

**WHATCOM CONSERVATION DISTRICT
Public Meeting Minutes
August 10, 2011**

I. Time and Place of Meeting.

A regular meeting of the Board of Supervisors of the Whatcom Conservation District (WCD) was held at the Ag Service Center, 6975 Hannegan Rd, Lynden, Washington on August 10, 2011, at 7:00 p.m.

II. Attendance and Quorum.

The following Supervisors, being a quorum of the Board, were present:

Joe Heller	Terry Lenssen
Larry Davis	Dick Yoder

Also in attendance were:

George Boggs, Executive Director	Alex Hall, NRCS staff
Dawn Bekenyi, Admin. Assistant	Stu Trefry, WSCC

III. Meeting Called to Order.

Joe Heller, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

IV. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting.

Dick Yoder moved that the minutes of the July 7, 2011 Board meeting be approved as mailed. Larry Davis seconded the motion. The motion passed.

V. Financial Report.

The financial report was mailed to the Board with their draft minutes from the July meeting.

Dawn Bekenyi, Administrative Assistant, presented the financial report. There were no questions.

Larry Davis moved to approve the Financial Report. Dick Yoder seconded the motion. The motion passed. Upon motion made and duly seconded, the Treasurer's Report was approved.

Accounts Payable –

A copy of District invoices and incurred expenses, as listed in the Accounts Payable Report, were reviewed and approved. The Board further authorizes the payment of District expenses incurred subject to their review and approval at the next Board meeting.

The following voucher/warrants are approved for payment:

July 2011 - balance					
Voucher (check) numbers	<u>18722</u>	through	<u>18795</u>	and totaling	<u>121,049.21</u>
Payroll check numbers:	<u>18796</u>	through	<u>18807</u>	and totaling	<u>26,033.76</u>
August 2011					
Voucher (check) numbers	<u>18808</u>	through	<u>18823</u>	and totaling	<u>27,269.89</u>
Payroll check numbers:	<u>18824</u>	through	<u>18835</u>	and totaling	<u>25,766.42</u>

Moved by Larry Davis. Dick Yoder seconded the motion. The motion passed.

VI. Action Items.

A. Approval of Contracts.

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) Contracts –

The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) is a joint federal and state program to enhance fish habitat and protect water quality. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) is the administrative lead. A District resource specialist (Wayne Chaudiere or Emily Hirsch) works with a landowner to develop a conservation plan that includes practices meeting the landowner's needs. It is reviewed for technical sufficiency by the Natural Resources Conservation Service representative (Alex) and George. The landowner signs the plan and it is passed on to FSA. The FSA County Oversight Committee (COC) approves all CREP plans. The current District policy is that once FSA approves the Federal Contract and CREP plan, then the CREP maintenance contract is brought to the Board for its approval. Absent unusual circumstances, the Board approves the standard-language maintenance agreement prescribed by the State Conservation Commission.

There were nine CREP maintenance contracts submitted for Board approval.

Dick Yoder moved to ratify the CREP maintenance contracts for:

1. Dale & Sara Andert (10-04-CS:11-12)
2. Clint & Karen Avery (10-04-CS:11-05)
3. Dave & Maggie Grantham (10-04-CS:11-15)
4. Karen Heggem & Roger Almskaar (10-04-CS:11-01)
5. Janet Kilmer (10-04-CS:11-03)
6. Tim & Kristina McHugh (10-04-CS:11-18)
7. Robert Paulson (10-04-CS:11-19)
8. Addie Pobst (01-04-CS:11-02)
9. Terrell Creek Conservation Easement 1 LLC (10-04-CS:11-21)

Larry Davis seconded the motion. The motion passed.

B. Washington Association of Conservation District (WACD) Awards.

Joe suggested that Todd Rightmire would be a good candidate for the Teacher of the Year award. He will look into what it takes to nominate him.

C. Budget.

Now that the grant awards were determined, the budget was presented to the Board and reviewed.

Dick Yoder moved to approve the 2011-2012 District budget as presented. Terry Lenssen seconded the motion. The motion passed.

