

Johnson County Weed & Pest Control

MINUTES

March 7, 2024

Start time 4:00 pm Stop time 6:00 pm Next meeting April 4, 2024

Attendees: Scott Rogers, Board Chairman Dick Gould
Randy Hepp Nathan Williams
Thane Zickefoose, District Supervisor Allen Buff, Assistant Supervisor
Crystal Cundall, District Clerk

Also attending:

Margaret Smith, Landowner Wylee Knudsen, contractor
Joan Smith, Landowner

Absent board member: Tyler Benton, Vice Chairman

Agenda

- Minutes of the last meeting – Randy moved to approve the minutes of the February meeting, with a second by Dick. **Motion** passed unanimously.
- Approval of financial statements – Crystal and Thane gave an overview of the financial statements for the month for each company, as well as the budget to actual statement. Nathan moved to approve the statements with a second by Dick. **Motion** carried.
- Payment vouchers – No concerns were expressed regarding the payment vouchers. Dick moved to approve the vouchers as presented, with a second by Randy. **Motion** carried.

Old Business:

- Activity Report – Dick asked about Frontier as he'd run into one of the pilots and they were still down a pilot. Thane reported on Big Horn Airways being sold and the agricultural portion was sold to a company in Nebraska and will be sending pilots up to work with Jamie Foy. There was more discussion as to the aerial spraying and lack of available pilots with some of the contractors, but updates will be made as they are available. Thane reported the Weed Bounty meeting was held Tuesday, March 5th and the Weed Pull date was set for June 13th. The Bounty for all species was increased by \$0.50. No district funds have been spent on Weed Bounty as there have been enough funds from BLM, Forest Service, WY Game and Fish, etc. to spend. There is plenty of funding, so the increased bounties should result in more involvement from the community. Thane and Allen reminded the board the Spring Workshop was coming up the 26th- 28th at the Hampton Inn, with Craig Johnson giving the opening remarks and an ATV safety course was planned for Wednesday. Lunch will be provided on Wednesday as well as an after-hours get-together that evening at Bonds Brewery. Allen and Thane reported on the extensive work with BLM regarding SAC grants. Thane reported he would be attending the SAC meeting next week. The proposed amount being asked for Salt Cedar/Russian Olive projects is \$30,000 and \$95,000 for Leafy Spurge, both are the same as last year's requests. Thane predicts getting approved for all the funds at SAC. Thane reported the BLM reporting has required extra time in the effort to fulfill their reporting requests. The new budget with them has some carryover from the last season. All of it must be spent this year due to contract expirations, so BLM lands will have maximum spraying. Then a new agreement will signed. Allen reported Thane and he would be gone the following week for SAC conference in Casper and entomology course in Laramie, respectively. Thane reported the Conex box should be here in the next week or so. The County Road and Bridge guys are bringing crushed asphalt for the parking lot in exchange for spraying work at various county locations.

- F-450/Flatbed bids – Thane reported there have not been any bids on the F-450 but there were two bids on the flatbed. Wylee Knudsen had the highest bid of \$2000 for the flatbed. Randy moved to accept his bid with a second by Dick, **motion** passed unanimously. The F-450 will remain in use until more bids are received.
- Supervisor use of district vehicle – Thane gave a short report of his use of the district vehicle. The fuel costs were minimal, and the vehicle threw a code that caused minor repairs to be made.

New Business:

- Conversation went straight to prairie dog chemicals with Thane presenting history of why Fumitoxin/Weevilcide is again on the agenda, and a recap from the last meeting as two board members were not present for it. During the recap, he referenced minutes from past meetings and no concrete policies were ever put into place as to the cost sharing timelines. He stated the only concrete evidence of a program was the small document taped to Katie Hepp’s desk that he used since he started as a guideline. Of note, Dick stated he was at several of the meetings in 2015 and understood Rod Litzel’s plan was to never use Fumitoxin as a primary application, but as a tertiary clean-up application after ZP Oats and Rozol were primarily and secondarily applied, respectively. Wylee confirmed Rod “pushed the ZP Oats” over the Fumitoxin because of the personnel hazards when applying Fumitoxin. Thane also presented further information procured from other Weed and Pest districts in the surrounding counties. Converse County will not sell Fumitoxin unless the air temperatures are above 50 degrees F. Most of the surrounding counties used less than 30 cases, on average around 15 cases. JCWP sold 60+ cases this last season. Thane stated confidently the EPA representative will be back to audit JCWP, especially considering how much Fumitoxin was sold. Thane shared all information from the Fumitoxin label regarding the appropriate minimum temperatures for application as well as the requirement to cover all holes. Of note, the label states Fumitoxin is to not be applied unless the ambient air temperature is over 40 degrees. The label also states every single hole is to be covered even if pellets are not applied to that hole. Additionally, cost per acres were discussed with all chemicals available for prairie dogs as well as efficacy rates observed and safety concerns. Allen and Thane reported their field observations of contractors and if those contractors were applying Fumitoxin and Rozol according to the labels. Allen and Thane reported what a couple of landowners shared as concerns and observations of how their acreages were treated by their employees as well as contractors. Thane reported, if a retroactive rebate was given to the landowners that have already purchased Fumitoxin through a contractor or on their own, it would cost the district an additional \$14,441 if 50% were reimbursed or \$20,218 if 70% were reimbursed. Additionally, Thane reported, as shown in the financials, the Rodenticide expenses were already over budget by \$105,000. Some of this cost was the ZP Oats cost as they were over purchased last summer in the hopes the program would proceed as it does during normal weather conditions. Thane also recognized a budget amendment will also be done in May, closer to the new budget year. Dick expressed concerns as to what the landowners were led to believe regarding any cost sharing for the Fumitoxin. Randy mentioned the dates of the purchases by landowners and contractors do not fall within the normal months where the temperature parameters are conducive to using Fumitoxin. Margaret and Joan gave their observations and opinions regarding the Fumitoxin and Rozol use on their acreage as well as expressed concerns for future flexibility on cost sharing timelines. Margaret was also concerned her neighbor finally got on board with managing prairie dogs and seemed to have good efficacy with Fumitoxin only to find out the cost was very high. She admitted she had not spoken to him directly. Allen reported this landowner contacted JCWP directly and was not disgruntled with the cost of the chemical but was concerned about the excessive cost of the application and labor fees, which are not a responsibility of JCWP. Margaret also expressed concern for the lack of communication as she didn’t know she would get a second bill from JCWP separate from the bill she received from the applicator. Wylee provided his observations of the efficacy of Rozol and shared he has only used Fumitoxin as a “clean-up” and final application, but not as a primary application. Wylee also expressed the concern for not having his employees apply Fumitoxin due to how dangerous the chemical is and the required PPE

