



# Okanogon Conservation District

1251 S. Second Ave, Room 102

Okanogon, WA 98840

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## DRAFT

**TO:** The Record  
**SUBJECT:** August 1, 2024; Board of Supervisors Meeting  
**LOCATION:** Okanogon Conservation District Office, Okanogon, WA and  
Remotely via Microsoft Teams and Teleconference  
**FROM:** Craig T. Nelson, Executive Director

### PRESENT:

Lorah Super, Chair	Emily Bustamante, Education Specialist
Jerry Asmussen, Vice Chair	Dylan Streeter, Wildfire & Resiliency Planner
Phillip Dart, Supervisor	Emmy Engle, Communication & Outreach Specialist
Edd Townsend, Supervisor	Taylor George, VSP Coordinator
Craig Nelson, Executive Director	Brant Rosenthal Smith, Science Data & Mon. Coord.
Becky Drenner, Finance Director	Aaron Wold, Range Program Lead
Kim Kogler, Grants & Contracts Director	Chevelle Yeckel, Riparian & Water Quality Planner
Natalie Torres, Admin. Assistant	Rosalie Powell, Communication & Technician Fellow
Jordana Ellis, Irrigation Planner	Sarah Troutman, NRCS
Eli Loftis, Wildfire & Resiliency Lead	Randy Kelley, Associate Supervisor
Kelsey Taylor, Walden	Anders Taylor, Walden
James, Walden	Gene, Walden
Kyle Spurgeon, Walden	Sam Israel, NCPBA

**Meeting Call to Order:** Lorah Super called the meeting to order at 6:01 PM. She completed a roll call of Supervisors, Associate Supervisors, staff, partners, and the public.

**Public Comment:** Kelsey Taylor reported that she received an update from Anders Taylor following his discussion with Craig Nelson. The update was regarding the potential advancement of the project and the request for additional funding from the legislature. Kelsey expressed appreciation for the responsiveness and support received, noting that this is the first instance where she has felt that their challenges and issues have been adequately addressed.

Anders Taylor echoed Kelsey Taylor's sentiments, expressing concern about the lack of genuine and forthright communication from some agencies. He described the news received last month about the potential return of grant money as a significant setback, reinforcing a sense of cynicism that he had previously experienced with certain state agencies. Anders conveyed his belief that local government can be more responsive to resident needs and appreciated the attentive listening to the stories shared during the previous month's discussions.

Kyle from Walden Farms expressed that he shares the same sentiments as Kelsey and Anders. He extended his gratitude for the reconsideration and noted that the entire team and crew wanted to convey their collective appreciation for the support and attention given to their concerns.

Lorah thanked them for participating in today's meeting and sharing their sentiments with everyone.

**Agenda Approval:** Craig Nelson proposed an updated agenda, as there are additional BDPs being presented. Phillip approved the agenda; Jerry seconded. The updated agenda was approved unanimously.

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

**Treasurer's Report #855,** which covers the checking account activity from July 3, 2024, to August 1, 2024, inclusive, was presented for the Board's approval. The following checks/payroll/direct withdrawals/electronic payments were approved for payment:

Checks – numbers 12470 – 12499 totaling \$140,234.87

One payroll direct withdrawal – numbers ACH4860 – ACH4874 totaling \$28,521.97.

Electronic payments – numbers EFT3442 – EFT3456 totaling \$35,621.00.

A transfer of \$100,000.00 was made to Savings. Deposits totaling \$246,029.45 were made.

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

### **Supervisor Reports:**

**Edd Townsend** – Edd reported that the wheat harvest is hitting its stride, and the canola harvest is nearly complete. Rain in early June caused some sucker growth in the winter wheat fields. The cows will need to adjust to the abundance of ripe, dry grass. Evaporation has been remarkable, with stock ponds having decreased by at least a foot and a half over the past month. There is a heightened awareness of the tinder-dry conditions, and humidity levels remain extremely low.

