



Okanogan Conservation District

1251 S. Second Ave, Room 102

Okanogan, WA 98840

TO: The Record
SUBJECT: June 6, 2024; Board of Supervisors Meeting
LOCATION: Okanogan Conservation District Office, Okanogan, WA and
Remotely via Microsoft Teams and Teleconference
FROM: Craig T. Nelson, Executive Director

PRESENT:

Jerry Asmussen, Vice Chair
Phillip Dart, Supervisor
Edd Townsend, Supervisor
Dale Swedberg, Associate Supervisor
Craig Nelson, Executive Director
Becky Drenner, Finance Director
Kim Kogler, Grants & Contracts Director
Jordana Ellis, Irrigation Planner
Eli Loftis, Wildfire & Resiliency Lead

Dylan Streeter, Wildfire & Resiliency Planner
Emmy Engle, Communication & Outreach Specialist
Taylor George, VSP Coordinator
Brant Rosenthal Smith, Science Data & Mon. Coord.
Aaron Wold, Range Program Lead
Chevelle Yeckel, Riparian & Water Quality Planner
Rosalie Powell, Communication & Technician Fellow
Sarah Troutman, NRCS
Ivan Oberg, Public

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

Public Comment: There was no public comment.

Agenda Approval: Phillip Dart moved to approve the agenda as amended. Edd Townsend seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Minutes: Edd Townsend moved to approve the May 2, 2024 board meeting minutes as presented. Phil Dart seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Treasurer's Report #853, which covers the checking account activity from May 3, 2024, to June 6, 2024, inclusive, was presented for the Board's approval. The following checks/payroll/direct withdrawals/electronic payments were approved for payment:
Checks – numbers 12429 – 12451 totaling \$126,199.36.
Two payroll direct withdrawals – numbers ACH4806 – ACH4831 totaling \$50,446.43.
Electronic payments – numbers EFT3408 – EFT3426 totaling \$53,506.67.
A transfer of \$100,000.00 was made to Savings. Deposits totaling \$331,817.09 were made.
Phil Dart moved to approve Treasurer's Report #853 as presented. Edd Townsend seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Supervisor Reports:

Edd Townsend – Edd reported that he just returned from Wenatchee where he attended a virtual fence/carbon credit conference. He said Allisa Carlson from the Conservation Commission spoke at the conference about opportunities about building partnerships and cooperative programs between agencies to encourage virtual fence concepts especially in areas with wildlife migration issues.

Otherwise, the grass is growing, and it's been a good May for field crops.

Phil Dart – Phil reported that May was one of the coldest he's ever experienced in his area. His heating bill was one of the most expensive he has ever had. But the weather has finally changed and he has even finally started to hay.

Jerry Asmussen – Jerry reported lots of grasses are starting to mature down low, but temps are still getting down to freezing in some pockets.

Associate Supervisor Reports:

Dale Swedberg – Dale reported that he hasn't been able to get down to the farm in Ellensburg, so he's been around home a lot. He has initiated Okanogan Highlands Prescribed Burn Association. He is looking forward to having a formal meeting organized in the near future. Let Dale know if you want the e-mail address for the association.

Ivan Oberg – Ivan reported that in the last month he has received about an inch of rain at his home. He also noticed that larch trees appear to have been frosted.

Staff Reports:

Craig reported that the district office will be closed next week starting Monday, June 10 through Wednesday, June 12 for all staff to attend the WADE (Washington Association of District Employees) Annual Training. Staff will be in Leavenworth for the training and each person will have courses that are closely tied to their particular position and duties. This is an annual training that employees have been attending for more than 26 years. The office will open for normal operations on Thursday, June 13.

