

**CASCADIA CONSERVATION DISTRICT
REGULAR DISTRICT MEETING
Zoom Meeting ID: 987 6961 1557
14 N Mission St.
Wenatchee, WA 98801
Friday, August 20, 2021
1:30 p.m.**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Junell Wentz, Chair; Amy Bridges, Auditor; Kurt Hosman, Member; and Jim Bartelme, Member.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Dillon Miller, Vice Chair.

OTHERS PRESENT: Chris Wright, Austin Shero, NRCS; Mike Baden, WSCC; and the following District staff: Valerie Hampton, Ryan Williams, and Nada Wentz. Attendees were present in person and via Zoom Meeting / conference call.

Junell Wentz, Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:32 p.m.

Consent Agenda: Approve the July 16, 2021, Regular Meeting minutes, approve the Treasurer's Report, and authorize payment of bills.

M/S/C Kurt moved and Amy seconded to approve the Consent Agenda. (Unanimous)

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE (NRCS) REPORT – Chris Wright, Austin Shero

Chris is wrapping up the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) contracting for this year. Next, he will be assisting the team with the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) and CSP status.

Austin Shero is the Assistant State Conservationist, working out of the Ephrata office. He apologized for not coming to meet Cascadia staff in person. He had hoped to do so before now but NRCS is still hesitant to send staff out due to the pandemic. After a brief report on his work background, he thanked Cascadia staff for all of the cooperation and work accomplished with NRCS. He extended an open door for any questions, comments or work he can help us with. Task order requests for District work were submitted in July. Hopefully, more will soon be known about the status of the amendments and overall agreements.

WASHINGTON STATE CONSERVATION COMMISSION (WSCC) – Mike Baden

The Commission is working to get Cultural Resource policies in line with the new Executive Order and align the budget so there will be enough funds to get the work done. The policy is out for comment until September 1. There are not a lot of changes expected. Mike asked that districts remember to charge cultural resource survey work to the grant that funds the project.

A webinar was held last week to go over the election process and the options for reform. Mike encouraged everyone to listen to the webinar when the recording link is available. Coronavirus update: Starting Monday, August 23, face masks must be used indoors in public places regardless of vaccination status. The vaccine mandate for state employees does not affect conservation districts for now. That may change in October.

There has been a concern for district employees that must work outdoors when the air quality ratings are unhealthy due to wildfire smoke. When the rating is 175 or higher, employees should use N95 masks. WSCC has sent a letter to NRCS indicating they are willing to be the project sponsor for Emergency Watershed Protection projects. This allows for NRCS to begin its assessments and identify projects for post-fire actions. Ryan asked Mike to send him a copy of the letter. The Commission wants districts to utilize the fire recovery funding as much as they can with the current allocation. Mike recommended that we keep communicating the needs for fire recovery in our district. Ryan asked if the District can use the fire funding we already have to assist with the 25 Mile Creek fire. Mike said to use the funding we have. If another significant fire develops, let him know. Mike will talk with Ryan on Monday or Tuesday regarding the Natural Resource Inventory (NRI) questions that have come up.

OLD BUSINESS

Grant Applications:

Tributary Committee Application: The Board was asked to approve submitting four project applications to the PUD Tributary Committee: Brae Burn Habitat Enhancement, Wilson Side Channel Reinvigoration, Entiat Prioritization Habitat Assessment and Cashmere Mill Site Restoration.

M/S/C Kurt moved and Amy seconded to approve application submissions for Brae Burn Habitat Enhancement, Wilson side channel Reinvigoration, Entiat Prioritization Habitat Assessment and Cashmere Mill Site Restoration. (Unanimous)

Grant Contracts:

Wheat Week Agreement: The interlocal agreement / contract with Franklin Conservation District for the Wheat Week educational program is up for renewal. The money has been received, but the workload has been difficult to conduct with schools teaching remotely. The only change to the document is the new date.

Pine Creek CD Cultural Resources Agreement: Pine Creek asked for assistance with cultural resource work for their post fire recovery fencing projects. This requires an agreement between the two districts. They currently have six projects funded through fire recovery.

M/S/C Amy moved and Jim seconded to approve interlocal agreements with Franklin CD for the Wheat Week education program and with Pine Creek CD for cultural resources work. (Unanimous)

Rates and Charges Update: Ryan met with the Chelan County Commissioners at their last meeting to present the District Rates & Charges proposal. The commissioners agreed to the proposal but for a period of five years instead of ten. They released a public notice for a public hearing on August 31, at 9 a.m. Ryan will attend the public hearing to field questions about the program. The commissioners also asked about shrub steppe fire safety and what involvement the District has with that work.

Personnel Update: Two jobs have been advertised and candidates have been interviewed. One position is for a Resource Specialist and the other position is for a Stewardship Forester. Ryan offered the Stewardship Forester position to a candidate, but they declined. Ryan is considering re-running the position at a later date since most folks are currently out fighting fires.

The Resource Specialist position is down to two candidates. Ryan is waiting for reference checks before making the final decision. Either candidate would be a good fit with the District.

Policies – Banking and ACH Payments:

Payroll Direct Deposit: Direct payroll deposits have gone pretty well with the exception of the tight window to complete the taxes and retirement payments before the payroll needs to be submitted to the bank for payment the next day. The calculations need to be made after payroll is run, and then entered in the online portal. There have been problems with the retirement portal showing the exact amount to be deducted before payroll is ready to approve. The Board was asked to approve the Resolution 2021-8b amendment to allow up to four days for payroll to be deposited in staff bank accounts. It shouldn't take that long, but four days gives room for taxes and retirement payments to be correct and final before approval is given.

