

**WHATCOM CONSERVATION DISTRICT
Public Meeting Minutes
March 10, 2010**

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 March 10, 2010, at 7:00 p.m.

II. Attendance and Quorum.

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

Dick Yoder	Ed Stone
Joe Heller	Larry Davis
Terry Lenssen	

Also in attendance were:

George Boggs, District Manager	Alex Hall, NRCS staff
Dawn Bekenyi, Admin. Assistant	John Larson, WACD Executive Director
Dean Martin, Whatcom County PDS	

III. Meeting Called to Order.

Dick Yoder, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Dick Yoder welcomed John Larson and Dean Martin to the meeting.

IV. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting.

Larry Davis moved that the minutes of the February 10, 2010 Board meeting be approved as mailed. Terry Lenssen seconded the motion. The motion passed.

V. Financial Report.

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

Dawn Bekenyi, Administrative Assistant, asked if there were any questions regarding the Financial Report. There were no questions.

Joe Heller moved to approve the Financial Report. Larry Davis 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:

Feb 2010 - balance				
Voucher (check) numbers	<u>17527</u>	through	<u>17547</u>	and totaling <u>\$ 18,942.96</u>
Payroll check numbers:	<u>17548</u>	through	<u>17561</u>	and totaling <u>\$ 28,368.36</u>

March 2010				
Voucher (check) numbers	17562	through	17581	and totaling
Payroll check numbers:	17582	through	17595	and totaling
				\$ 23,584.53
				\$27,990.83

Moved by Joe Heller. Larry Davis seconded the motion. The motion passed.

John Larson spoke regarding the potential cut of Conservation Commission staff, which would impact payment turn around.

Dairy Federation –

Ed Stone moved to approve paying Dairy Federation 2010 Associate Dues in the amount of \$125. Joe Heller seconded the motion. The motion passed.

VI. Action Items.

A. Approval of Conservation Plans.

Livestock Nutrient Management Plan (LNMP) Approval –

There was one Livestock Nutrient Management Plan Update submitted for Board approval.

Ed Stone moved to approve the Livestock Nutrient Management Plan update for PenRod Dairy (Rod Visser). Terry Lenssen seconded the motion. The motion passed.

B. Approval of Contracts.

CREP Contracts –

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) is the administrative lead on the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) joint program. The FSA County Committee approves all CREP plans. The current policy is that once FSA approves the Federal Contract and CREP plan, the contract is then brought to the Board for its approval. The Board approved the State Conservation Commission prescribed standard-language maintenance contract.

There was one CREP maintenance contract submitted for Board approval.

Terry Lenssen moved to ratify the CREP maintenance contract for Darrell Gray & Renee LaCroix (10-04-CS:10-01). Larry Davis seconded the motion. The motion passed.

C. Internal Audit.

Terry and Larry agreed to do the annual internal audit.

VII. Other Business.

A. John Larson, Washington Association of Conservation Districts (WACD).

The legislative session focused mostly on the state budget. John said that it was hard to work on other issues besides the budget this year.

John took a brief field tour of Whatcom County and our projects with George prior to the Board meeting. John informed the Board that his background was in forage production. It is good to see the projects and concerns of Conservation Districts in various areas around the state.

John thanked the Board for writing to the Department of Ecology regarding the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between Ecology and Conservation Districts. This issue needed to be addressed. This prompted all effected agencies to come to the table to talk. The MOA is a starting point of relationships and working with Ecology. There is a six month timeline identified to get an updated MOA between the WA Conservation Commission, Conservation Districts and Ecology. Roles will be clearly defined under the new MOA.

B. Budget -

John said that with tightening budgets at the state level, it is becoming apparent that not all resources needed for Conservation Districts will come from the State. There was discussion regarding justifiable expenses paid by the State. How do we count, allocate and justify programs and projects? Outcomes and environmental impacts need to be captured and reported back to the state. The future of funding is uncertain. There was a brief discussion regarding the questions about any WA Conservation Commission funding for Districts. It is uncertain how much or how it will be allocated. John encouraged all Districts to participate in WACD and be active with their legislators.

C. Supervisor's Reports.

Larry Davis –

Larry has scheduled the Local Work Group meeting on April 19. A location is to be determined.

Joe Heller –

Joe attended the WACD legislative days. This was the second year in a row that he has attended with George. The event started with the WACD Officers and Directors meeting. There were four talking points to review with legislators. There was also a lot of talk regarding the letter that Whatcom sent to the Department of Ecology and their response. Representatives from the Governor's office and Roylene Rides at the Door were in attendance and they want the issue resolved.

Joe mentioned that Okanogan Conservation District has lost four employees to NRCS for the past few years.

Joe expressed that the Whatcom Conservation District needs an assessment in the future to have a stable source of funding.

April Board Meeting Time –

There was a request to change the April Board meeting to accommodate Supervisor schedules. Several people were going to be out of town on the regularly scheduled date. The April meeting will be April 13, 2010 at 7:00 p.m.

