

Ross Soil & Water Conservation District

December 13, 2023

**ADMINISTRATOR REPORT**

**FOR THE RECORD**

Tabby reached her third-year service anniversary on November 9th. Under policy, Beehive settings now reflect Tabby is accruing 6 hours of annual leave each pay period plus 4 hours of annual leave at the end of the year.

During the budget meeting with Ross County Commissioners on November 13th, the administrator:

- Furnished letter to Commissioners under ORC 325.19 (F) to state the district vacation carry over policy and holidays
- Furnished Auditor with 2024 Pay Rates Letter
- Furnished Auditor with 2023 Fringe Benefits letter
- Furnished Auditor with the annual EEOC survey

On November 13th, the administrator sent the updated inventory sheet to CORSA insurance agent Eric Braunlin.

On November 16th, the administrator signed the updated 2024 lease agreement and sent it to commissioners.

On November 22nd, Ben and Tabby completed the 2023 Ag Easement monitoring report – sent to ODA on 11/28.

**AERIAL SERVICES PROJECT**

Greg Rouse announced Allen SWCD will contract Ross SWCD for an RTK drone project near Lima. Fees were determined under Aerial Services Policy 35-2022 based on mileage and hourly rates using the ODA personnel cost calculator.

**OFFICE SPACE**

Katy Roush indicated the FSA will add up to three staff members over the next two years. Katy wished to inform the board that the FSA would support any building initiative undertaken by the district.

**DISTRICT NEWS**

SWCD, NRCS, and FSA staff held a pre-Thanksgiving chili cook-off during lunchtime on November 16th.

**DECEMBER AGENDA ITEMS:**

**CAREER DAY**

We received two submissions for the t-shirt design contest before the November 30th deadline. We can extend the deadline or choose one of the designs. I will recommend recruiting a professional artist or designer to modify the winning entry. And speaking of Career Day, Chris Bruynis sent a link to request the OSU “Bugmobile” since entomology was a requested topic.

**TREE SALE/FISH SALE/NEWSLETTERS**

I believe the best approach for the tree sale is to again this year participate in the group buy with Athens SWCD. No details are available at this time. Fender’s Fish Hatchery has designated Tuesday April 30, 2024, for fish pickup:

| <u>Size</u> | <u>Species</u>       | <u>Wholesale Price</u> | <u>Retail Price</u>               |
|-------------|----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 2” to 3”    | Largemouth Bass      | \$1.20                 | \$1.30                            |
| 2” to 4”    | Bluegill             | \$.90                  | \$1.00                            |
| 4” to 5”    | Channel Catfish      | \$.80                  | \$0.90                            |
| 2” to 4”    | Hybrid Bluegill      | \$.90                  | \$1.00                            |
| 2” to 4”    | Red Ear Shellcracker | \$.90                  | \$1.00                            |
| 1” to 3”    | Fathead Minnows      | \$.07                  | \$0.08 each or \$8.00 per hundred |
| 5” to 7”    | Japanese Koi         | \$11.00                | \$13.00                           |
| 8” to 10”   | White Amur           | \$14.00                | \$16.00                           |
| 2” to 3”    | Perch                | \$1.00                 | \$1.10                            |

Both sales are pre-order sales. Upfront expenses are minimal (bags, twine, buckets, etc.) except for \$125 to renew the state nursery vendor license. We’ll receive invoices from the vendors after the sales. In 2023, Athens SWCD was paid \$6,554.00 and Fenders Fish Hatchery was paid \$8,007.40. I’ll ask for a motion to approve the sales and associated expenses and authorize a winter newsletter to advertise the tree sale and a spring newsletter to advertise the fish sale. The last newsletter cost \$815.36.

## ENVIROTHON RECRUITMENT

The Area 5 Envirothon will be held on Tuesday April 23, 2024, at Camp Oyo near Portsmouth. In recent years, to help recruit teams, the district has paid for registration and made a donation to offset transportation costs for schools. The Envirothon committee opted to buy water bottles for participants instead of t-shirts. T-shirts will only be given to teams advancing to state competition. Registration is \$30 per team. Each school can register up to 3 teams. I will ask the board to authorize potential expenses to recruit Envirothon teams. If every school participates fully, expenses would total: \$1,886.24:

