



Okanogan Conservation District

1251 S. Second Ave, Room 102

Okanogan, WA 98840

TO: The Record
SUBJECT: September 6, 2022; Board of Supervisors Meeting
LOCATION: Okanogan Conservation District Office, Okanogan, WA
FROM: Cassandra Lange, Administrative Assistant

PRESENT:

Ivan Oberg, District Chair

Jerry Asmussen, Vice Chair

Albert Roberts, District Auditor

Steve Colvin, Member

Lorah Super, Member

Gerri Oberg, Associate Supervisor

Craig Nelson, Executive Director

Becky Drenner, Finance Director

Cassandra Lange, Administrative Assistant

Chevelle Yeckel, Water Quality & Riparian Planner

Kim Kogler, Education Specialist

Dylan Streeter, Conservation Planner

Eli Loftis, Wildfire & Community Resilience Lead

Emmy Engle, Communication & Outreach Specialist

Celeste Acord, FSA

Meeting Call to Order: Ivan Oberg called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM. Ivan completed a roll call of Supervisors, Associate Supervisors, staff, partners, and the public.

Public Comment:

There was no public comment.

Agenda Approval: Craig asked to add Wildfire Ready Neighbors Relaunch and the October 2022 Riverside Chipping Grant to the Review, Approve and Sign Contracts and Conservation Plans. Jerry Asmussen moved to approve the agenda as amended. Lorah Super seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Minutes: Jerry Asmussen moved to approve the August 2, 2022 board meeting minutes as amended. Albert Roberts seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Treasurer's Report #832, which covers the checking account activity from August 3, 2022 to September 6, 2022, inclusive was presented for the Board's approval, the following checks/payroll direct withdrawals/electronic payments were approved for payment:

Checks – numbers 11994 - 12009 totaling \$25,226.31.

Two payroll direct withdrawals – numbers ACH4302 – ACH4321 - totaling \$32,048.34.

Electronic payments – numbers EFT3073 – EFT3086 totaling \$24,192.87.

Deposits totaling \$313,540.86 were made, and Transfer from checking to savings of \$130,000.

Albert Roberts moved to approve Treasurer's Report #832. Jerry Asmussen seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Supervisor Reports:

Albert Roberts – Albert reported that there were three fires in the area, but the firefighters were quick to come, there was no wind, and there was a new helicopter that helped get the fires out quickly. Albert has a meeting coming up with WACD about the WA Department of Ecology proposed stock water policy change later in the week. Albert added that he will be finishing up second cutting of hay within the week.

Ivan Oberg – Ivan reported that he got not quite three quarters of an inch of rain.

Jerry Asmussen – Jerry reported that rain hit dead center at his ranch, and that has caused flooding and sediment movement from the Walker Creek Fire in Bonaparte Creek. Jerry added that up high in the hills there has been a great grasshopper hatch, upper elevations are drying out, and he observed a big smoke plume in the Upper Cascades today.

Steve Colvin – Steve reported that harvest is going to be two or three weeks late due to the late spring, and farmers are hanging on and hoping for no frost until November.

Lorah Super – Lorah reported rain all around her, but it skipped by her house. She added that last year's fires in the Methow Valley didn't seem to cause floods or sediment movement. Lorah stated her garlic ripened too quickly, grapes are on time, apples are late, and she had a sad onion crop. Lorah apologized for being gone most of the summer and informed the board she is going to be leaving the country from the second week in October thru November. Lorah continued by informing the board that the NCW Forest Health Collaborative is still working through some re-organization work but is hopeful the group can get back to the level of success they had early in the program. Lorah stated she received an email inviting her to participate on the WACD Natural Resource Policy Committee and she semi committed to attending the Wenatchee meeting.

Associate Supervisor Reports:

No Associate Supervisors were present.

Staff Reports:

Craig reported that the Water Bank grant application with the Department of Ecology is currently in the 30-day public review and comment period, starting August 12. Following that, there is an unclear length of review period for Ecology to evaluate comments and make a final decision. In the interim the district did some outreach including the newsletter, and that generated a phone call within just a day or two of its release from an irrigator who is interested in selling their water right to the bank and leasing it back for the near term to ensure their rights aren't relinquished. Craig stated he will be giving presentations in early to mid-September on the topic at a couple of conferences involving water resource management professionals.

