**VALLEY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

**AUGUST MINUTES 209 N IDAHO ST, CASCADE**

**WEDNESDAY AUGUST 21, 2025, 9:00 A.M. IN-PERSON/ZOOM HYBRID MEETING**

**Zoom:** [**https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88091655753?pwd=XaHxrYwWifdTvnYrk1b2qYlMJjAu4j.1**](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88091655753?pwd=XaHxrYwWifdTvnYrk1b2qYlMJjAu4j.1)

**Meeting Called to Order at 9:01am by Art Troutner**

**Members Present:** Art Troutner (Chairman), John Lillehaug, Bill Leaf, Colt Brown, Judy Anderson, Lenard Long (Associate Supervisor).

**Others Present:** Durena Farr, VSWCD District Manager; Amanda Grant (former Nezperce and Lewis SWCDs).

**Others Online:** Melissa Jayo, USBR; Janet Cherry, ERG/EPA; Brittany Brand, Boise State Hazard and Climate Resilience Institute; Jason Pretty Boy, Philanthropy Northwest; Pam Pace; Cynda Herrick, Valley Co. P&Z; Travis Jones, ISCD; Megan Brooksher, ISWCC; Bill Lillibridge, ISWCC; Kim Thompson, NFPRWC Admin; Ron Brooks, NRCS; Meghan Cline, IDEQ.