VII. Other Business.

A. Supervisor Reports.

Larry Davis –

National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) Policy Task Force – The National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) Policy Task Force has had their second conference call. The task force made a decision on the template to use to review the policy book. The review will be in two phases. The first phase is to determine if the most currently adopted language needs to be changed. The second phase will be to rewrite the language if changes are necessary. Are they still pertinent? The goal is to simplify and make the policies more understandable. The task force will also work on a definition of terms. The next teleconference is scheduled for August 17, 2011. Then the task force will review the portions of the policy book that they were assigned.

Washington Association of Conservation Districts (WACD) – Larry was asked to be on two committees, the WSCC Administrative Efficiencies Task Force and WACD 2012 Budget Committee. Larry was also asked to facilitate one of the breakout sessions at the WACD Annual Meeting in December. There is still some question as to whether Larry has been appointed to take over as NW Area Director for Karen Krug.

Terry Lenssen – Feed is a big issue this year due to weather issues in feed growing areas.

Dick Yoder – Dick reported that they had just completed their first cutting of grass last week. The second cutting has happened on some fields and looks good. He turned his cows out into the pasture for the first time this year on August 9.

Joe Heller – Joe attended the Washington Conservation Commission meeting in Wenatchee with George. It was successful to attend since CREP technical assistance and livestock technical assistance funding were determined at this meeting. The District did well with the technical funding allocations for both CREP and livestock. There are more reporting requirements with these funds.

John Larson accepted a position as NACD CEO in Washington, DC.

B. Alex Hall, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) – The sign-up deadline has been moved. It is now open ended. The reason is to move to a national payment schedule.

Whatcom County has ninety EQIP practices left to install. Staff are doing status reviews on projects.

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) – Alex attended Integrated Pest Management training in Spokane. The desire is to do more mitigation and less pest management risk assessment. IPM is not an acceptable practice for organic producers since there is no resource concern to fix due to no spreading of chemicals. Mitigation techniques include elimination of chemicals. NRCS will recommend that producers speak with a licensed technician regarding chemical application recommendations. No recommendations can be given without a license.

Cultural Resources Specialist – The Cultural Resources specialist is scheduled to complete the EQIP practice inspections on August 22, 2011.

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) – There are no more funds available for 2011, so there will not be a second round at this time. Alex anticipates a 2012 sign-up for the program.

NRCS State Office – The state budget request process is different this year. Input from local teams and a resource assessment will be done. There is hope that this will favorably impact funding for the Northwest Team.

Alex said that there is no news regarding any cuts to programs. Programs are moving forward with the same funding as last year. NRCS is recognized nationally for getting practices done with high performance.

C. George Boggs, Executive Director.

Washington Conservation Commission Meeting –

Joe reported that he signed the letter to Director Sturdevant and brought copies to the Commission meeting.

CREP - George reported that the Commission meeting was productive. The Conservation Commission Board does respect the advice of their staff. They had confidence and adopted Carol's recommendation for CREP Technical Assistance allocations. There is a shortfall in

funding for CREP maintenance this year. District staff will go into the fall inspections and look at where cuts can be made, but not short the project. Dick suggested that this would be a good time to introduce the sheep and goats for flash grazing maintenance.

George reported the Conservation Commission advised that additional projects could not be added without acquiring funding for them. District staff feels that we can get 20 new projects for spring 2012 approval or 2013 planting. The cost would be approximately \$121,000 for cost-share of installation and maintenance. George advised that the Farm Service Agency suggested that if we stop enrolling people that the CREP program may be downsized and potentially eliminated.

Stu discussed the current budget. He expressed that state legislators should be aware of the contractual obligation towards those enrolled in the CREP program. Districts should show that CREP is an effective program and show our progress. The key to the continued success of the program is to find other sources of funding for it. Some potential sources for funding to explore were discussed.

There was continued discussion regarding enrolling new CREP participants without firm funding. The Board was not agreeable to pay for the projects out of their limited funds in savings. It was suggested to advise new enrollees that there is no guarantee of state cost-share or maintenance for their project. There was discussion regarding legislative impact and how the program is explained to the policy makers. The CREP program has a lot of "bang for the buck" compared with other restoration programs. The potential to defer the projects until the next year was also discussed. Staff will continue to recruit participation in the CREP program.

Livestock – Funding for the livestock program for the state was cut in half from the last biennium. These funds are used for both technical assistance and cost-share. The Conservation Commission asked Debbie Becker, WSCC staff, what she would recommend to allocate the available funds. She suggested that staff can get cost-share funds from other sources if the technical assistance is available.

