



Okanogon Conservation District

1251 S. Second Ave, Room 102

Okanogon, WA 98840

TO: The Record
SUBJECT: January 2, 2025; Board of Supervisors Meeting
LOCATION: Okanogon Conservation District Office, Okanogon, WA and Remotely via Microsoft Teams and Teleconference
FROM: Natalie Torres, Administrative Assistant

PRESENT:

| | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Lorah Super, Chair | Eli Loftis, Wildfire Community & Resiliency Lead |
| Jerry Asmussen, Vice Chair | Emmy Engle, Communication & Outreach Lead |
| Steve Colvin, Supervisor | Brant Rosenthal Smith, Science Data & Mon. Coord. |
| Phillip Dart, Supervisor | Chevelle Yeckel, Water Quality & Riparian Lead |
| Randy Kelley, Associate Supervisor | Sarah Troutman, NRCS |
| Craig Nelson, Executive Director | Jack Owen, Irrigated Ag. Natural Resource Tech |
| Becky Drenner, Finance Director | Tanya Margerison, Finance Assistant |
| Jordana Ellis, Irrigation Lead | Kim Kogler, Grants & Contracts Director |

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

Public Comment: There was no public comment.

Agenda Approval: Phil Dart moved to approve the agenda as amended. Jerry Asmussen seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Minutes: Phil Dart moved to approve the December 5, 2024 board meeting minutes as amended. Steve Colvin seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

Treasurer’s Report #860, which covers the checking account activity from December 6, 2024, to January 2, 2024, inclusive, was presented for the Board’s approval. The following checks/payroll/direct withdrawals/electronic payments were approved for payment:
Two direct deposit payrolls, transaction numbers ACH623-ACH636 totaling \$24,678.87 and ACH652 – ACH666 totaling \$28,605.08. One ACH direct deposit totaling \$1534.28 for Dylan’s vacation payout.

Checks – numbers 12616 – 12630 totaling \$156,048.34.

Electronic payments – totaling \$167,496.16.

Deposits totaling \$446,725.66 were made.

Steve Colvin moved to approve Treasurer’s Report #860. Phil Dart seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

Becky presented an amended Treasurer's Report #859 because of an error in fund balances. Phil Dart moved to approve Treasurer's Report #859 as amended. Jerry Asmussen seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

Supervisor Reports:

Phillip Dart – Phil shared that his place has a lot of mud, even more than the spring. He reported snow on his higher elevation property.

Steve Colvin – Steve reported lots of moisture around his property, including that mosquito creek is still running in December. He explained that it was nice to have warm weather for 11 new lambs as they're still eating grass. There is no snow, and the ground has not frozen.

Jerry Asmussen – Jerry mentioned that he is feeding cattle and there are a lot of deer on the lower ranges. There is mud on the lower elevations and snow on the upper elevations.

Lorah Super – Lorah shared that she was asked and accepted to co-chairing the forest health collaborative. They have a meeting in person in Wenatchee next Thursday to go over changes in protocol. She stated most precipitation in the Methow has been snow, though it's warm enough that it is compacting. French Creek area is not frozen.

Associate Supervisor Reports:

There were no associate supervisors present.

Staff Reports:

Craig reported that he took time off. This month, the district experienced a few staffing changes. Tanya was hired as the new finance assistant, and we offered the position to the chosen forest health planner who declined the position. We will offer the position tomorrow to a new candidate. Jack started work on January 2nd as the new irrigated agriculture technician. WACD legislative days is on Wednesday February 5th.

Becky reported that Tanya joined us and has a lot of years in finance and HR. She's been a help from day one. Becky stated her appreciation for Tanya and that she is working with us. Becky is spending time learning about Springbrook year end process.

Emmy shared that we are doing some Community Engagement Plan activities. We are sponsoring halftime basketball shows, the first of which will happen on January 4th. We will also attend basketball games in Tonasket, Lake Roosevelt, and Brewster.