**Phil Dart** – Phil expressed a preference to not have to endure prolonged periods of over 100-degree temperatures. However, he noted that approximately ¼ inch of rain was a welcome relief. They are already in the process of the third cutting of hay and plan to proceed with a fourth cutting, despite it not being their preferred practice. Fire season has begun, with three lightning-caused fires reported in their fire district.

**Jerry Asmussen** – Jerry reported that last week they conducted a small Ecology tour to review the Bonaparte Creek restoration project implemented years ago on his property. He observed that the pastures at higher elevations remain green, with the grass being so tall that the cows grazing there seem to disappear. Additionally, Toroda Creek vanishes midway through the property, while Bonaparte Creek has notably lowered.

**Lorah Super** – Lorah reported that the garlic did not turn out as well as she had hoped, despite a promising start to the season. Although the cloves are present, they are significantly smaller than anticipated. She also mentioned that on the first day of the tour, she was accompanied by the

Conservation Commission Executive Director. There was a surprise visit from the CTCR Business Council. Lorah and Taylor attended CRM Facilitation training last week in Ellensburg. Lorah observed that CRM has recently regained popularity, prompting state agencies to work on expanding the pool of trained facilitators. Additionally, Lorah received an email from a contractor involved in collecting monitoring data for the NCW Forest Health Collaborative. She and several staff members from the Conservation District are scheduled to meet with the contractor next week.

### **Associate Supervisor Reports:**

**Randy Kelley** – Randy reported that weeds are becoming increasingly problematic. He also noted that the loss of Norm McClure has resulted in the loss of their most vocal proponent for CRM.

### **Staff Reports:**

Craig discussed planning and preparation for the upcoming commission tour. The goal is to ensure the tour is both enjoyable and memorable. A significant concern is transportation, as in the past a school bus with no air conditioning was used. We have been encouraged to explore charter bus options, which were quoted at \$4,500. Fortunately, Emmy suggested reaching out to Okanogan Nutrition, which operates 15-person buses. We have currently secured two buses and are in the process of possibly arranging a third.

Craig also shared that field studies are underway to examine the impact of DDT on cannabis. The study is expected to be completed by September. The results will help us understand the effects of DDT on cannabis cultivation. Depending on the findings, we plan to import clean soil and allow the cannabis to grow for one full season. Requests for bids will be issued for this process, and we will ensure compliance with requirements related to cultural resources and necessary permits.

Lastly, Craig acknowledged Becky and the staff for their efforts in managing the transition to the new payroll system. While we are currently encountering some challenges, it is anticipated that the new system will ultimately prove to be more beneficial.

Emmy expressed her appreciation for Becky and Brant's outstanding efforts in helping set up everything for Springbrook. She also announced that planning is underway for their 85th anniversary celebration next year. They aim to start preparations for the rollout at this year's fair. Emmy encouraged anyone with ideas or suggestions to share them with either her or Rosalie.

Jordana reported that they are closing out their NFWF grant, which included drone flights for analyzing irrigation efficiencies.

Chevelle reported that the 2025 WADE conference is tentatively scheduled for June 9-11. She noted that the WADE board is facing a significant financial challenge for next year's conference due to a substantial increase in facility costs. The anticipated cost for the conference may rise to \$900 per person, up from \$600 this year. The board is working with WSCC to explore additional funding options to support Conservation District staff attendance amid the increased costs. Chevelle also mentioned that during the site visits hosted for ECY staff last week, the

landowners showcased exceptional dedication to their projects and delivered impressive presentations.

Becky reported that she recently took a week off for a vacation in Montana. Before her departure and since her return, she has been extremely busy. She noted that the support from Springbrook has been outstanding, and she has been dedicating approximately 20-30 hours a week to setting up the system. This timing is crucial as QuickBooks is undergoing significant changes. The setup process is not yet complete, as they still need to establish ACH with the bank, which may result in printed paychecks for the current pay period.