**New Business:**

1. **Bureau of Reclamation - Lake Cascade Water Operations Modeling Study:** Melissa Jayo was present but did not have information on the study. She reached out to Ryan Hedrick and Mike Poulos during the meeting, but they were unavailable. The presentation was deferred to a future meeting, with Ryan Hedrick and Mike Poulos identified as the appropriate contacts for the study results.
2. **Janet Cherry - EPA Closing America's Wastewater Access Gap Grant Update:** Janet reported on the South Lake Recreational Water and Sewer District project progress. The district is focusing on West Mountain subdivision (Phase 1) with ERG subcontracting with Keller Associates for an in-depth study. **Key challenges include finding adequate well logs for sampling** - only about a dozen well logs are available on IDWR website despite many more wells existing in the area. The project requires wells less than 100 feet deep with no confining layers for pharmaceutical and personal care product (PCP) sampling. **Four property owners in West Mountain have agreed to allow sampling access**. The sampling has been moved to next year to allow time for well log research and cost-sharing arrangements. **Sample costs are approximately $1,400 each** for 2-4 wells plus quality control samples. Valley County, Valley SWCD, and South Lake district have verbally agreed to cost-share. ERG is developing a comprehensive map of approximately 400 on-site permits in the West Mountain area, with draft expected for the October meeting. Janet will coordinate with Idaho Geological Survey (Alexis) on their Valley County groundwater nitrates study. **Community meeting minutes from June were mailed to all South Lake Recreational Water and Sewer District property owners** at a cost of $1,600, with only 4 responses received requesting email updates for all future district communications.
3. **Brittany Brand - West Central Mountains Resilience Assessment:** Brittany presented an update on the completed first draft of the resilience assessment covering four areas: built environment (infrastructure), thriving today and in the future (sustainable development/natural stewardship), effective disaster management, and sustainable economy. The assessment included targeted surveys with 35-55 responses each from regional experts. **The steering committee includes representatives from all municipalities, county, and key stakeholders including Durena Farr**. Results show validated overarching strengths and challenges, areas of divergence in community perceptions, identified opportunities, and root challenges that could have wide impact if addressed. **Workshops are planned for September-October using "challenge and solution trees" methodology** to develop specific actions with timelines, costs, responsible parties, and resources. A specialized workshop is proposed to prioritize the North Fork Payette River Watershed Coalition recommendations and county comprehensive plan amendments using feasibility and impact analysis. **Final action plan and prioritization process scheduled for November**. The project aims to help communities identify the most feasible, highest-impact early wins versus longer-term vision items.
4. **Jason PrettyBoy - Philanthropy Northwest Grant Program:** Jason reported that the Valley SWCD was selected as a successful applicant for Round 2 funding. **The district will receive $250,000** for their proposed project. Grant contracts are expected to be implemented after October 1st, pending some procedural steps. The program survived the new administration's EPA cuts through legal action, allowing distribution of approximately $65 million through EPA Region 10 (Alaska, Washington, Oregon, Idaho). **The work plan is being fine-tuned** with two main focus areas: water availability studies and lake monitoring. Judy Anderson, Lenard Long and team are developing detailed project scopes including potential purchase of a portable sonde (water quality probe) system for approximately $20,000 that would be compatible with DEQ equipment and shared between Payette Lake and Cascade Lake monitoring efforts.
5. **Megan Brooksher - Commission Update:** All 50 Idaho districts submitted WQPA applications this year for the first time. VSWCD project was not selected for funding. **The Aging Infrastructure application for Lake Irrigation District was submitted by the August 1st deadline** with results expected at the September 11-12 Water Resource Board meeting. **The Commission is moving from under ISDA to IDWR** with third-party consultants (Langdon Group and Ray Ledgerwood) hired for $95,000 to facilitate the transition. **A district survey will be distributed soon** to gather input on the potential merger. **New audit requirements** effective July 1st required biannual audits for expenditures between $200,000-$300,000 and annual audits for expenditures over $300,000. **A new natural resource conservationist wads hired for Division 1** (Northern Idaho) after 27 applications and interviews. Regarding District survey Megan commented on District input that only 1 VSWCD WQPA application has been selected for funding in last 10 years, Megan clarified WQPA **program was only funded by the State in 4 of the last 15 years** (fiscal years 2023-2026), with no funding from 2011-2022. Since the program has been funded (FY23-FY26), it remains that only one VSWCD project has been selected for funding since WQPA program restarted in FY23.
6. **Cynda Herrick - Valley Co. Planning and Zoning Updates:** September 11th P&Z agenda includes: property management business north of Ion Electric (access issue resolved), Tamarack final plat (formerly Blue Mountain), Will Smith solar panel conditional use permit (after-the-fact application), and **three Idaho Power conditional use permits** - two switching stations (one by Granite Excavation in Cascade area, one at Scott Valley Logistics facility) and one substation at Stibnite. Additional items include Perpetua converting Silver Dollar Grill in Yellow Pine to office space, Paikka Bakery expansion on Highway 55, and **Highway 55 Storage preliminary plat** (former rodeo grounds location) for 108 condominium storage units with 2 offices and bathroom facilities. The property owner had previously obtained building permits claiming personal use but is now converting to commercial use.
7. **Lenard Long - SEEP Training Update:** The University of Idaho SEEP training course is postponed until spring due to insufficient interest. **A City of McCall Stormwater Erosion Education Program (SEEP) was planned for fall** where Leonard and Art will have 10-15 minutes to discuss water quality importance and conservation district/watershed coalition best management practices. Leonard emphasized the need for direct contractor outreach rather than just advertising to increase participation in future courses.
8. **Ron Brooks - NRCS Update:** **Jerome Faulkner is the new acting State Conservationist** from headquarters on approximately 4-month detail. **Team 5 local work group meeting scheduled for September 18th at 10:00 AM via Zoom** (earlier than usual to meet state office October 1st deadline). No outside facilitator available this year due to budget constraints. **EQIP and CSP fiscal year 2025 obligations nearly complete**. Fiscal year 2025 was challenging due to Inflation Reduction Act funding being pulled back in January/February, significantly impacting forestry projects that typically receive higher funding rates. Despite setbacks, **approximately $3 million in fire recovery EQIP projects were approved** for Adams/Valley counties addressing post-fire needs. **Staff reductions statewide estimated at 25-30 people** due to various separations and retirements.
9. **Pam Pace - Water Supply and Weather Update:** Pam presented drought conditions showing the entire state in drought with Valley County experiencing moderate to severe conditions in the northeast. Within the last**90 days, precipitation was near normal**, with ENSO outlook indicating neutral status for fall/winter. She explained the Northwest River Forecast Center modeling process using historical data (1981-2024) with current model states to generate probability forecasts. **Correction made regarding previous Boise water availability presentation** - it was conducted by Christian Petrick (formerly IDWR, now with SPF/HDR) rather than Ken Neely. Pam reported that the **Big Payette Lake Water Advisory Group meeting is scheduled for August 26th** focusing on Eurasian milfoil and nearshore monitoring. The group presented to county commissioners August 6th requesting a comprehensive 5-year plan for milfoil and Sherry Maupin. **Mountain Meadows Ranch development in Donnelly** announced by Craig Groves (also developing Pine Creek Ranch) - 240 homes on 47 acres with developer providing 3.4 million water system improvements in exchange for 20 years free water and connection fee reimbursements.
10. **Lenard Long - Lake Cascade Health Advisory Update:** **First-ever location-specific health advisory issued for Van Wyck boat ramp on August 12th** after DEQ sampling found cyanobacteria toxins above recreational water thresholds. Dam location tested below threshold. Satellite imagery shows seasonal progression of cyanobacteria blooms from June through August, with **clearing beginning in mid-August in northern lake areas**. Different cyanobacteria species dominate at different times - Gloetrichia in July/August, followed by Dolichospermum and anabaena in September/October. **Health advisory posted by both Idaho Department of Health and Welfare and DEQ**. Blue Heron boat ramp shows worse conditions visually but was not sampled.
11. **North Fork Payette River Coalition Update:** Leonard reported the restoration plan is in working draft form at approximately 60% completion but needs professional editing and polishing. **The plan is over 100 megabytes and must be shared via OneDrive link rather than email**. Board members will receive printed copies for review and comments before final submission deadline in October.
12. **Agricultural Protection Area Progress:** Bill Leaf announced the **Leaf Ranch became the first property to complete the APA process** and awaits final county commissioner approval. The process required establishment of a limited liability partnership to ensure agricultural use continuation for future generations. **APA application and information will be included in the upcoming district newsletter** distributed to 1,500 recipients. Art encouraged other landowners to consider the program to protect open areas and agricultural lands in the valley.