| School                    | Registration Max | Round-Trip Mileage | Estimated IRS Rate | Mileage Amount                | Driver Fee | Total Mileage | Total School Reg + Miles |
|---------------------------|------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------|------------|---------------|--------------------------|
| Adena                     | \$90.00          | 142                | \$0.680            | \$96.56                       | \$100.00   | \$196.56      | \$286.56                 |
| Huntington                | \$90.00          | 99                 | \$0.680            | \$67.32                       | \$100.00   | \$167.32      | \$257.32                 |
| Southeastern              | \$90.00          | 115                | \$0.680            | \$78.20                       | \$100.00   | \$178.20      | \$268.20                 |
| Zane Trace                | \$90.00          | 124                | \$0.680            | \$84.32                       | \$100.00   | \$184.32      | \$274.32                 |
| <b>FFA TOTAL</b>          | <b>\$360.00</b>  |                    |                    |                               |            |               | <b>\$1,086.40</b>        |
| Chillicothe               | \$90.00          | 114                | \$0.680            | \$77.52                       | \$100.00   | \$177.52      | \$267.52                 |
| Unioto                    | \$90.00          | 118                | \$0.680            | \$80.24                       | \$100.00   | \$180.24      | \$270.24                 |
| Paint Valley              | \$90.00          | 106                | \$0.680            | \$72.08                       | \$100.00   | \$172.08      | \$262.08                 |
| <b>Non FFA TOTAL</b>      | <b>\$270.00</b>  |                    |                    |                               |            |               | <b>\$799.84</b>          |
| <b>Registration Total</b> | <b>\$630.00</b>  |                    |                    | <b>Potential Grand Total:</b> |            |               | <b>\$1,886.24</b>        |

## 2024 CELL PHONE ALLOWANCE

Policy 28-2000 outlines personal cell phone use for district employees and provides for a monthly allowance amount. This amount should be reviewed annually. The thinking is that the reimbursement amount should be close to what it would cost the district to provide a phone. Here is what I found shopping for business plans (prices are per month, per line):

Verizon - \$35

AT&T - \$45

T-Mobile - \$33.62

Spectrum - \$45

I will recommend a motion keeping the phone allowance amount at \$35 per month.

## EQUIPMENT STORAGE

Policy 12-2023 includes guidelines for storage of district equipment, specifically the no-till drill, Gator, and trailer. Since the county garage was destroyed in 2021, the district has had a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to pay Tim Givens \$600 per year to store equipment in his barn in Frankfort. The staff is satisfied with the convenience of the current location partly because the county garage is inaccessible after hours. I spoke to County Engineer Charlie Ortman. He says the garage is full - but he could make room for us. He recommended keeping our current arrangement if the board is okay with the reasonable storage fee. I will recommend the board approve renewing our arrangement with Mr. Givens for 2024.

## HEIDELBERG WATER TEST

State auditors recommend board action to authorize receiving payments from Heidelberg University for maintenance and monitoring of the water test station along the Scioto River. Samples are shipped weekly at Heidelberg's expense and the district receives \$125 per week for collection. I will recommend a motion to continue this long-standing relationship.

## 2024 OFSWCD PARTNERS MEETING

The annual federation partners meeting in Columbus has moved to a new location and will be held earlier than it has been. Area Directors will meet on Monday January 22nd and general sessions and break-out sessions will be held Tuesday and Wednesday January 23rd and 24th. The location is the new Hilton at 401 North High Street across from the convention center. Parking should be better for those not staying overnight. The Vine Street garage (across from the North Market) is

around the corner from the hotel. Last year's expenses totaled \$2,620.32. This year, event registration is \$170 for a 2-day pass or \$100 for a 1-day pass. Hotel rooms are \$194 per night plus parking, meal expenses, and mileage. If all 10 of us attend both days, depending on who stays overnight, expense estimates range from \$4,400 to \$5,200 (less if not everyone attends). These estimates include \$200 to purchase an Envirothon silent auction item for the event. I will ask the board to authorize up to \$5,200 for partners meeting expenses. The event registration deadline is later, but to ensure hotel rooms will be available, **please let me know ASAP if you plan to stay overnight.**

#### **2024 OASWCDE MEMBERSHIP**

The Ohio Association of Soil and Water Conservation District Employees is an organization that provides informational events, TDP training, and offers a small college scholarship to children of members. Membership is \$15 per employee.

#### **2024 PURCHASE ORDER**

As part of the budget process, I will ask the board to approve a 2024 purchase order allocating amounts stipulated for each spending category approved in October.

#### **2024 BOARD MEETING SCHEDULE**

If we keep the same meeting schedule on the second Wednesday at 5:30 p.m., this would be the 2024 meeting schedule:

January 10  
February 14  
March 13  
April 10  
May 8  
June 12  
July 10  
August 14  
September 11  
October 9  
November 13  
December 11

I have reserved conference room D for all these dates except for conflicts in March, April, and May.

#### **JANUARY PREVIEW – OFFICER REORGANIZATION AND NOMINATING COMMITTEE**

Please give some thought to the January 2024 meeting. The first order of business will be to reorganize officer positions. Current office holders are:

Brice – Chairman  
Pam – Vice Chair  
Billie – Secretary  
Philip – Treasurer/Fiscal Agent

January also requires naming a nominating committee. The nominating committee chair should be a board member not running for re-election. The board should also name two committee members from the general public who are knowledgeable about the district. The task of the committee will be to find three candidates to run for two terms expiring at the end of 2024. Those seats are currently occupied by Pam Snyder and Philip Gray.