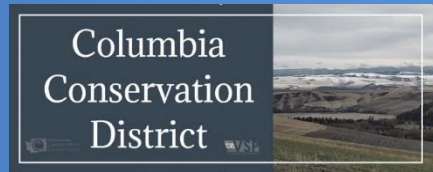


District Manager Report



February 2025

Highlights of December 2024 & January 2025-

Job Announcement/Interviews/Hire -

A job announcement went out a while back for the Administrative Assistant position. I pulled interviews after the holidays, held interviews the 3rd and 4th weeks of January and made a job offer this last week.

We had 4 applicants and 1 partial applicant (application packet was not fully completed). 3 of the 4 applicants were more than qualified for the positions with 2 showing great retention outcomes. Out of those 2, I am happy to announce that Gracie Pearson has been offered the position and accepted as of Feb. 6th. She will start Feb. 10th and looks to help us in multiple ways including daily supports and revamping our procedures (or creation where there is none currently) to help with efficiencies. Please give her a warm welcome on Wednesday! I think she will do an amazing job and has great potential to be a long-lasting employee.

Greenhouse/School ILA - Plants are still being planted and I am looking at our next batch already as we will need to order these soon for delivery in the fall.

5-year Strategy/Annual Plans/HR/Policies - I will be looking to create a couple committees to go over our 5-year and Annual plans as well as look at facility options. As Clay has announced this is his last year, I would like to go through our plans thoroughly as newer board members will utilize these plans for support as we move forward. The annual plan will need to be approved by May's board meeting and the 5-year plan will need to be approved before Clay leaves.

My employment review needs to be completed. We started this process last year and never finished. The review itself went through a committee (Clay and Cody) to develop the document and unless there are needs to change this version, we should be good to use it going forward. I think it might be helpful for the board to fill it out prior to Wednesdays meeting, then take time to discuss things together and mold the review into one. That way no one feels out of place on what to say and you all have time to discuss matters. This document will be attached along with the board packet.

Insurance has gone up - again! On everything... I'm sure you all know. As part of keeping our benefits current and enticing to potential and current employees, I am proposing that our insurance stipend be amended to \$650. Hopefully with the administration change federally, we will see some of the inflation pains slow.

Cost of Living has continued to rise, as I am sure you have all felt as well. During the Biden administration inflation rose 20% according to the Trump Administration. With this and seeing as we have continued to adapt our Pay Scales as these events have taken place, I looked at our past COLA's to evaluate what would be necessary to keep our scales relevant. State this year has set a 2.7% inflation. I would propose a 5% which should catch us up a bit more and allow us to follow state here on out.



Governance Policies – 3 years ago we started down the path of creating governance policies so the board and DM had a more functioning work relationship. One of the things that was kept in board control was approving cost share projects. As annual and 5-years plans are approved by the board, Shana Joy has stated that the cost share projects can be given to the DM for approval as necessary, since the DM should be following the approved annual and 5-year plans. This would be helpful in timeliness for project implementation as some do not take much time to complete and have ran into issues where a landowner was not wanting to wait 3-4 weeks to get approval by the board. I am proposing a change in the governance policies to give authority to the DM over approving Cost-share projects moving forward. This will be up for discussion in the Wednesday meeting.

A 1st reading of District Equipment Usage Policy – **I will look to bring this policy to you all in March.** Public, will be discussed and part of the board packet. *Example from before* - We had an instance in which the SRSRB was wanting to utilize out side by side for a meeting on the Tucannon to drive legislatures around. I think we should have a policy around this for liability and insurance reasons. Tye was at the meeting this time, but wanting to discuss the usage/rental otherwise.

River Projects – PA 26 is almost complete. Rubenser needs to create a pond for Hovrud's pump site and move the pump station. He will also move logs from the downstream area. There will be an amendment to his contract to approve the additional construction and materials. Lance will be working on as-builts. The PA 34 project looks to be completed Summer of 2025. I am looking to start procuring materials and supplies for this project starting this month and am looking for approvals on those costs at the meeting. Lance and I will be bringing the bids from this project hopefully to the meeting in March or might look to call a special meeting late march to accommodate timeframes needed. Anchor needs to update preliminaries for MS-15 and as I am waiting I discussed things with landowners which brought to light some changes that will need to be addressed. With this and the uncertainty of when this project will be ready for implementation, I am pulling the project from the RCO grant round. I will look to put this in a floodplains by design grant (DOE) in the future along with NF/SF project.

Next projects to look at will include Tucannon PA 27 (already started assessing), NF/SF pending agreement approval, Touchet MS-10 depending on CORPS actions, Touchet MS-14, and Tucannon PA 44.

Im trying to lessen our load by doing only 1 Touchet or Tucannon Project per year. We may have 2 going on (1 in each watershed) but will try to only have 1 per year to keep the district from being overloaded.

NRI/IE/CREP/VSP Programs –The 2 Irrigation Efficiencies projects are now complete. 5 NRI projects -1 which is Fundak Streambank Stabilization – this project will need to be reallocated to FY26 biennium and 2 Forestry projects – Roskelley and Allen (approved by Clay) which will utilize all NRI funds. Other NRI projects include the Hovrud Bridge (completed) and TV Golf Course Irrigation (still waiting for more information). We have multiple VSP projects including streambank stabilization, watering facility, fencing, and soon to be wireless fencing, nutrient management, spring development, sediment basin and others. Projects are being completed as we near the end of the biennium. It is great to see how many are get done this year!

Facilitated Groups – Right now I am facilitating 3 groups – Nutrient pH Management Group, Equipment rental/Usage Group, and the Touchet Subbasin Pilot Watershed group. All of these groups are looking to



vamp up as we continue through the year and I am thankful to have help organizing materials as Gracie onboarded.

Post Office lease – The post office lease will be up at the end of the year. I am looking for a committee to be put together (2 board members and I) to go over district office options. I am always looking as I drive around town. There is some potential for the Columbia County Planning Office (across the street from the post office) to come available to purchase but do not know costs or when it will be vacated. This space also does not allow us to build a pole building for nutrients or have our own nursery.

CREP – CREP audit has been completed. We are now waiting to see how many contracts have pulled. All contracts were impacted in one way or another. I'm estimating between 50-75% have been voluntarily canceled.

Finally –

Annual Outreach Event – The annual outreach event (annual producer meeting) was a hit. I was hoping for more attendees but as we went through the meeting and saw comments in the comments cards, pesticides credits, continuing door prizes, and getting the announcement out sooner will help this next year. I am hoping that as we have community and producer mini events throughout the year, we can gain more incite into what will bring more people in. Attending the meeting online might also help (would have to see how this works for pesticides credits, but tiger recently did one online for credits so it does work.)

Over all I think it was a great success! People seemed happy and very talkative! There was a glitch printing the ballots this year and the template did not print with Columbia or Charlies name on the ballot. This was easily remedied by writing the names on the ballot. But I do apologize to Charlie that this wasn't double checked in my hast to complete everything. I will make sure this does not happen in the future!

I'm looking for guidance on a annual producer tour or maybe switching it to a biannual with these mini events taking place instead.

I know this was a long report! A lot happened in the end of December and January.

I look forward to seeing you all on Wednesday!

Thank you!

Aneesha