Rosalie reported that she, Emmy, and Taylor attended the Apple Pie Jamboree in Pateros. Expressed it was a great opportunity to connect with young community members. Taylor thanked the board for the opportunity to attend the CRM training. She mentioned that she is already applying her training both in the office and in external settings. After discussing with Will Strand from Ecology, Taylor believes the study being conducted on the DDT project may provide the answers to a lot of the questions OCD felt needed answered to better inform how we move forward, and she is looking forward to seeing that report this fall.

### **NRCS Report**

Sarah reported that she is pleased to be back and to provide an in-person update. She spent much of last week operating the combine on her family's wheat farm. NRCS is currently wrapping up some of the EQIP applications. Although the CRP workload has been heavy, it is manageable, and they are nearing completion of this year's tasks. They have just finished the first round of CSP and completed a second round of applications, receiving seven submissions. There is a month to finalize those contracts. Sarah highlighted that one of the major issues with CSP is underutilization of available funds. In the future, employees will have CSP contract numbers included in their performance plans. She also noted that CSP payment rates have increased significantly and encouraged everyone, including those with backyard gardens, to consider applying. Additionally, Sarah announced that a new Area Conservationist from Oklahoma will start on August 11. The new Area Forester, Jeff, will be based in Okanogan, and they are also working to fill his local position.

**North Cascades Prescribed Burn Association** – Sam Israel, a consulting forester from Twisp, introduced himself to discuss the North Cascades Prescribed Burn Association (NCPBA). The NCPBA aims to unite landowners to foster productive discussions on private land prescribed burning. Sam shared that they have held two local meetings with interested landowners this spring and summer. He presented a slideshow detailing their plans, including a prescribed burn near Carlton scheduled for October, following a Learn and Burn workshop. Sam circulated a sign-up sheet for those interested in more information and provided his email address for any follow-up questions. Phil Dart suggested that Sam collaborate with local fire districts, which are required to conduct annual training for volunteer firefighters involving prescribed burns.

### **Partner Reports**

There were no partners present.

### **Review, Approve and Sign Contracts and Conservation Plans:**

**Washington Conservation Society (WCS) MOU & Dues** – Craig shared that the Washington Conservation Society (WCS) provides a vital link for conservation districts and conservation education. The WCS is a 501c(3) that can be a fiscal manager for grants if we need one with very little overhead. They are responsible for offering greater communication between CDs through a hosted discussion board as well as providing remembrance of passed Washington CD family members through their “Leaving a Legacy” program. They also recently launched their “Creating a Legacy” program that honors conservation professionals who are working to increase collaboration, conservation leadership, and professional capacity within the Washington Conservation District family. Phil Dart moved to approve the Memorandum of Understanding with the WCS, sign the agreement, and authorize Craig Nelson as our representative for the WCS. Jerry Asmussen seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

**Christianson Ranch Cost Share Contract** – Jordana shared the Christianson Ranch is in the Twisp River drainage in Twisp Washington. The project is to replace an old and inefficient hand line irrigation system with a half circle, 4 span pivot sprinkler system (BMP #442) on 27 acres of alfalfa hay. This project consists of a new 15hp pump (BMP #533). There is an existing 4” mainline. The pivot will be connected to the mainline by 100 ft of new 4” pipeline (BMP #430). The implementation of this project will create a 48% improvement in efficiency. The project is in WRIA 48(Methow), in the Lower Twisp River sub-basin. The field is just North of the junction of Twisp River and Poorman Creek. Both water bodies are habitat for ESA listed salmonid species Chinook, Steelhead, and Bull trout. The Ranch is on the TVIP irrigation ditch, and the ditch has sent a letter of acknowledgement of the project to the Okanogan CD. As the water is not available for trust by the Christianson Ranch staff recommends a cost share rate of 75%. The total cost of the project is \$137,490.00. At a 75% rate the contract would supply \$103,118.00 in funding with the Christianson Ranch paying a 25% rate of \$34,372.00. Phil Dart made a motion to approve the Christianson Ranch Cost Share Contract and authorize Lorah Super or Craig Nelson to sign upon receiving the funding award from WSCC and signature from Christianson Ranch authorized signer, Julie Palm. Jerry Asmussen seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