Craig went on to say that the district will be doing interviews for the Grants and Contracts Director next week. He reported that Jordana Ellis filled the vacant Irrigated Ag Planner and Cassandra Lange was hired for the Administrative Assistant position. Craig commented that the Okanogan County Fair is this week and passed around a signup sheet for board members for fair shifts. Lastly, Craig stated that it is time to start considering resolutions for WACD. He will be working on one regarding extending the water bank grant program beyond June 30, 2023 and

modifying or lifting the \$2 million per entity cap. He would also like to submit a resolution regarding raising WSCC cost-share maximum rates on public lands.

Becky reported a very busy month. She has been training Cassandra on all administrative assistant tasks. She reported receiving all the cost share reimbursements from Fire Recovery 2022 and being able to move \$130,000 back to savings. She is looking forward to focusing on next year's budget, and the addition of the Grants and Contracts Director.

Eli reported that he wanted to thank Dylan for catching a GIS glitch, Emmy for utilizing COCO AIM funds for the banners and expanding social media and redesigning the website, and Chevelle and Emmy for going with him to get the Bonaparte contract signed. He also thanked Will Knowlton for his help on various DNR tasks. Eli informed the board that he and several district staff and partners are working to submit a large grant application for the Community Wildfire Defense Grant program. This grant, if approved, would fund home risk assessments, community risk assessments, fuels reduction work at homesites, communities, and possibly rights-of-way, and education about fire preparedness throughout Okanogan County. We are proposing to include the purchase of an excavator with a masticating head and a woodchipper to be used by CD staff to directly implement fuels reduction projects. The grant application budget hasn't been started but could be up to \$10 million to be spent over a 5-year period.

Review, Approve and Sign Contracts and Conservation Plans

CREP Re-enrollment Conservation and O&M Plan for Rodney Lentz– Chevelle informed that Rodney Lentz's CREP project consists of a Riparian Forest Buffer installed in 2008 along the Methow River. The contract period for this project will be ending on September 30th, 2022. Rodney is re-enrolling into another contract term for his CREP Riparian Forest Buffer. The buffer has been determined by the Okanogan Conservation District to be functioning as originally designed, including consideration to the 2009 Amendment to Lentz Conservation Plan of Operation that reduces density requirements. The Okanogan CD has developed a Conservation Plan that denotes mid-contract requirements, and an Operations and Maintenance Plan that guides the cooperators on how to maintain the buffer for its additional contract life. This includes information and requirements of three practices including Riparian Forest Buffer, Herbaceous Weed Control, and Tree/Shrub Establishment. Lorah Super moved to approve the CREP Re-enrollment Conservation and O&M Plan for Rodney Lentz and authorize Ivan to sign them. Steve Colvin seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

VSP Funding for Witte & Walker Fencing – Chevelle informed that Anna Casey Witte and Joseph Walker raise sheep on approximately 25 acres of land and graze sheep on two pastures near the Twisp River. In between the eastern and western pastures is a riparian area with an ephemeral wetland. Cooperators are interested in excluding sheep from the riparian area to allow regeneration of native vegetation. Cooperators recently installed a 350' section of woven wire fence and are seeking VSP funding to install the remaining 1,750' of woven wire fence. The district has considered a 2-phase approach for this project due to timing constraints. Phase 1 would include the fencing practice listed above. Phase 2 would including a supplemental riparian planting with micro irrigation practices to integrate plant diversity and would be implemented during the 23-25 VSP Fiscal Year. With VSP Funding the District would be developing a 75/25 cost-share contract with the cooperators that would fund sheep exclusion fence from the riparian

area. Cooperators will install the remainder of fence but will hire a contractor if needed. Lorah Super moved to approve the VSP Funding for Witte & Walker Fencing to fund a new fence and authorize Ivan or Craig to sign the cost-share contract. Steve Colvin seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Wildfire Ready Neighbors Relaunch- Eli informed that the district is working collaboratively with DNR to relaunch the Wildfire Ready Neighbor (WRN) program in the county, beginning September 8th. The district worked with DNR to run a pilot of WRN in April 2021, and the full program is now in operation and has been launched in several other eastside counties this year. An agreement between the district and DNR to facilitate home risk inspections is in process and will last till June 30th 2023. After which, DNR hopes to enter into an agreement that will last for several years. Jerry Asmussen moved to approve the Wildfire Ready Neighbor relaunch and authorize Craig Nelson to sign the contract when it is available. Albert Roberts seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