Dick Yoder –

Dick reported that several people that attend the Ag Advisory Committee wanted to review the local Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO) due to some complaints. A sub-committee was formed. Dick is chair of the sub-committee. George is on it. The first thing that the committee determined was that current law prevents any changes to Critical Areas Ordinances until around 2013. The Ruckelshaus Process impacts the timeline to make any potential changes. The committee also determined that the Ag Advisory Committee does not have the authority to adopt any changes. They can only make recommendations to the Whatcom County Council. There are significant hurdles to making any changes to the current CAO. The sub-committee will inform the Ag Advisory of the process and seek further input.

The next Ag Advisory Committee meeting is scheduled for April 5, 2010 at the North County Fire Hall in Lynden.

D. George Boggs, Executive Director.

Conservation Program on Agricultural Land (CPAL) Update –

George reported that the CPAL program is working well and the value of the services that the Whatcom Conservation District is providing is being voiced by those that we have worked with. Surveys have been distributed and all favorable responses have been received.

River Corridor Management –

George will meet with Randy Kinley and Alan Chapman of Lummi Natural Resources on Friday regarding the River Corridor Management. There is a problem with large woody debris in the mouth of the Nooksack River blocking fishing boats.

Local Work Group –

George explained that there is a new process to prioritize natural resource concerns. Peter Bautista said that it is important to place priorities on a list so that they can capture funding.

Long Range Plan –

The Long Range Plan was sent out to cities, county employees, County Council members, legislators and others for comment. We received one from the City of Lynden suggesting that we add North Lynden and flooding issues. The Long Range Plan will be completed and ready for adoption at the April Board meeting.

Annual Plan of Work –

There was a review of the 2009-10 Annual Plan of Work. George mentioned some activities that we are working on. It will be updated and sent to the Board for review and adoption at the April Board meeting.

Events –

The plant sale is scheduled for March 20, 2010 at the Whatcom Community College.

Washington Association of District Employees (WADE) training is scheduled for June 14-16, 2010. A registration form was passed out to the Board for review.

WADE Employee of the Year nominations are due March 26, 2010.

Employee Health Insurance –

The current medical plan expires April 30, 2010. We are investigating options for health insurance. One possibility is the Public Employees Benefits Board (PEBB). This coverage is through the Washington Health Care Authority. The District would need to join the PEBB to obtain the health insurance plans provided.

Larry Davis moved to authorize the Whatcom Conservation District to join the Public Employees Benefit Board through the Washington Health Care Authority. Joe Heller seconded the motion. The motion passed.

The health insurance policy was reviewed. Benefits and impacts on the budget of the proposed premium increases were discussed. The Board expressed the desire to not spend any more than we currently do for medical premiums. They also authorized staff to pick a medical plan with further Board approval at the April meeting.

E. Alex Hall, Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS).

Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) –

The majority of the funds in regular EQIP have been obligated. Four dairies and one berry farmer have been completed. There may be an opportunity for more funds in Whatcom County. There is an April 10, 2010 deadline to obligate EQIP funds.

EQIP Organic –

15 or so applications have been received for EQIP organic. Most are coming in for high tunnels and will be getting the full plan. The Soil Tech in Mt. Vernon transferred to the Soil Conservationist position, so may be available up here as the workload warrants.

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) –

Two projects were approved. There may be more applications in the future as word gets out about the program.

Local Work Group –

This is the District’s opportunity to provide input on EQIP and ranking, etc. Alex said that the Lynden Field office and Conservation District staff will meet to provide input on EQIP, draft some new items for cost-share and recommendations on old items. Some suggested new items would be small scale manure digesters on dairies and feed management.

F. Dean Martin, Whatcom County Planning and Development Services.

Dean expressed that Dick described the challenges with the Ag Advisory Committee well. Meetings have a lot of attendees with issues, but not many solutions.

Whatcom County is looking at updating their Growth Management Act. It was cited for having very liberal ag land uses.

Whatcom County is working on making CPAL and the CAO administration more user-friendly. Administrative procedures are on their website.

Dean stated that in Missouri they have a 1/10 of a percent sales tax which pays for conservation. This includes their equivalent to the Conservation Commission, park commission and a large pool for cost-share projects. John Larson reported that the WACD is asking all States for their top 3 ways to fund District activities and cost-share. They hope to get some innovative ideas.

VIII. Record of Board Actions.

10-17 Larry Davis moved that the minutes of the February 10, 2010 Board meeting be approved as mailed. Terry Lenssen seconded the motion. The motion passed.

10-18 Joe Heller moved to approve the Financial Report. Larry Davis seconded the motion. The motion passed. Upon motion made and duly seconded, the Treasurer’s Report was approved.

10-19

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10-21 Ed Stone moved to approve the Livestock Nutrient Management Plan update for PenRod Dairy (Rod Visser). Terry Lenssen seconded the motion. The motion passed.

10-22 Terry Lenssen moved to ratify the CREP maintenance contract for Darrell Gray & Renee LaCroix (10-04-CS:10-01). Larry Davis seconded the motion. The motion passed.

10-23 Larry Davis moved to authorize the Whatcom Conservation District to join the Public Employees Benefit Board through the Washington Health Care Authority. Joe Heller seconded the motion. The motion passed.

IX. Adjournment.

There being no further business before the meeting, Joe Heller moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:00 p.m. Terry Lensen seconded the motion. The motion passed.

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

Dated: April 28, 2010

Dawn Bekenyi, Administrative Assistant

Approved: _____