppress weeds and help hold moisture longer for some of the shrub species. Vegetative barriers or deer protection will be used to protect plants from deer browsing. White clover seed will be planted in the drive rows of the organic orchard. The clover will help attract pollinators to the orchard for both pollination and pest control. Stina reported that, over the years, she has seen decline in pollinators in her orchard. Therefore, there is a lot of hope that this plan will help increase those pollinator populations. The estimated project cost is \$8,370.10. Staff requested approval for a 50% cost-share reimbursement of \$4,185.05. The funds will be allocated from the Voluntary Stewardship Program. The project is expected to begin in November, with a request for cultural resources this fall and the actual planting to begin in the Spring of 2021. Jerry Asmussen asked about the location of the plantings, which appear to be on the edge of the property, expressing concern about rabbitbrush encroaching into the rangeland because he fights that all the time. Ricardo noted that and assured Jerry and the Board that he would check into it. Jerry also asked for clarification on the purchase of a mower that Ricardo had mentioned, and Ricardo stated Stina is purchasing the mower with her own funds and it is not part of the cost-share contract. Ricardo also confirmed that all the plants being used in the plan are native. Albert Roberts moved to approve the Stina Booth Cost-share Contract with the condition that Ricardo checks into the potentially invasive nature of all the plants used in the plan. Jerry Asmussen seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

**Loup Loup Creek SRFB Agreement** – The Salmon Recovery Funding Board grant is for \$71,462.00 and runs through December 31, 2022. Funds are intended to be used for two main components. The first of which includes preliminary designs for instream steelhead habitat restoration for the Lassila property of Loup Loup Creek. Lassila first approached the District in 2017 interested in restoring habitat. The District is partnering with the Colville Tribes to develop restoration designs for this property. The second component includes a reach assessment for Loup Loup Creek. The Regional Technical Team, an application scoring arm of the Salmon Recovery Funding Board, is requiring reach assessments to best inform restoration actions. The Okanogan Basin Monitoring and Evaluation Program (OBMEP), run by the Colville Tribes, collects regular habitat data for steelhead producing waters in the Okanogan. Staff will compile existing data, as well as information from other sources (DNR, USFS, Lidar data, flow, etc.) to evaluate the trends and conditions of Loup Loup Creek through time, relative to the habitat requirements for summer steelhead. The reach assessment effort will include landowner outreach and prioritization of habitat restoration actions within the creek. The collected and analyzed information will be consolidated into a reach assessment report. The products of these components will be utilized for future grant applications to continue project design and implementation for the Lassila property. The reach assessment process may identify additional properties for restoration work. Staff requested authorization for Craig to sign the agreement when it comes through. Jerry Asmussen moved to approve the Loup Loup Creek SRFB agreement and authorize Craig Nelson to sign it. Steve Colvin seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

**Albin Cost-share Amendment** – The District is preparing to implement cost-share projects on the Albin and Strong properties, which have already been presented to and approved by the Board, to finish out the NPS-Fire Ecology agreement. However, costs for the Albin project, which is on Omak Creek, have increased. First, the cost of the proposed mulch is more expensive than anticipated. Second, the landowners do not want plastic on their property so the initial proposal of plastic deer protection fencing, which could eventually be removed and reused by the District, was replaced with permanent metal fencing. The original agreement was for \$4,634.00 with 25% investment of \$1,158.00 by the landowner and Ecology funding approximately \$3,476.00. Staff is asking for an amended agreement due to the unexpected increase in project costs, which now totals an estimated \$8,760.00 with 25% investment of \$2,190.00 by the landowner and Ecology funding approximately \$6,570.00. The District will also be receiving a donation of about \$750.00 from the Colville Tribes Fisheries Program. District staff has learned a lot from the Thurlow Lake project regarding the importance of mulch and the need for protection of plantings to mitigate for potential damage caused by browsing and buck rubs. Staff added that the NPS-Fire Ecology funding ends in December of this year so this would be a good use of those resources. Staff requested authorization for Craig to sign the updated Albin cost-share agreement when it is complete. Jerry Asmussen moved to approve the amended Albin cost-share agreement and authorize Craig Nelson to it. Steve Colvin seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously with Albert Roberts abstaining because he is engaged in a contract on that property.

### **NRCS Report**

Sarah Troutman reported that the Conservation Stewardship Program will be paid out this month. She went on to report that the Okanogan NRCS office has moved to the USDA Phase 3 reopening stage. This will permit customers to enter the building by appointment only and will allow for some use of conference rooms for internal meetings. She added that she needed to connect with Craig and Celeste to discuss comfort levels with the use of break rooms and meeting rooms in the building. It is expected that NRCS will be in USDA Phase 3 for quite some time, because moving beyond that would prohibit the ability to accommodate flexible schedules due to COVID-related complications, such as childcare, as well as opportunities for employees to work from home.