**Action Items:**

1. **Judy Anderson** moved to approve minutes from the June 5th Board Meeting. Colt Brown seconded and **motion carried** with all in favor.
2. **Financial Reports:** Bill Leaf moved to approve June and July Treasurer's Reports, Judy Anderson seconded to approve both June and July Treasurer’s Reports and **motions carried with all in favor**.

**GOOD OF THE ORDER:** Discussion of upcoming boat tour of Payette Lake on August 24th for commissioners and decision-makers to observe milfoil infestation. Idaho Geological Survey will receive septic system mapping data from Lori Hunter to support their groundwater nitrates study. Budget preparation needed for next fiscal year.

**Date Reminders**

***August 24th Payette Lake boat tour for milfoil observation***

***August 26th Big Payette Lake Water Advisory Group meeting, 10:00 AM, McCall Public Library***

***September 3rd McCall Impact Area public hearing***

***September 4th Next board meeting, 9:00 AM***

***September 11th Valley Co P&Z meeting***

***September 11-12th Water Resource Board meeting (Lake Irrigation District results)***

***September 15th Idaho Women's Charitable Foundation final report due***

***September 18th NRCS Team 5 local work group meeting, 10:00 AM***

***October 14th Fall Division 3 meeting, Weiser***

**Meeting Adjourned by Art Troutner at 11:24 AM.** Thanks extended to Amanda Grant for attending and considering involvement with the district. Appreciation expressed to all online participants for their updates and continued collaboration.

**Chairman:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**Date Approved: September 4, 2025**  
Minutes prepared by Kim Thompson, and Durena Farr