

**Skagit County Conservation Futures Program Advisory Committee
(CFAC)**

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, May 19, 2014

Members in Attendance

Carolyn Kelly, Chair	Scott DeGraw, Vice-Chair	Steve Sakuma	Andrea Xaver
Owen Peth	Andrea Xaver	Keith Wiggers	

Staff in Attendance

Linda Christensen, Skagit County
Dan Berentson, Skagit County
Kara Symonds, Skagit County
Kendra Smith, Innovative Environments

Open

Meeting opened at 7:00 AM

Member Update

Andrea Xaver explained the importance that the CFAC be aware of the current work to make our waters federal regulated by the Environmental Protection Agency and the Army Corp of Engineers. Carolyn will send additional information to the CFAC.

Carolyn Kelly attended a recent state technical advisory committee meeting. She learned that the RCP Program will be granting money for our local conservation programs. At a national level, officials will support approximately eight local programs. At the same meeting were discussions with tribal agencies about best available science priorities through USDA. One of the issues is a timeline that farmers can and can't apply manure. No manure applications October through April. Carolyn also mentioned that USDA said there will not be a buffer requirement in the 2014 Farm Bill for conservation easements. A meeting with Monica Hoover from USDA will be held in the near future, hopefully prior to June 6 when the grant application is due to discuss the specifics of the 2014 agreement.

Meeting Minutes

March: Keith Wiggers moved to approve the March 11, 2014 meeting minutes and Scott DeGraw seconded. The motion carried unanimously. No one abstained.

April: Andrea Xaver moved to approve the April 8, 2014 meeting minutes and Scott DeGraw seconded. The motion carried unanimously. No one abstained.

Financials

Kendra Smith reported there is approximately \$614K cash in the Conservation Futures fund. We have not made any major expenditure so far this year. We expect 2014 reimbursements from the grants provided by USDA and RCO.

Old Business

Ranking

Kendra reported that she doesn't have enough funding in her contract to complete the ranking tasks. She also reported that two additional applications were received this year. There is a legal question on one regarding a possible conflict of interest. Our legal department is handling this.

Kara Symonds reported that tomorrow she will be working with Monica Hoover and a biologist from USDA to tour the 2013 grant applicant's properties as they relate to streams. The 2013 grant agreement has buffer restrictions.

New Business

Farmland Legacy Administration Structure

Dan Berentson announced that the Farmland Legacy Program (FLP) will now be administered under the Skagit County Public Works Department, Natural Resources Division. Kara Symonds, Watershed Planner, will administer the program and is the primary county contact for all FLP contracts and outside agency communication.

Kendra Smith with Innovative Environments previously administered the program as a county hired consultant. Currently Skagit County feels a need to have county staff run the FLP to give it a county-run structure. Kara will work with Kendra assigning month-to-month task assignments.

Dan applauded the current programs success as being one of best farmland conservation programs in Washington State. The new administration under Public Works will continue the goals of the program with the assistance of outside resources.

Farmland Legacy Records

Dan mentioned that the county's Records Department continues to scan easement records into Laserfiche and should complete the project in the near future.

Salmon Maps

The CFAC is interested in seeing maps that have salmon bearing streams. Kara said she can be instrumental to assist with this effort. There are many different sources and maps to use as a tool showing these streams, but not one specific map.

Elections

Keith Wiggers suggested a new Election of Officers Policy. The position of chair and vice-chair should rotate among the committee members and rotate as follows:

Committee member representing:

1. District 1
2. Skagitonians to Preserve Farmland
3. District 2
4. Skagit Land Trust
5. At large/Agriculture Industry
6. Conservation District
7. District 3

Terms shall be two years. The representative (committee member) of the next number on the list shall be vice chair. If a representative is unable to serve when it has become his or her “turn” for an office, or that position is vacant, then that office will go to the next representative on the list. A vote will still be held early in the early to formalize the process.

The Conservation District representative, Carolyn Kelly is currently the Chair. Scott DeGraw, representing District 1 will be the next Chair and Owen Peth, representing District 1 will be the Vice Chair.

Motion

Steve Sakuma moved that the process to elect a new Chair and Vice Chair will be a rotation process among committee members. The order is: 1) District 1; 2) Skagitonians to Preserve Farmland; 3) District 2; 4) Skagit Land Trust; 5) At Large/Agriculture Industry; 6) The Conservation District; 7) District 3. The rotation will usually take place during the first meeting of the calendar year and a formalized vote will be taken. If a committee member is unable to serve when it has become he or her “turn”, or that position becomes vacant, then that office will go to the next representative in the rotation list.

Discussion

Currently, the CFAC Chair and Vice Chair will immediately begin a rotation and the next rotation and vote will occur January 2016. Currently the Chair is the representative from the Conservation District, Carolyn Kelly. The new Chair will be Scott Degraw from District 3 and the Vice Chair will be Owen Peth from District 1.

Keith Wiggers seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously. No one abstained.

Fees to Change an Easement

Keith reported that the Land Trust does not charge the landowner administration fees when the landowner requests an amendment to a Conservation Easement. It could be construed that in doing so, the holder of the easement (Land Trust, County etc.) is being complicit in the change. Although some changes could be positive, some requests are in conflict with the intent of the easement. In any case, someone could look back and claim that the landowner "bought" their change.

Everyone needs to recognize that easements are serious documents, and that any change be restricted mostly to clerical errors or oversights or if the conservation values are enhanced. In no case should there be any financial benefit to the landowner.

Next Meeting

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 a.m.