Craig went on to report that he and Taylor George have been working diligently to make the DDT Soil Remediation project 'fit' within the side boards given by the board last fall when the project was taken on by the district. These side boards included actually remediating soil, which we learned we wouldn't be doing pretty quickly. But we charged forward in an attempt to find other solutions that may offset this problem. The next roadblock we encountered was the method of soil application desired by the two landowners (both landowners were adamant about how they would apply new soil on their farmland and it wasn't in the method our board directed and we relayed to the landowners). The final issue was permits, which included cultural resources due to ground disturbance from compaction caused by many dump trucks and excavation at two of the three sites impacted, and SEPA permits for all three sites. Craig explained to the board that staff doesn't have the capacity due to other workload to work through all of these issues and keep the project as minimally low-key to public scrutiny as possible (still staying compliant within public disclosure laws) while implementing other

contracted workload that is more closely aligned with our Annual Work Plan. Therefore, Craig requested board authorization to cancel our contract with the Conservation Commission and return unspent funds. Phil Dart moved to authorize Craig to cancel the DDT Soil Remediation grant contract. Edd Townsend seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

Craig noted that there had been some staff changes since the last board meeting. Rosalie Powell, our Communications and Technician Fellow, started this week, and the staff is very excited to have her on board with us. Rosalie Powell introduced herself to the board. Finally, Craig reported that he will be taking some vacation the last two weeks of June, so he won't be around the office much, if at all. During his absence, Kim Kogler will be the Acting Executive Director.

Emmy said she is working on logo wear orders for board and staff. We are hoping to get t-shirts and dressier shirts ordered soon.

Eli reported that Ecology and EPA are not quite as excited about non-attainment for air quality in Okanogan County at this time. Looking like some time in 2025 before we may be in non-attainment for PM 2.5. The good news is our amount of PM 2.5 has been dropping slightly according to the most recent data. Hope is to get the number below 9.0 ppb to get us below the new standard.

Chevelle reported that she has been serving as the elected Vice-President of WADE for the past year. WADE's primary purpose is to support and provide training for CD employees in Washington State. The primary event is the annual WADE training conference in Leavenworth. Next week, the current WADE President, Cindy Pierce, will be stepping down from her position and with the support of the remainder of the WADE board and her direct supervisor Chevelle will be stepping up to the role of WADE President to fill the remainder of Cindy's term for a year.

Chevelle reported that Ecology is requesting site visits on July 25 and 26 with landowners who have received funding for projects.

The board members congratulated Chevelle on her ascension to WADE President.

Becky reminded the board of Natalie Torres' hiring start date of June 10 (next Monday). She said she is continuing to work through helping to get Springbrook set up with a 'go live' date of July 1. It has been a very busy May with getting the Annual Financial Report completed, completing vouchers, and completing other necessary financial and administrative duties.

NRCS Report

Sarah reported on updates to the IRA special funding pools. No new pools were requested, but there were some slight changes to existing pools we previously received funding to implement. These were captured in her written report. She reported that they did get their packets put forth for Local Work Group. In the future they will only allow one pool at the local level instead of two. Two NRCS Area Specialists will be based in Okanogan. They include the Central Area Forester and Central Area Range Specialist. This will be very helpful to future technical and workload assistance needs.

Intern, Jeff Allred is in Okanogan. If Okanogan CD staff have a cool project let him know and maybe he can tag along. Might be another person added to Waterville office.

Partner Reports

There were no partners present.

Review, Approve and Sign Contracts and Conservation Plans:

Larson Road Culvert Replacement Tributary Agreement – Brant reported the Larsen Road Culvert Removal Project (2024-02 W) is a collaborative project, funded by the Habitat Conservation Plan Tributary Funds, between the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation and the Okanogan Conservation District. The project aims to address a partial obstruction for fish passage on Loup Loup Creek by replacing an undersized culvert with single lane bridge. The Okanogan Conservation District will contract this work for \$320,000. The Okanogan Conservation District has been awarded \$21,266 for advertisement, staff time, site visits, and monitoring of the project. The total budget of the project is \$353,766 of which \$12,500 will be contributed match from the Tribes. Project aims to be completed by November 2024. Staff recommends the board approve the sponsor agreement with the Tributary Committee and authorize Lorah Super or Craig Nelson to sign it. Phil Dart moved to approve the contract and authorize Craig Nelson to sign it. Edd Townsend seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

