

Upper Ohio Conservation District Minutes January 26, 2021

Members Present via teleconference

Allen Rush, Chairman
Bill Gellner, Vice-Chair
Patricia Thomas, Supervisor
Audra Cunningham, Supervisor
Holly Morgan, Secretary/Treasurer
Wayne McKeever, Supervisor

Others Present via teleconference

Julia Bolin, WVU Extension
Kim Fisher, WVCA Area Manager
Lori Cochran, WVCA/UOCD District Manager
Nick Beaver, NRCS
Jennifer Kile, WVCA
Aimee Figgatt, WVCA

Vice-Chairman Gellner called the meeting to order.

Cooperating Agency Reports

USDA-NRCS-FSA – Nick reported nothing really new happening in the District. Nick and Lauren are staffing the office in rotation, with only one of them in the office. Now is the time of the year that participants are working on Forestry, so expecting some Timber Stand Improvement, Grapevine Removal and possibly some other kind of brush management. Should have some Frost Seeding Practices completed within the next couple months. Tyler County Forester Jon Wilson is visiting a new participants property next week. This time last month was working on a CSP renewal, unfortunately it was not selected for funding, so back to the drawing board on that one. The staff have been conducting planning visits and entering conservation plans in Desktop, the new planning software. This is the second year for the software and seems a lot of the bugs have been worked out. Have been accepting applications for sign-up 2 for 2021. Have not heard a deadline for these to be in. Currently have three applications for Forestry & Wildlife Work and one, possibly two applications for a high tunnel and currently have 32 active contracts. Working on 27 EQUIP and ANA applications for sign-up 1.

WVCA – Fisher review her written report. Audit needs to be completed, District Personnel Plan needs to be submitted, place on the agenda for February if not done. Meeting in Flatwoods was canceled, however committees are meeting, so if you sit on a committee, you need to be aware of that. We have not received an opinion back from the Attorney General on the water quality question yet; will continue to keep us updated.

Forestry – None

SWA – None

WVU Extension –Bolin reported virtual Master Gardener Classes are available. Registration is now, the link is available on our Facebook page. Classes will be every Thursday starting February 18. The Small Farms Conference is virtual this year running from February 23 – 26. It is free. Ag Webinar registrations are still being accepted and these are held on Thursday evenings. Link is also on Facebook page for Grow Them, another seed program is doing seed sign-ups until January 31. Garden calendars are still available on the porch and the office is staffed from 8 – 4.

Rush joined the meeting.

Meeting Minutes

Cunningham made the motion to approve the December 15, 2020 meeting minutes. McKeever seconded the motion; motion passed.

Financial Report

Gellner made a motion to file the financial report for audit. Cunningham seconded the motion; motion passed.

Gellner made a motion that UOCD bills be paid as funds permit and coordinated by office staff. Cunningham seconded the motion; motion passed.

Funding Request

Aimee Figgatt, Spring Seed Program background. Program blossomed from Capitol District when Aimee was a supervisor there. When she transferred to the Agency, she continued with the Program, it is an easy outreach program to get the word out for our mission. It is not necessarily our job to tell them how to grow the plant, but it is to tell them the importance of the soil that plant is growing in as well as the water used to help it grow. Normally events are being held throughout the state to hand out the seeds, but due to COVID that is not able to happen. So now there is a sign-up form for seeds to be mailed out, and Aimee is seeking funding from each District for postage for mailings in their District, since this was not an item in the Spring Seed Program Budget. Each packet cost around \$2 to mail, asking us to sponsor up to 200 packets.

Supervisor Reports

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Cunningham – Participated in the call with NPCD about the NRCS shared employee, sat in on the Envirothon call, on the 8th participated in the Appalachian Grazing Conference meeting, which the conference has now been postponed until 2022. They are currently looking at holding it the second weekend in March 2022. Another meeting is scheduled to move forward with the planning if that date works out. Have been participating in the Ag webinar series that WVU is doing. They have had two so far, grazing management and small-scale poultry marketing. Was on a call through No-Till Farmer about practices to improve soil biomes. Was invited to watch “Kiss the Ground” a documentary narrated by Woody Harrelson that talks about conservation and what the agencies do across the nation to help with conservation. Was on the Grasslands evaluation call, which has been canceled for this year. Will see how the Envirothon goes virtually this year and if necessary, will put on a virtual Grasslands Evaluation Contest next year.

Gellner – on the subcommittee for the State AgEP Program and meeting weekly to modify the program. Some of the ideas include a guaranteed amount rather than using the formula we have been using. Another topic is an audit of the program.

