

**MINUTES OF THE JULY 1, 2024
AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE MEETING OF
NORTH PLAINS GROUNDWATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

The Agriculture Committee of North Plains Groundwater Conservation District met in regular session on July 1, 2024, at 3:00 p.m. in the General Manager's Office in the North Plains Groundwater Conservation District, 603 East First Street, Dumas, Texas 79029. The following persons were present:

Members Present at 3:00 p.m.:

Daniel L. Krienke, Member.

Members present via Zoom during part or all the meeting:

Justin Crownover, Member

Staff present during part or all the meeting:

Janet Guthrie, General Manager;
Kirk Welch, Assistant General Manager – Conservation Outreach;

Others present during part or all the meeting:

None.

Others present during part or all the meeting:

None.

Chairman Harold Grall arrived and called the meeting to order at 3:15 p.m.

1. - Public Comment

No Public Comment was made to the Board.

Action Agenda 2.a. - Discuss NRCS RCPP Grant Opportunity

Action Agenda 2.b. - Discuss Master Irrigator Funding

Chair Grall invited staff to comment regarding the first item on the agenda.

Kirk Welch, Assistant General Manager – Conservation Outreach, explained that while the RCPP is reported not to require a match from the applying partners, further investigation by staff revealed that a "partner contribution" is statutorily required and on a majority of projects that have been selected, the partner contribution is 50-percent or greater.

Janet Guthrie, General Manager added that the previous Dryland Rotation Project proposal was for \$5 million which would have required a \$2.5 million partner contribution, and the District is not in the position to obligate funds to that extent.

Various comments about understanding that there was no match required, and that this would not be possible without more partners to help.

Welch explained that RCPP projects that have been approved often included large contributions from special interest groups with significant cash resources to dedicate to the cause.

Committee member, Danny Krienke agreed and suggested that groups like Pheasants Forever and the Wild Turkey Federation might fit that bill with the habitat enhancement that could result from a dryland conversion practice.

Welch stated that a representative from the Texas Water Development Board indicated that the TWDB is open to grant funds awarded by their agency being used as matching funds to secure additional funds for conservation projects. However, different funding policies and administrative requirements could make the RCPP a challenge to combine with TWDB funding.

There was varied discussion about other possible partners who might be interested in supporting a District conservation project with each person offering thoughts and opinions.

At 4:15 Justin Crownover left the Zoom call.

Guthrie asked for clarification of the committees' agreement that the District should wait for the next round of grants from this program, while investigating partnerships with organizations who can bring significant partner contributions to the table.

Krienke and Grall agreed.

Next, Welch presented the current status of funding for Master Irrigator graduates. Welch stated that there is approximately \$600,000 in grants currently remaining. Based on the model of allocating \$10,000 per graduate to each graduating class and holding a second round of funding to expend leftover funds, the remaining grants should accommodate the previous graduating classes. However, there will not be enough grant funds to fulfill requests from future graduates beginning with the Class of 2025.

Krienke asked why we are low on funds?

Welch explained that some grant requests had not been approved at the amount of funds requested from the TWDB. The awards were reduced from the number requested.

Guthrie said it appeared that those making the funding decisions did not understand the timeline that an agricultural cost-share and education program needs to run an education program and then distribute funds, while working around a seasonal operating schedule. Consequently, they were less willing to commit more funds when it appeared they were not being used.

Kirk Welch agreed and stated that he and Guthrie had been making an extra effort to explain the process to their contacts at the TWDB.

There was extended discussion about what options would be going forward. Would the District be able to offer a cost-share for the Class of 2025? Would anyone attend without the cost-share? Are there other sources of funds for future classes? Could the second rounds be discontinued, since it was never guaranteed, and any extra funds be rolled over to future years?

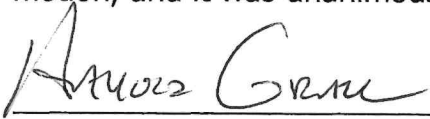
Krienke voiced concerns that all classes should get a second round of funding, if there were funds left that were not applied for during the initial application process.

Janet Guthrie stated that the TWDB Agricultural Conservation Section did get funding to continue to offer grants and those should begin in January of 2025, which would be in time to fund the Class of 2025, if the District gets the grant.

Grall agreed that second rounds should continue and the guidance from the agriculture committee is to continue with the second rounds of funding through 2024 and seek additional funds for the Class of 2025.

Adjournment.

At 4:35 p.m., Harold Grall moved to adjourn the meeting. Danny Krienke seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved by the members of the committee present.



Harold Grall, Chair



Danny Krienke, Member