**Schertenleib Cost Share** – Jordana reported the Schertenleib property is a 151-acre farm in Okanogan County, with an irrigation system that is old an inefficient preventing the farmers from properly irrigating. The Landowner is increasingly burdened by the labor involved in the moving of hand and wheel lines. The inefficiency and the labor-intensive needs of the system coupled with the heavy development pressure are a threat to the land staying in agricultural use. The proposed project will replace aging hand and wheel lines with a 4-span pivot with end gun, that will serve an area of 34.18 acres (#442 Sprinkler System). A 40ft extension of the 6” mainline will be added to facilitate the pivot placement. (#430 Irrigation Pipeline). This project ranked 3rd in the 2024 ranking process. The property is in the Duck Lake Aquifer and the landowner is a senior water right holder in the Adjudicated Aquifer. Any saved water will be placed in the State Trust Water Right Program to protect from relinquishment and support the adjudicated aquifer. Staff recommends this cost share contract be awarded at an 85% rate

because Mr. Schertenleib has agreed to Trust the .2cfs water savings. Total cost of the project is \$102,221. At an 85% cost share rate the contract would supply the landowners with \$86,887.00. Mr. Schertenleib's share would be 15% totaling \$15,334.00. Jerry Asmussen moved to approve the Schertenleib Cost Share Contract and authorized Lorah Super or Craig Nelson to sign after WSCC has awarded the funding for the project and Mr. Schertenleib has signed. Phil Dart seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

**IEGP Cost Share Amendment Quinn** – Jordana shared the Okanogan Conservation District was awarded \$123,000 by WSCC's IEGP for a cost share contract related to a project at Quiet Valley Ranch, owned by Todd Quinn. The original project, estimated to cost \$154,336.14, involved converting the existing gravity-fed irrigation system to more efficient pivots, which was expected to save at least 20% in water usage and improve irrigation efficiency over 41 acres of alfalfa hay. At the time, the ranch utilized an aging handline system. The proposed upgrade included replacing the handline with three 1-span and one 4-span pivots. Mr. Quinn requested an amendment to the contract to include additional work. Specifically, he proposed replacing 4,880 feet of 6-inch mainline from the headworks of the pond to the end of the 40-acre field, to ensure consistent water delivery to the four pivots. The amendment also involved updating the headworks to connect the mainline to the pond fed by Spray Springs. The total cost for the amended project was \$412,050. The revised cost share at a 75% contribution amounted to \$309,037.75, representing an increase of \$179,879. The amendment was pending approval with WSCC. No motion was made in the request to approve the amendment for the Todd Quinn cost-share contract for an additional \$179,879.00 to add a pipeline replacement to the project.

**TL Ranch Wildfire Recovery Fencing Project** – Taylor reported that the property is located along Happy Hill Rd towards Conconully, WA. The landowners are 3rd generation farmers and wish to keep their acreage in production. The landowners would like assistance in rebuilding their boundary fencing after wildfires destroyed the existing fence lines. The 2015 Okanogan Complex Fire burnt through the ranch, leaving downed fence lines and unusable ground. This project aims to build new fences in the existing fence lines footprint, providing the landowners with the ability to use that acreage for grazing and apply a better prescribed/rotational grazing practice to their production. Phil Dart moved to approve Craig or Lorah to sign the cost share contract for the TL Ranch Wildfire Recovery Fencing project, and for staff to submit the addendum. Jerry Asmussen seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

