**Blaine Soil & Water Conservation District**

**Board of Supervisors Meeting**

**February 21st, 2024@ 2:00pm**

**Carey City Hall**

Present were Bob Simpson; Vice Chair, Dan Ratliff; Supervisor, Kathy Noble; supervisor, Carolyn Firth; Commission, Kelsey Barg; Administrative Assistant. Lindsay Mollineaux, County Commissioner.

Chairman called the meeting to order @ 2:35 p.m.

**Minutes**

* The minutes from the previous meeting were reviewed. Bob moved to approve the minutes, Kathy seconded the motion all were in favor, motion was carried.

**Administrative Assistant Report**

* Kelsey gave the financial report. Kathy moved to approve the financial and task reports as presented, Dan seconded the motion all were in favor, motion was carried.

**Office Business (action items)**

* Kelsey Discussed the 5yr plan. The only adjustment that needs to be made to the report is the elections of officers for the board.
* Board members discussed if they could host a water supply by March 20th. Kelsey will try to get speakers for that date and report back to board members.
* Kelsey Discussed division Meeting is March 12th in Shoshone. She will send out invites to board members with the agenda.
* Kelsey discussed the tree sale. She has a few preorders. Preorders are due March 1st.
* Kelsey asked board members if they wanted to do a spring scholarship with Blaine County graduating seniors.

**Commission: Carolyn Firth**

NOTES FOR FIELD STAFF, FEBRUARY 2024

I'm going to hit on a relatively few items this month, not because nothing is going on but because much of the work administrative staff are currently involved with has yet to come to fruition.

FY 2024 WQPA

Loreta reports that the FY24 WQPA program is steaming along. More than $2 million of the $5 million obligated to FY24 WQPA projects has already been paid out, which means all of you made a lot of hay while the sun was shining last summer and fall. With the ridiculously open winter we’ve had so far, I understand and appreciate that work on some projects is connoting to progress. Thank you! Please continue to discuss with your Districts potential projects for FY 2025. If any project ideas for next year require Bill’s engineering assistance, let Bill know ASAP.

FY 2025 Budget Request

The Legislature has approved a maintenance budget for our agency for FY 2025, with “maintenance budget” being defined as adequate funds to maintain staff and operations at FY 2024 levels. They have yet to act on the budget enhancements in our FY 2025 budget request so at this point no decisions have been made regarding funding for the

following items:

• The $75,400 in additional funds for Districts. These funds would be added to the match funding pot for distribution to Districts according to our normal match funding process. We requested these funds to help Districts deal with the financial realties of rising costs for everything.

• The $1,000,000 WQPA funding which the Governor put into his recommended FY 2025 budget for our agency. These funds will enable us to continue—though at a greatly reduced level—the great work our field staff and Districts have accomplished with WQPA over the last two years. The Legislature may either increase or decrease the amount of WQPA funding recommended by the Governor and at present it’s too early to tell which way they’re going to go with this.

• An additional $36,000 for CREP landowner payments. These funds are not included in the Governor’s recommended FY 2025 budget recommendation but I’m aware of legislators who understand and appreciate the CREP program and are advocating for these additional funds. Please understand, the fact the above requests haven’t been acted on doesn’t mean legislators are opposed to appropriating money to fund the requests, but rather that they simply haven’t yet gotten around to considering them.

FY 2025 WQPA

In his Executive Budget Recommendations for FY 2025, Governor Litle included $1 million in WQPA funding. This represents an eighty percent reduction in the funding appropriated for each of the previous two years. If $1 million ends up being what is appropriated for our FY25 WQPA, it is likely we’ll have to revise some elements of the program. Potential revisions Loreta and I have discussed include:

• Reducing the cap on per project WQPA cost-share to some amount less than the current $150,000/project maximum.

• Revisions to how projects are prioritized or ranked, perhaps moving to prioritize projects which have no other sources of public funding over those that have already lined up cost-share from other state or federal programs. These are only ideas. Understand that any revisions will have to be reviewed and approved by our Commissioners. If you have thoughts on how we might get the biggest bang out of however many dollars we end up being appropriated for WQPA, please let Loretta and I know! Other News from the Legislature House Bill 403 is making its way through the legislative process. This bill, a copy of which is attached, would amend Conservation District law, section 22-2721 of Idaho Code to:

1. Establish provisions regarding a reduction in the number of supervisors serving on District Boards.

2. Revise provisions regarding terms of office, filling of vacancies, and quorums.

3. Make technical corrections to the language in the statute [wordsmithing]. Representative Dan Garner has worked on this bill since early last session and has several co-sponsors who share his belief that these amendments to the statute will benefit Conservation Districts.

Following is H403.

**NRCS:**

**Jesse:** Could not attend