when applying it. Nathan asked Margaret and Joan for clarification as to their concerns for the use of Fumitoxin and the efficacy as well as if they spoke directly to their neighbor. Nathan also clarified the need to stick to the label regardless of the weather conditions and not being able to predict what the weather will be like in any given year. Scott admitted he noticed the Fumitoxin smell (a garlic like smell) was still in the air 10 days after it was applied. Dick mentioned the Fumitoxin should not be taken off the table completely but should be used as a clean-up and the safest chemical was ZP Oats. Thane posed questions to the board as to whether they wanted a year-round cost sharing for Fumitoxin. The goal was to help the landowners in case weather conditions are right for Fumitoxin use outside of the cost shared timeline. However, he suggested adhering to the timelines and cost shares/rebates already set for Rozol and ZP Oats decided at the last meeting and with some adjustments for Fumitoxin. These questions were in direct response to his conversation with Rod Litzel on a previous occasion where Rod advised Adaptive Management would best serve the landowners of Johnson County. Randy suggested adding a requirement the Fumitoxin not be sold unless there was a temperature conducive to the proper application within label parameters, similar to Converse County. Scott wanted to make sure we weren't needlessly storing the Fumitoxin due to its dangerous nature, at least in large quantities outside of the normal cost share timeline. Dick moved to keep the Fumitoxin policy the same for a 70/30 cost share on the first three (3) cases during the months of April 1st through June 30th and to only **reimburse** landowners at a 50/50 rate outside of those months. Included in the motion was the stipulation that the special projects were to be pre-approved by the district and no Fumitoxin/Weevilcide would be sold, housed, or provided by the JCWP except during the regular cost share timeline. Also included in the motion was the reiteration that all applications, regardless of the chemical used, could be randomly checked by the District Supervisor or Assistant Supervisor to ensure the applicators were applying chemicals per label requirements and to gauge efficacy. Randy seconded the motion and the **motion** passed unanimously. Discussion returned to going back and retroactively cost sharing or reimbursing the landowners that were affected by the considerable amounts of Fumitoxin used. Scott reiterated all the contractors are responsible for knowing the policies and label specifics of every chemical they are procuring from JCWP and applying to landowners. Wylee stated he applied a very small amount as a clean-up on a town that was found by a landowner. There was a great amount of discussion regarding reimbursements to landowners that had already paid for Fumitoxin last fall, but since it was decided to not reimburse landowners at the February 2024 meeting and no new motions were made, the subject died. To deter the use of Fumitoxin, an increase in bags of Rozol cost sharing was suggested. Wylee reported one 50-pound bag treats 8.33 acres. Randy made a **motion** to change the cost shared number of bags for Rozol to increase from 10 bags to 20 bags in the next season, seconded by Dick, motion carried with a unanimous vote. Wylee, being the only contractor in attendance, was asked his opinion on all of the proceedings. He brought up possible rebates on Rozol. Thane reported the issue with rebates was the high expenses of rebates and would be cost prohibitive for other weed spraying activities later in the year as it would extinguish the budget.

- Discussion was started regarding prompt invoicing and financials to improve collection and reduce outstanding AR accounts. Nathan moved to change the delinquency fees/interest to begin after 60 days from the previous 90 days and the fees would continue to be 10% per annum. Randy seconded the **motion** and it passed unanimously.
- Discussion opened regarding the special meeting for contractors on March 19th at 2pm where the Board will meet with the contractors and discuss expectations and requirements prior to the spraying season starting. Lunch will be provided. Randy moved to set the meeting for March 19th at 2pm as suggested, Dick seconded it and the **motion** passed unanimously.

Next Meeting:

April 4th, 2024 4:00PM