NRCS Report

Sarah Troutman – Sarah shared that NRCS is currently in the midst of EQIP planning and working to rank all applications. They've introduced new "Act Now Pools," which allow eligible applicants to move directly into contracting once ranked. The local work group's forestry pool, as well as the high and low tunnel pools, are among the Act Now Pools. However, they are facing challenges in getting applicants eligible in time. NRCS is also accepting CSP applications through January 17th, and so far, they've received 24 applications. The local work group

meeting is tentatively scheduled for the evening of April 17th in Chelan. In addition, NRCS is working to process task orders and encouraged districts with ideas or interest in entering into task orders to reach out to Sarah. They are also experiencing staffing changes, including the addition of two new employees, and are currently interviewing for a new forester. Lastly, please note that the NRCS office will be closed on January 9th for the funeral of late President Jimmy Carter.

Partner Reports

There were no partners present.

Review, Approve and Sign Contracts and Conservation Plans:

Washington Conservation Society Funds for the 2025 North Central Regional Envirothon –

Kim shared that the Okanogan Conservation District will host the 2025 North Central Regional Envirothon on April 17th at Filaree Farms in Okanogan. This event is a natural resource quiz bowl open to high school students from Chelan, Douglas, Okanogan, Grant, and Stevens Counties. Participants will compete in five subject areas: Soils and Land Use, Aquatic Ecology, Forestry, Wildlife, and a rotating current environmental issue, which this year is "Roots and Resiliency: Fostering Forest Stewardship in a Canopy of Change." The Washington Conservation Society has generously contributed \$500 to support the regional competition, which will be used for transportation, snacks, set-up costs, trophies, t-shirts, and other supplies.

Title III 2025 Interlocal Agreement– Eli shared that Okanogan County has awarded the Okanogan Conservation District \$70,000 in Title III funds to support wildfire resiliency projects and the district's efforts with the Firewise® USA program. The funds will be used to conduct 40 home risk assessments, certify at least one new Firewise community, and finance five chipping events scheduled for the fall of 2025. Phil Dart moved to approve the Title III 2025 Interlocal Agreement and authorize Lorah Super to sign the interlocal agreement with Okanogan County. Jerry Asmussen seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

Pine Forest Forest Health Project Updated/Amendment – Okanogan CD staff have been assisting the Pine Forest POA in the Methow Valley to increase wildfire resiliency and improve forest health. The board previously authorized staff at the September 2024 board meeting to provide cost-share assistance for a joint project intended to resolve a root rot pocket and reduce ladder fuels in a nearby aspen stand. Since that time, however, the scale of root rot pocket has been revealed to be far larger than initially identified, crossing from the POA's ownership in adjoining private parcels. Staff are currently working to address the issue via a District Implemented Project (DIP) rather than costs-share. The DIP is still in the planning stages. The aspen stand ladder fuels treatment, however, is ready for implementation as a cost-share with the POA, with an updated budget. The ladder fuel project involves the removal of ten conifers that are growing in amongst or adjacent to the aspen stand on 1.8-acre parcel. Their removal will reduce the risk of running crown fire and reduce competition for the aspen. The district is proposing to assist the Pine Forest POA through a 75-25% cost-share, with the district to contribute 75% of projected cost not to exceed \$8,838.98. This project would be funded utilize forest health funds from WSCC. Phil Dart moved to approve the Pine Forest Forest Health Project and authorize Lorah Super or Craig Nelson to sign the finalized agreement. Steve Colvin seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

Interlocal Agreement between Trout Unlimited & Okanogan CD– Chevelle shared that the Interlocal Agreement (ILA) will foster collaboration between Okanogan Conservation District (CD) and Trout Unlimited (TU) on various initiatives, including education and outreach, irrigation efficiencies, Coordinated Resource Management, technical assistance, drought planning, and the implementation of Best Management Practices. The agreement facilitates the pass-through of grant funds from TU to Okanogan CD under TU’s National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant for habitat restoration and water quality improvements with willing landowners in the Methow and Okanogan Basins. Additionally, it allows funds to pass from Okanogan CD to TU as part of a Department of Ecology grant for Local Drought Planning Preparedness, where TU will assist with public meetings and produce outreach materials. Both organizations will meet regularly to coordinate efforts. Jerry Assmussen moved to approve the Interlocal Agreement between Trout Unlimited and Okanogan CD once finalized by both parties and authorize Lorah Super or Craig Nelson to sign the contract. Phil Dart seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

Old Business:

Public Comment – There was no public comment.