Each District submitted a workload showing their landowners that need technical assistance based on referrals from the Departments of Ag or Ecology, new operations, etc. The Conservation Commission decided to fund Districts based on their workload spreadsheet. George explained that the list for Whatcom has over 120 producers. Staff have met to discuss the workload and timeline of 18 months set by the Commission. There are other projects that need to be completed during this time as well. George advised the board that it would be helpful to have administrative help for the livestock team.

Dick Yoder moved to hire a livestock technician at entry level to assist with the livestock planning workload. Larry Davis seconded the motion. The motion passed.

The livestock team will review the current farm plan template to see if we can make it a more concise and useful tool. Staff will review independently and meet to decide changes.

George sought confirmation on how to handle producers that do not want to work with the Conservation District. He suggested that staff will offer assistance to those on the workload list. If the planning process stalls or the producer is non-responsive, staff will document that in their files with a letter to the producer that we are no longer dealing with the issue at this time and then they will move on to the next producer. The Board expressed that they desire the letter to use charitable language asking the producer to decide if they would like to work with District staff - that their time is valuable - prior to closing the issue.

Public Records Request – George reported that the District received a public records request from Shuksan Golf Course's attorney for all CREP projects on Ten mile Creek. He advised the Board on how it should proceed with the response.

Farm Energy Grant – Washington State University (WSU) is applying for a grant to partner with districts to conduct audits for dairies on farm energy. Whatcom was invited to participate. George explained the program.

Dick Yoder moved to sign a letter of approval for participation in the Farm Energy Program. Terry Lensen seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Flood Plain Managers Meeting – George will be attending the Flood Plain Managers meeting in Puyallup. Whatcom County sent out an RFP for gravel removal in the Nooksack River. The process is slowly moving along.

National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Task Force – George is on the NACD TMDL Task Force. They had their first teleconference. Groups are suing EPA over TMDL nutrient values. George noted that EPA does not have jurisdiction over non-point source pollution. EPA only has jurisdiction when there is a discharge to waters of the US. George suggested that the best approach is to deliver a program of stewardship, not argue the technical merits of numeric nutrient criteria. A technical argument would need scientists and attorneys to debate. It is a much more powerful message to rally around a reasonable expectation coupled with what a farmer can affordably do. Districts are all about stewardship. That is what they should lead with as the best alternative. If farmers could be inspired to implement four or five core practices significant positive environmental results could be attained.

Meetings – Stu Trefry reported that the WACD Northwest Area Meeting is scheduled for October 13, 2011 in Coupeville.

Washington State Conservation Commission's September meeting will be in Walla Walla.

VIII. Record of Board Actions.

11-53 Dick Yoder moved that the minutes of the July 7, 2011 Board meeting be approved as mailed. Larry Davis seconded the motion. The motion passed.

11-54 Larry Davis moved to approve the Financial Report. Dick Yoder seconded the motion. The motion passed. Upon motion made and duly seconded, the Treasurer's Report was approved.

11-55

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Moved by Larry Davis. Dick Yoder seconded the motion. The motion passed.

11-56 Dick Yoder moved to ratify the CREP maintenance contracts for:

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- 2. Clint & Karen Avery (10-04-CS:11-05)**
- 3. Dave & Maggie Grantham (10-04-CS:11-15)**
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- 7. Robert Paulson (10-04-CS:11-19)**

8. Addie Pobst (01-04-CS:11-02)

9. Terrell Creek Conservation Easement 1 LLC (10-04-CS:11-21)

Larry Davis seconded the motion. The motion passed.

11-57 Dick Yoder moved to approve the 2011-2012 District budget as presented. Terry Lenssen seconded the motion. The motion passed.

11-58 Dick Yoder moved to hire a livestock technician at entry level to assist with the livestock planning workload. Larry Davis seconded the motion. The motion passed.

11-59 Dick Yoder moved to sign a letter of approval for participation in the Farm Energy Program. Terry Lenssen seconded the motion. The motion passed.

IX. Adjournment.

There being no further business before the meeting, Dick Yoder moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:00 p.m. Larry Davis seconded the motion. The motion passed.

The meeting, on motion duly made, seconded and carried, adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Dated: September 27, 2011

Dawn Bekenyi, Administrative Assistant

Approved: _____