**Larsen Road Update & Contract Signing** – Brant shared that the Larsen Road Culvert Removal/Bridge Installation Project (2024-02 W), funded by the Habitat Conservation Plan Tributary Funds. Aims to address a partial obstruction for fish passage on Loup Loup Creek by replacing an undersized culvert with single lane bridge. Having awarded funds for contracted work, a Request for Bid (RFB) was posted according to MRSC roster guidelines to find a qualified contractor. The bid closed on July 26<sup>th</sup> and on July 29<sup>th</sup>, district staff recommended to award the contract to Cates & Erb, Inc. Jerry Asmussen moved to approve Craig or Lorah to sign the contract with Cates & Erb, Inc. once finalized, regarding the Larsen Road Removal/Bridge Installation Project. Edd Townsend seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

**Dombernowsky Tree Removal Cost-Share Agreement** – Dylan reported that the Dombernowsky project involves the removal of select trees on the perimeter of the house, to

improve the property's fire resiliency and overall forest health. The removal of the trees will provide a break in an otherwise continuous fuel source that runs to the house and will thin the overstocked portions of the property. Phil Dart moved to approve Craig or Lorah to sign the cost-share agreement to proceed with the Dombernowsky Tree Removal Project. Edd Townsend seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

**Young Forest Health Cost-Share Agreement** – Dylan announced that the Young project involves removing the 23 mature trees out of a root rot infected pocket. Dead/dying trees will be removed, as well as seemingly healthy trees to act as a buffer. Fungicide will be immediately applied to the cut stumps to help prevent the spread of the root rot. Phil Dart moved to approve Lorah or Craig to sign the cost-share agreement for the Young Forest Health project. Edd Townsend seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

**Wilcox FH Cost-Share Agreement** – Dylan shared that the Wilcox FH project intends to reduce wildfire vulnerability for the 4.2 acres of property. The aim to reduce risks will be accomplished by conducting a thin from below, cutting standing fuels, and removing jackpots of underbrush and ladder fuels. Treatment slash and newly generated residues that are 1" in diameter or greater will be piled no greater than 10' in diameter and 6' tall. Piles of larger debris will be burned or chipped. Jerry Asmussen moved to approve Craig to sign the cost-share agreement for the Wilcox FH project. Phil Dart seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

#### **Old Business:**

**Public Comment** – There was no public comment.

**Water Bank Update** – Jordana reported that activity was limited due to the cancellation of the planning meeting, which was a result of scheduling conflict. Aspect is continuing its collaboration with the County Commissioners to finalize and submit their application, with a focus on completing the budget for administrative and grant management needs. The Quarterly Progress Report and Payment Request were submitted and approved efficiently, thanks to the work of Becky and Natalie. This approval allows us to move forward with the amendment for the Barkley acquisition. The amendment has been reviewed by both Okanogan CD and Ecology staff and is now ready for entry into the EAGL system, which Ecology staff will complete by early next week. We have clarified the eligible expenses: the grant can cover a subscription to Western Water Market to advertise our interest in purchasing water rights. However, expenses related to investigating a water right can only be covered once we have a letter of intent from the seller and have been awarded a grant from Ecology to pursue that right. Consequently, we need to identify and secure an alternative funding source for these investigations. For the next planning meeting, we will discuss securing alternative funding, developing the business and guidance document, setting up a website, and preparing for the upcoming public meeting.

#### **New Business:**

**Public Comment** – There was no public comment.

**Bonaparte Meadows Project** – Craig shared that the current owner of Bonaparte Meadows is seeking to sale 738 acres. If Okanogan Conservation District purchased the property, with

support from the commissioner's office, then the sight would be used for educational purposes. While also potentially working alongside the Colville Tribe to preserve the land.

Lorah Super adjourned the meeting at 9:46 PM.

### **Summary of Motions**

Phillip approved the August 2024 agenda; Jerry seconded. The updated agenda was approved unanimously.

Edd Townsend moved to approve the July 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. Jerry Asmussen seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

Phil Dart moved to approve the Memorandum of Understanding with the WCS, sign the agreement, and authorize Craig Nelson as our representative for the WCS. Jerry Asmussen seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

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Lorah Super  
Chair

Date

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Becky Drenner  
Finance Director

Date