Water Bank Update –Jordana provided updates on the acquisitions and planning process. We have not received word from Ecology on timeline for approval of justification for purchase price of the first acquisition. We were told that the process is happening, but the holidays has hobbled the progress. Title company and lawyer hunt is still ongoing. The request for qualifications is in review status and we are building a list of firms. The kickoff meeting to start the valuation process or the second acquisition took place just before the holidays. That meeting was helpful in discussing the inputs for the valuation and how those differ from the first valuation process.

Jordana reported that the planning team didn't meet this month. She heard that Aspect is working on some of the identified work products and is looking forward to being able to see and share those soon.

Jordana is in conversation with Ecology about the Pine Creek water right and why it is not posted for public comment.

5-Year Plan – Emmy shared that at the next session, district staff will each present next steps for programs they lead. The group will use those presentations to start narrowing the focus of the plan.

Conservation Celebration – Randy announced that he has reached out to Smallwoods for a cost estimate and has left a message with World Cuisine for the same. He’s also been brainstorming potential keynote speakers. Emmy asked the group to consider their food preferences for the event. The board showed interest in the food options, with a preference for supporting Smallwoods. The Conservation Celebration is scheduled for May 7th, from 4:00 to 8:00 PM, with tickets priced at \$30 each. Starting at the end of January and running through March, we will begin reviewing the guest list, nominations, and finalizing keynote speakers. The event

theme will focus on historic conservation efforts and the people who have contributed to conservation.

New Business:

Public Comment – There was no public comment.

Becky Vacation Hours Carryover – Craig presented that district policy states employees may not carryover more than 240 hours of vacation leave from one calendar year to the next without board authorization. The board may authorize excess hours above 240 to be rolled over to the next year for any reason, but the policy specifically states workload as one example. Becky carried an immense workload this year, particularly the second half of the year. Because of that, she was unable to use accrued leave and bring her vacation hours down to, or below the 240-hour maximum carryover. Craig requested that on Becky's behalf that the board authorize up to 60 hours of additional vacation leave (300 maximum) from 2024 to 2025. Phil Dart moved to authorize a carryover of up to 60 hours of accrued vacation leave from 2024 to 2025 for Becky Drenner. Jerry Assmussen seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

Employee Wellness Policy – Craig shared that the directors believe supporting employee wellness is important and plan to conduct wellness activities. These activities may include providing resources to improve in-office health equipment and funding staff-related wellness initiatives. Phil Dart moved to approve policy 2.27 Employee Wellness. Steve Colvin seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

Executive Session – Personnel Evaluations per RCW 42.30.110 (g) – Lorah called the executive session to order at 6:58 PM. At 7:50 PM, the board returned to public session. Jerry Assmussen moved to approve the following personnel evaluations as presented and to approve the following wage/status to take effect January 1st, 2025.

- Craig Nelson, salary range 80, step D, exempt status, \$119,496 per year
- Natalie Torres, salary range 57, step B, regular, non-exempt status, \$30.86 per hour
- Terri Williams, salary range 60, step B, regular, non-exempt status, \$32.43 per hour

Phil Dart seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

Lorah Super adjourned the meeting at 7:51 PM

Summary of Motions

Phil Dart moved to approve the agenda as amended. Jerry Assmussen seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

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Phil Dart seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.



Jerry Assmussen Date
Vice Chair 2-6-25



Natalie Torres Date
Administrative Assistant 2-16-2025