Sarah informed that Stan Janowicz has taken a new position as the Colville area conservationist, stating that next Friday is expected to be his last official day in the Okanogan office. He will be sorely missed.

NRCS is currently taking EQIP signups with a deadline of November 20. Regarding fire recovery assistance, the State has requested 5 million dollars. NRCS partners and producers met last week and, while no allocation has been made yet, it sounded hopeful. They are taking fire recovery applications just like any other applications. There is a small potential for on-the-ground work in critical areas that might need planting this year. However, there is some concern that it may be too dry and too late to get plants in the ground this fall. Additionally, because the Cold Springs fire is largely on CCT reservation lands, cultural resources review must take place before any on-the-ground practices can be implemented. Sarah stated that if something cannot be in place by October 15, it will likely be put off because there are too many unknowns. NRCS



expects a full announcement of fire recovery funding by the end of the week. Sarah concluded by asking that landowners and producers affected by the fires be directed to call the NRCS office in order to potentially provide them with opportunities such as prescribed or deferred grazing, which would get them a little money in their pockets for immediate needs.

### **Partner Reports**

There were no partners in attendance.

### **Public Comment:**

There was no public comment.

### **Old Business:**

**Review Executive Director Actions Taken Under Resolution 2020-02** – Craig requested and received a \$10,000 supplemental funds request from the Washington State Conservation Commission to help offset the costs of providing technical assistance to residents affected by recent wildfires. He added that this funding has helped the District provide fire recovery assistance.

**WACD Resolution** – NRCS and other trainings often involve significant amounts of “classroom” time that could be done remotely using existing, and ever-improving, webinar technology platforms. This Resolution calls on WACD and NACD to work with state conservation agencies such as WSCC and NRCS to change training programs to reduce in-person classroom time to save costs and make more efficient use of trainee’s time. Albert Roberts moved to approve presentation of the WACD Resolution on Use of Technology for Training at the upcoming area meeting. Jerry Asmussen seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Ivan brought up the topic of potential changes to elections procedures. Craig brought up several points that would need to be addressed if a resolution were to be presented, such as term limits, costs, optional involvement, and a possible change in the number of supervisors to be elected. There are a lot of concerns regarding the potential for changes in district elections procedures. Deciding where the District would go with a resolution at this time would be difficult. The board chose to review what resolutions on this topic may come from other districts and respond to those as they deem appropriate.

**Other** – There was no other old business.

### **New Business:**

**Resolution 2020-04 Emergency Declaration and Need for Expedited Response** – The adoption of this resolution allows for the District to request emergency funding and assistance for affected residents. Jerry Asmussen moved to approve Resolution 2020-04 Emergency Declaration and Need for Expedited Response. Albert Roberts seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Ivan Oberg adjourned the meeting at 7:19 PM.

### Summary of Motions

Jerry Asmussen moved to approve the agenda as amended. Steve Colvin seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Albert Roberts moved to approve the September 1, 2020 board meeting minutes as presented. Steve Colvin seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Albert Roberts moved to approve Treasurer's Report #809. Steve Colvin seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Albert Roberts moved to approve the UCSRB 2020-2021 Contract and authorize Ivan Oberg to sign it. Jerry Asmussen seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Jerry Asmussen moved to approve the Brother's Fire LLC Personal Services Contract and authorize Ivan Oberg to sign it. Albert Roberts seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Jerry Asmussen moved to accept the WSDA Specialty Crop Block Grant Contract and authorize Ivan Oberg to sign it. Steve Colvin seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Albert Roberts moved to approve the Stina Booth Cost-share Contract with the condition that Ricardo checks into the potentially invasive nature of all the plants used in the plan. Jerry Asmussen seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Jerry Asmussen moved to approve the Loup Loup Creek SRFB agreement and authorize Craig Nelson to sign it. Steve Colvin seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.


Jerry Asmussen moved to approve the amended Albin cost-share agreement and authorize Craig Nelson to it. Steve Colvin seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously with Albert Roberts abstaining because he is engaged in a contract on that property.

Albert Roberts moved to approve presentation of the WACD Resolution on Use of Technology for Training at the upcoming area meeting. Jerry Asmussen seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Jerry Asmussen moved to approve Resolution 2020-04 Emergency Declaration and Need for Expedited Response. Albert Roberts seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

  
Ivan Oberg  
Chair

Date

  
Becky Drenner  
Finance Director

Date