October 2022 Riverside Chipping Contract- Eli informed the board that the district and the Town of Riverside are working cooperatively to provide chipping services to residents to aid in woody fuel reductions this October. The district is proposing to enter into a MOA to facilitate this work and any other future chipping events, up until December 31st 2028, and a supplemental statement of work (SSOW) to authorize the October 2022 chipping event, which is financed with funds from the Department of Ecology to reduce emissions within the Okanogan River Airshed. Albert Roberts moved to approve the MOA and authorized Craig Nelson to sign the MOA and any subsequent amendments, and that Craig be authorized to sign the SSOW and all subsequent SSOWs during the life of the MOA. Lorah Super seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

NRCS Report

Celeste Acord reported that this month of August has been focused on CRP deadlines. NRCS is currently interviewing for the Resource Conservationist position in Wenatchee and recently forwarded a selection for the Resource Conservationist position in Waterville. Celeste went on to say that Chris Wright's last day with the North Central team NRCS was August 26, but Chris is physically housed in Wenatchee for a while longer but will be moving to Yakima for his new position.

Partner Reports

There were no partners present.

Old Business:

Water Bank Update – Craig reported that he's still waiting to hear back from Ecology about funding, which could take quite a while as there could be a 60-day internal review. The district was the second application they received. The commission gave the district about \$35,000 in water bank funds this year. Ecology has a February 1 deadline for new applications under their current appropriation. Lorah stated how the Department of Ecology has a lack of staff and lack of hiring, and that is part of the issue getting our grant application reviewed. There does seem to be interest in getting the Ecology grant program extended, and Craig and Lorah hope to get feedback from others at their coming training. Craig talked about leasing back water rights,

because once they are in the state water trust they cannot be relinquished, which is a very powerful selling point as the water right remains with the land.

New Business:

WACD Resolutions

Craig reported that he is proposing WACD resolutions to ask the Washington State Conservation Commission to change cost share rates for projects on public lands. Craig went on to give the example that if a rancher has a range permit on public lands and would like to enter a cost share with the district to get a new water trough system installed, the landowner would be responsible for 50% of the cost, but if it was on privately owned land the cost share would be 75%. Craig reported that he would be presenting another resolution to support extending the Ecology Water Bank Program funding and lifting the two million per applicant entity cap. Craig will draft these proposed resolutions for their consideration at next month's meeting. Albert suggested a resolution regarding the proposed Ecology stock water policy change.

WACD Area Annual Meetings attendance –

Craig reported that the WACD Area Meeting will be held in Waterville in October and the Annual Meeting is going to be held in Wenatchee starting November 28, and asked board members if they planned on attending. Becky Drenner, Steve Colvin, and Albert Roberts stated they are going to the Area Meeting and Annual Meeting. The board also directed Craig to bring another employee to both meetings to help them understand policy level discussions.

Other –

Jerry Asmussen noted that he received a notice from the Washington State Conservation Commission stating that his appointment term to the district board ends next spring. He informed everyone that he is interested in being re-appointed to the Okanogan Conservation District board and will file accordingly. Craig noted that he received that notification as well as a notification that Ivan's elected term expires next spring as well.

The board entered Executive Session for a personnel evaluation at 7:15 for 15 minutes. At 7:30 PM the board returned to public session. Jerry Asmussen moved to approve Eli Loftis' 6-month evaluation, change his employment status from probationary to regular, and increase his wage by one step to Range 49, Step E effective September 1, 2022. Albert Roberts seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Ivan Oberg adjourned the meeting at 7:32 PM.

Summary of Motions

Jerry Asmussen moved to approve the agenda as amended. Lorah Super seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Jerry Asmussen moved to approve the August 2, 2022 board meeting minutes as amended. Albert Roberts seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Albert Roberts moved to approve Treasurer’s Report #832. Jerry Asmussen seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Lorah Super moved to approve the CREP Re-enrollment Conservation and O&M Plan for Rodney Lentz and authorize staff to implement it. Steve Colvin seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Lorah Super moved to approve the VSP Funding for Witte & Walker Fencing to fund a new fence and authorize staff to implement it. Steve Colvin seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Jerry Asmussen moved to approve the Wildfire Ready Neighbor Relaunch and authorize Craig Nelson to sign the contract when it is available. Albert Roberts seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Albert Roberts moved to approve the October 2022 Riverside Chipping Contract MOA and authorized Craig Nelson to sign the MOA and any subsequent amendments, and that Craig be authorized to sign the SSOW and all subsequent SSOWs during the life of the MOA. Lorah Super seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Jerry Asmussen moved to approve Eli Loftis’ 6-month evaluation, change his employment status from probationary to regular, and increase his wage by one step. Albert Roberts seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

 10/4/22

Ivan Oberg
Chair

Date

 10/4/22

Becky Drenner
Finance Director

Date