M/S/C Kurt moved and Amy seconded to approve Resolution 2021-8b, allowing a maximum of four days for payroll to be deposited into staff accounts. (Unanimous)

Automated Clearing House (ACH) Payments: Ryan and Valerie talked with the Board about payment options available for the District. Numerica Credit Union has an option for online initiation of ACH payments at no additional charge. The ACH payment goal would be to reduce the amount of paper checks written and the time needed to come in for signatures. They further discussed the risks and benefits of this service, as well as updating the District policy manual to cover ACH payments. The Board was asked to approve an agreement to use this service. To substitute for the current policy of two signatures for payments, a Board member would be asked to review and approve them prior to submittal, as is done with payroll. It would be best to have another Board member familiar with the process as a backup for Amy. Kurt volunteered to do so.

M/S/C Kurt moved and Jim seconded to approve activating ACH payments through Numerica Credit Union for the payment of monthly District bills. (Unanimous)

Executive Director's Report:

Chipping Incident: The landowners involved have signed an agreement acknowledging that the damages to their property during the chipping event have been taken care of to their satisfaction. The District will sign the agreement and send them a letter along with the payment. They have also signed up for a cost share project with the District.

Fire District Agreement: The Fire District that was originally going to store and do maintenance on the new chipper have decided to purchase their own chipper. Ryan and the Board discussed other options for winter storage and maintenance. Other fire districts may be interested in the agreement, but all are currently busy with fires. The agreement language is now set, allowing a quicker decision by another interested party. Ryan will approach other fire districts when the fire season has slowed down. The original fire district may have signed the agreement had it not taken so long for the insurance companies to provide proper contract language agreeable to both agencies.

Batterman Fire Response: Patrick, Elizabeth and Sophie have visited the areas with fire damage in Douglas County as requested by South Douglas CD. About 10,000 acres burned and about 10 miles of fencing needs replacement. Not as many requests for assistance came in for the Red Apple fire, but there are some potential seeding projects. Patrick is following up with the

affected landowners. A public meeting about potential flooding was not needed for the Red Apple fire. It is too early to tell with the 25 Mile Creek fire what the assistance landowners will need. More will be known after the Burn Area Emergency Response (BAER) report comes out.

House Bill 1168 - Forest Health and Firefighting: This bill was approved by the senate to provide additional funding for forest health and firefighting. Ryan and the Board discussed strategies, concerns and communications with DNR to carry out the work involved together. Conservation districts could partner with DNR to get the work done quicker, providing a win-win situation for all involved.

Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) Code for Chelan County: Chelan County is preparing to adopt a WUI building code. As part of new construction permits, hazard assessments may be required. Cascadia may be asked to complete these assessments as part of the permitting process. Because this is regulatory in nature, instead of voluntary, the Board felt this work would be better suited for the fire districts or other interested agencies.

Washington Association of Conservation Districts (WACD) Area & Annual Meetings: The Area meeting is in October and hosted by Okanogan CD this year. Ryan asked if there were any resolutions the Board would like to propose at this meeting.

There will be a series of virtual class meetings in November leading up to the Annual Meeting around the end of November or early December. As of a week ago, it will be an in-person one day meeting held in Tacoma. Ryan asked that Board members let him know if they wish to attend any of these meetings. He will bring more information to the September Board meeting. Ryan plans to attend virtually and report back to the Board.

COVID Updates: An indoor mask mandate begins Monday, August 23. The District had just started in-person staff meetings. Ryan will consider the risks of in-person staff meetings and will survey how the staff feel about in-person meetings. Ryan would like to have a strategic planning session late October or early November. The staff structure has changed since 2019. He has received ideas for potential meeting rooms but hasn't had time to research them yet.

Conservation Commission Projects: Projects were submitted for Natural Resource Investments (NRI) funds. All the plans that were requested will be funded. Staff are working on understanding the changes to CPDS (Conservation Practice Data System) related to eligible practices that can be selected.

Project Updates by Region:

Lake Chelan Basin: Help needed for the 25 Mile Creek fire is unknown at this point. We are waiting for the BAER report.

Entiat Watershed: The Entiat Planning Unit is on a summer hiatus with hopes to have another meeting in October. Sophie has been working on the riparian projects in this area.

Wenatchee Watershed: A farm in the Chumstick area was certified for the Salmon Safe program last month. A second farm in Cashmere is submitting for their certification in September. MarySutton started the certifications and Elizabeth is finishing them up. Staff will be in Plain at the Farmer's Market to talk with folks about the chipping program and the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). Kirk and Amanda are working on interested schools

for the Kids in the Creek program. It is also hoped that a couple of Beaver Dam Analogs (BDA) can be done in the Chumstick area this fall.

Amy Bridges left the meeting at 3:00 p.m.

Southern Chelan County Water Resource Inventory Area (WRIA) 40: No activity this month.

Set September 2021 Regular District Meeting Date and Agenda: The next Regular Meeting is Friday, September 17, 2021, at 1:30.

Board Member Comments & Open Discussion: Kurt expressed his appreciation for the way the Treasurer's Report is formatted.

Jim commented about the new movie called "Bring Your Own Brigade," directed by Lucy Walker. He wondered if the District and partners could speak with the local movie theater and bring it to Wenatchee.

The meeting adjourned at 3:07 p.m.

Summary of Official Actions:

Approved the Consent Agenda;

Approved application submissions for Brae Burn Habitat Enhancement, Wilson side channel Reinvigoration, Entiat Prioritization Habitat Assessment and Cashmere Mill Site Restoration;

Approved interlocal agreements with Franklin CD for the Wheat Week education program and with Pine Creek CD for cultural resources work;

Approved Resolution 2021-8b, allowing a maximum of four days for payroll to be deposited into staff accounts;

Approved activating ACH payments through Numerica Credit Union for the payment of monthly District bills.

CHAIR _____

OFFICE ASSISTANT _____