McKeever - this month was on the communications call, was on the shared employee call on the 4th, had a State Conservation Subcommittee meeting on the 5th, Envirothon meeting on the 6th which went pretty well. Getting better at this virtual thing and think it will come together and be alright. A lot of things were placed on the webpage, four video training modules there, for teachers and students to use. It was decided to go with Google for the virtual platform and attach an app to limit the time on the test. The team presentation will be Skype or something similar. On a by-laws committee for WVACD Foundation, this is something new established to help promote educational programs to develop better understanding among the agricultural and natural resources. People want to donate to the Foundation, and we can use those funds to help promote education programs and other programs. The committee approved that, but it won't be final until the Executive meeting tomorrow. Partnership call on the 7th, Awards committee on the 12th. Association decided we need to keep the State Conservation Farmer, whatever it takes to get it done. Didn't have the regular quarterly meeting in January, but each of the standing committees met and I attended all of those meetings and the Executive Committee Meeting will be tomorrow. To summarize some of the things from the committee meetings. Legislative – there will be no Ag Day however, we are hoping letters will be sent out to our representatives throughout the state. Hoping that personal contacts can be made along with that. Only about 8 people at the Legislative Meeting. This is a very important meeting and it is important if you are on the committee that you attend the meetings and if you are unable, get someone else. We are relying on the committee to get things done. The water quality issue was discussed, the problem is, it is holding up funds across the state that Districts are needing. If we need to get it on code, then we need the answer pretty soon so we can get sponsors. We need to get it on there pretty fast or in the long run it could hold the funds up for a year or more. Legislative also established a committee, Terry Hudson, Bob Buchanan, Shirley Hyre, and Wayne to go over budget items with Brian. Natural Resources, of course Grasslands competition and Grazing Conference have been canceled for this year. Operations Committee, question on high tunnels tax issue. High tunnels are not considered a permanent structure, but they are taxing them as a permanent structure. Training modules will be coming soon. Hopefully some training on code among other things. Written material is all complete now. Working with Stonewall Resort for the April Quarterly Meeting. Hoping to be able to visit a couple of farms in West Fork during the meeting. Trying to work with our partner agencies. There was a big push prior to COVID and since then it is difficult to hold the meetings. The Districts used to hold Area Meetings. Do the Supervisors have any interest in holding Area Meetings again? WVACD has a web page. A newsletter will be sent in a week or so and it will be included in that newsletter. Century Farm Applications are due by Feb. 1 and due to John by April 1. Association Scholarships are due the first Monday in March, this year that is March 1st. Poster Contest them this year is “Healthy Forest Equal Healthy Community”, Posters and photos are due at the July Quarterly Meeting. Education District of the year is due at the July Quarterly Meeting. Changes to the Rookie Supervisor Award and those will be on the website as soon as the Executive Committee approves it tomorrow. Excellence in Conservation Communication Award changed so if you win then you will not be eligible for the following year. Younger Conservation Camp is going to be virtual, and don't know anything about older camp right now. Still having the Scholarship Auction and are trying to come up with new things for that. NACD Meeting is Feb. 1 – 10. Instead of being in New Orleans it is virtual this year and the cost is \$50. They will give you a code and then you can to whichever meeting you want to. Registration will be accepted right up to the time it starts. Lastly, I participated in 4 or 5 Envirothon Webinars. Conservation Agency and Extension have come up with a Weed Management Pilot in 5 Districts. Note this is a weed *management* and not weed *eradication*.

Thomas – was in on the shared employee meeting with NPCD. Talked with teachers about Envirothon. Having a meeting later this week to discuss this some more. Sent copies of WV Extension information out to some people. I sent out an article on the Commercial Composting Facility that Marshall University was working with. Read over Wayne's training material and gave him some positive feedback on that. I looked at LKCD's January agenda and was noticing they seem to have good participation in the Heavy Use Area that we have added to our AgEP and was encouraged by that. I signed financials at the office. I read and studied over the various newsletters and other correspondence that we have been sent. I gave the Area Scholarship information to the TC Sr. Counselor.

Morgan – Was in on the NPCD call and the Communications call. Completed and sent in the RC&D Grant information. Promoted the RC&D grant information to New Martinsville and Paden City organizations. Worked with Aimee on

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Chestnut Tree Grant signs. 24" signs are \$15 each and we would need 6. Signs have all the information about the trees and who put them there. These are really nice signs. Working on a progress report for the Tyler County and Wetzel County papers. I will include the Spring Seed Project that Aimee discussed. Posted information on Facebook, we reached 1368 people and had 12 new likes this month.

Rush – Was on the District Operations committee meeting. Wayne covered that if we have a live meeting, it will be at Stonewall Jackson Resort. It's a little cheaper there. Bob Buchanan said they are going to try to send out the most important training first. Copper pipes came in for the spring headers and I will try to get the holes drilled in them here in the next few weeks. Found a place not too far away that has the pipe in shorter pieces for about half the price of a full length of pipe. Going to check to see which is best for us.

Unfinished Business

Cooperator Agreement

None

AgEP

Hold an AgEP Committee Meeting February 8 to discuss practices.

Grant Needs

Morgan will submit a grant request to LK RC&D

Vacant NRCS/UOCD 60/40 Position Expectations

Rush and Gellner to draft expectations for submission to NPCD

Education Programs

- Rain barrel workshop update –
- Composting workshop update –
- Mushroom workshop –
- Gardening workshop update –
- Other ideas on new programs and how to proceed – nothing new
- Food desert update – Nothing new.

Century, etc. Farms Update

Received 2 applications: Century Farm from Jack Smith and Sesquicentennial application from Joe Wells.

New Business

Barrels – nothing new.

LOR – Audit \$2150.00

Gellner made a motion to submit an LOR requesting funds to pay for the audit performed by Lowe & Associates. McKeever seconded the motion; motion passed.

Correspondence

Adjournment

Morgan made a motion to adjourn. Cunningham seconded the motion; motion passed.

The next regular meeting will be teleconference February 16, at 6:00 p.m.

Minutes submitted by: Lori Cochran, District Manager

Signature of Chairman

Signature of Secretary

Date

Date