WSCC Riparian Grant Program Funding Award – Chevelle reported that she and several other employees combined forces and applied for multiple projects in this program. Five different applications were funded for a total amount of \$738,785. The projects include \$95,000 for outreach in the Palmer Lake Watershed, \$525,000 for general technical assistance to develop projects, \$20,000 for a 4-acre critical area planting implemented by the CD, \$58,000 for maintenance on previously implemented riparian projects, and \$40,785 for technical assistance and cost-share for the Perrault well relocation project on Salmon Creek. Staff recommends the board authorize the submittal of an addendum for the Riparian Grant Program funding so that staff can begin work on the projects. Phil Dart moved to approve the Riparian Grant Program addendum. Edd Townsend seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

Perrault Well Relocation RGP Cost-Share Project – Taylor reported the proposed well relocation project will take place at 324 Salmon Creek Rd, in Okanogan. Salmon Creek Watershed is the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation's highest priority watershed for anadromous fish recovery. Okanogan CD will implement a 3-acre critical area planting, a water well, and a well decommissioning. The project is funded by a Riparian Grant Program grant from the Washington State Conservation Commission with \$26,000 available for cost-share. Staff is requesting the board move to authorize Craig Nelson or Lorah Super to sign the Perrault Well Relocation Cost Share Contract. Phil Dart moved to approve the Perrault Well Relocation Cost-Share contract and have Craig or Lorah sign it. Edd Townsend seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

WSCC Sustainable Farms and Fields 2yr. TA Funding – Aaron reported the WSCC has awarded Okanogan CD \$13,725 in Sustainable Farms and Fields funding for use in the current biennium, ending June 2025. This funding is intended to further develop practices identified as

climate-smart during CRM meetings. Staff recommends the board authorize staff to submit an addendum for the Sustainable Farms and Fields 2 yr. funding and to begin utilizing the funds. Phil Dart moved to approve the addendum for the Sustainable Farms and Fields 2-year funding. Edd Townsend seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Bowen Wildlife Area Watering Facility (NRI) – Aaron reported that Jess Darwood has a 650-acre (84 AUM) grazing lease for horses on the Methow Wildlife Area. Currently, the horses water directly from a beaver pond that is showing signs of hoof shear and riparian vegetation degradation. The proposed project will construct 1,100 feet of exclusion fencing around the pond, install a solar powered watering facility including solar panels and pump, pipeline, heavy-use protection area, and trough. The project is proposed to be funded using up to \$7,967.78 of available WSCC Natural Resource Investment funding. This represents 75% of the total project cost. Staff are requesting the board to approve the project and authorize Craig to sign the cost-share contract. Phil Dart moved to approve the Bowen Wildlife Area Water Facility cost-share contract and authorize Craig to sign it. Edd Townsend seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

SAO Interagency Data Sharing Agreement – Becky reported that the State Auditor now requires a data sharing agreement any time there is an audit. This includes the data exchanged for the district's upcoming audit. The purpose of the agreement is to set forth the terms under which the Auditor's Office will take control of certain documents and materials from the district to review them for the purpose of conducting the audit then return them following the completion of the audit. Essentially, it is a paper trail to create a paper trail so that can be audited by an auditor in a future audit should there be a question about how this audit was audited and who had responsibility for which piece of paper or document at which time within the trail of paper. Phil Dart moved to authorize Craig to sign the SAO Interagency Data Sharing Agreement. Edd Townsend seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Old Business:

Public Comment – There was no public comment.

Water Bank Update – Jordana reported that we received comments back from Ecology on the contract amendment to add the Barkley acquisition to the existing grant. We are reviewing the necessary changes and will notify Ecology when we are ready to enter the amendment into EAGL. The planning group met twice outside of our monthly meeting to discuss new acquisitions and if groundwater preservation could have a place in the bank. Ecology has provisions for this in the funding guidelines, but the criteria are not clear, so we met with them this week and opened the conversation. It will require a meeting with their Technical and policy staff to continue the conversation. The planning team is waiting for the potential seller to have authority and intent to sell before we pursue the possibility. We will be cancelling our monthly meeting for June due to staff attending WADE. Aspect and the County might still meet in that time frame. They are working on the County's application and are waiting for the return of the Letter of Intent from OCR as well as finalizing a budget for their grant proposal. We were given authorization to use Ecology funding to advertise on Western Water Market that we are interested in acquiring water rights. However, we can't advertise to sell water rights using Ecology funding.

