

MEMO TO BOARD: Agenda Commentary for May 3, 2023

Action Items

- a. **Wy'East Continued Advanced Precision Ag Support:** We have provided \$10,000 per year to WyEast for advanced precision agriculture and assistance to the FAST program. The proposed budget includes continuing this amount for FY23-24 and I would like board approval on this item.
- b. **Lower Deschutes Cooperative Weed Management Area Support:** Pursuant to board discussion, I have budgeted an increase in support of this program to \$15,000 per year, up from \$10,000.
- c. **USGS Mosier Gaging Station Cooperative Agreement:** I will bring the updated agreement to the board if I have it in time; the current estimate is \$14,600 for continued support. I budgeted \$15,000 since USGS mentioned it could be more.
- d. **Pick up Employee Contribution to PERS:** The proposed budget includes picking up employee contributions to PERS, which are 6% of subject salary. This would align staff increases for the year with the board approved 10% increase on District Cost Share rates. An employer pick-up has advantages for both the employee and the employer. For the employee, the pick-up portion is considered salary for computing the final average salary for some PERS benefit plans, and since the employer pick-up is not paid as wages is not subject to federal income tax. The benefit to the employer is not having to pay Social Security payroll tax. Since the 6% pick-up is based on gross pay and free from payroll taxes, an employer pick-up of an employee contribution is a less expensive mechanism for compensating employees than a comparatively valued 6% salary increase, which would be subject to payroll taxes and provide less net pay to an employee. We will be able to increase our grant billing rates accordingly, so the expense is reimbursable for grant funded hours.
- e. **Climate Resiliency Plan:** Ryan has been working with the City of The Dalles on a climate resilience plan and will give us an update.

Updates

- a. **Next Regular Mtg, June 7, 2023 1:00 PM USDA Service Center (also our Budget Hearing)**
- b. **15mile MUS** – We completed what shakedown testing we could within the water availability timeframe (our limited license expires on April 30, 2023). We ran into some interesting snags and had to practice adaptive management. We are currently working on a grant application to OWEB for continued technical assistance funding (Due May 1) and propose to conduct additional bench-scale testing this spring/summer and apply to renew our limited licenses to conduct additional on-the-ground testing this coming winter.
- c. **Highline Ditch**– Josh will provide an update.
- d. **2020 White River Fire & 2022 Miller Road Fire** – Josh will provide an update.
- e. **Weed Control** – Scott will provide an update. We've been awarded a few grants through the state and there is tremendous potential to expand the program.
- f. **SDAO Best Practices Program** – This year's topic is emergency preparedness planning. If we complete the 5 required items, we will get 10% off on our insurance premiums.

Executive Session: I would like to provide the board with an update on a couple of sensitive subjects, which are exempt from public inspection pursuant to ORS 192.660(2)(f).

Routine Reports: Committees, Agencies, Manager

Shelah Olson