Conservation Celebration Committee – Craig reported that we had a great celebration and we had internal staff conversations about the best time of the year to hold our celebration. The board generally agreed that the time we have been holding it in May is pretty good. Overall, everyone really liked our event and while there were a few suggestions for tweaks, the general opinion was that it was a good program, and attendees enjoyed the event.

New Business:

Public Comment – There was no public comment.

September Conservation Commission Tour – Craig reported that with the cancellation of the DDT Soil Remediation grant our intended first stop was no longer a viable option. He also reported that our final stop was no longer an option because Steve Colvin had recently notified him that the winery wouldn't be available the evening of September 18. Craig and Chevelle reported on other tour stops still on the schedule and how we will continue to work on finding good spots to take the Commission. Then following a good discussion of options, staff were directed to investigate taking the Commission to the fairgrounds for the Omak-Okanogan Rotary Steak Night Fundraiser to support the Okanogan Valley Orchestra and Choir.

Forest Health Grant Next Steps Discussion – Following the denial of funding for the USDA Community Wildfire Defense Grant for the second year in a row, we no longer have a need for as much equipment as we originally anticipated in our Conservation Commission funded Forest Health grant. Staff are requesting authorization to amend the budget to move almost \$100,000 from equipment purchases into cost-share and/or salaries and wages for the remainder of the grant. It was discussed to leave enough funds in equipment purchases for the remainder of the project to acquire a trailer and necessary tools to outfit a set-up for a prescribed fire association to use during a burn event. The estimated cost for that is in the \$20,000-\$30,000 range, and staff will have the authority to put that together within the framework of the grant and make the trailer and associated equipment available to recognized burn associations in the county.

Executive Session – Personnel Evaluation per RCW 42.30.110(g) – Jerry Asmussen declared the board would enter executive session starting at 7:50 PM to discuss personnel performance until 8:05 PM.

Jerry Asmussen called the meeting back to order at 8:06 PM.

Other – Phil Dart moved to approve Emily's evaluation and change her status from probationary status to regular employment and give her a step increase from salary range 50 step A to salary range 50, step B, effective June 1, 2024. Edd Townsend seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

Jerry Asmussen adjourned the meeting at 8:08 PM.

Summary of Motions

Phillip Dart moved to approve the agenda as amended. Edd Townsend seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Edd Townsend moved to approve the May 2, 2024 board meeting minutes as presented. Phil Dart seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Phil Dart moved to approve Treasurer's Report #853 as presented. Edd Townsend seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Phil Dart moved to authorize Craig to cancel the DDT Soil Remediation grant contract. Edd Townsend seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

Phil Dart moved to approve the contract and authorize Craig Nelson to sign it. Edd Townsend seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Phil Dart moved to approve the Riparian Grant Program addendum. Edd Townsend seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.


Phil Dart moved to approve the Perrault Well Relocation Cost-Share contract and have Craig or Lorah sign it. Edd Townsend seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Phil Dart moved to approve the addendum for the Sustainable Farms and Fields 2-year funding. Edd Townsend seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.


Phil Dart moved to approve the Bowen Wildlife Area Water Facility cost-share contract and authorize Craig to sign it. Edd Townsend seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Phil Dart moved to authorize Craig to sign the SAO Interagency Data Sharing Agreement. Edd Townsend seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Phil Dart moved to approve Emily's evaluation and change her status from probationary status to regular employment and give her a step increase from salary range 50 step A to salary range 50, step B, effective June 1, 2024. Edd Townsend seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.


Jerry Asmussen
Vice-Chair

Date


Craig T. Nelson
Executive Director

Date