

**Skagit County Conservation Futures Advisory Board**  
**Meeting Summary**  
February 13, 2024

**Members in Attendance**

Scott DeGraw                      Audrey Gravley                      Andrea Xaver  
Margery Hite                      Sarah Stoner (ex-officio)

**Members Absent**

Jim Glackin  
Keith Morrison  
Owen Peth

**Staff and Others in Attendance**

Jenn Johnson, Skagit County Public Works  
Kai Ottesen, Belle Bean Services  
Rebecca Rising, Skagit County Public Works

Scott called the meeting to order at 7:30AM.

**Review Agenda**

Agenda approved.

**Approve January 9 Meeting Summary**

Audrey made a motion to approve minutes; Andrea seconded. All in favor.

**Annual Monitoring Report: 2023**

Kai reported that monitoring work is wrapped up for 2023 easements, with 186 easements monitored. Discussion included impervious surface calculations for each FLP easement, which are now part of the monitoring summary report spreadsheet. Twelve easements came into the FLP program already at or in excess of the maximum impervious surface allowed in the easement restrictions. Five additional easements are close to but have not exceeded their impervious surface allotment.

Kai is working with Sarah to coordinate content of the Annual Monitoring Notice letter that is sent to all easement holders. The annual letter as written does not note individual easements. As the body of protected properties grow, change owners, have multiple owners, the change to list specific properties in these Annual Monitoring Notice letters creates a challenge -- since one landowner can have multiple protected properties enrolled in FLP, or one protected property can have multiple landowners at different addresses.

The Annual Monitoring Notice letter historically mails out in July. Timing of the Annual Monitoring Notice letter will be moved up earlier in the year, to springtime (May), following on the heels of the FLP Annual Report printing. Two benefits of this earlier timing for the monitoring notice letter: including a copy of the annual report along with the monitoring letter and sending notice to landowners prior to their busier summer season.

## **Applicant Property Scoring/Review**

### **FLP 253**

The group reviewed and scored FLP property #253, comprising of 66 acres and 1 development right south of the town of Conway, bordering Skagit-Snohomish counties.

The property scored as follows: *Core Criteria 54, Edge Criteria 31*. The property scored highest in Core Criteria, which emphasizes the protection of a critical mass of farmland to protect agricultural viability.

## **Property Updates**

The group discussed updates on the properties currently in queue for agricultural conservation easements. The queued applicants encompass 700 acres and 15 development rights.

## **Marketing & Application Process**

### **FLP Press Coverage, January/February 2024**

The Year-in-Review press release recapping properties protected in 2023 still has traction in the news, with two articles in area news.

La Conner Weekly News featured [Skagit County preserved 425 acres of farmland in 2023](#) last Wednesday, February 7, 2024, (two of the five properties protected 2023 were in La Conner. Also, [Protected Skagit County farmland acreage grows with local legacy program](#) article ran in *My Bellingham Now* (affiliated with KGMI 96.5 FM and 790 AM) after the reporter contacted Sarah for more information.

Conversations continue with Cascade Daily News reporter, who is interested in adding Skagit ag to their coverage. Sarah alerted him to the Skagit Ag Summit which he attended and subsequently covered in the news today, February 13, 2024: [Skagit farmers navigating complex water issues, variable weather challenges](#).

### **Farmland Legacy's \$100,000 Land Transfer Navigator Grant**

Sarah reported on the grant training hosted in Savannah, GA, in January. Farmland Legacy is one of only 36 entities across the nation awarded a [\\$100,000 grant over a 4-year period](#) starting last fall, from American Farmland Trust. The goal of the Land Transfer Navigator grant: to support transfer of agricultural lands to the next generation of farmers.

Skagit County was well-represented at the January training, with local organic farmer Anne Schwartz (Blue Heron Farm) hired as a consultant for the training, Elizabeth Bragg (Long Hearing Farm) newly hired by American Farmland Trust to represent the PNW region in succession work, and Sarah Stoner as Skagit County Farmland Legacy program coordinator.

## **Member Updates**

Members discussed the information they might like to hear from upcoming March 12 meeting guests from the Assessors' Office, Danny Hagan, Skagit County Assessor, and Annette DeVoe, Chief Deputy.

**Financial Summary**

The financial summary is updated for 2024 and reflects easement properties closed and recorded.

**Conservation Futures Annual Revenues 2023**

2023 Conservation Futures revenues, which totaled \$1,188,095-, are as follows:

*Taxes*

Real & Personal Property Tax	\$987,691-
Sale of Tax Title Property	\$772-
Leasehold Excise Tax	\$6,336-
Timber Excise Tax	\$8,267-

*Intergovernmental Revenues*

DNR—ALEA	\$950-
State Land & Timber Sales	\$16,040-

*Miscellaneous Revenues*

Investment Interest	\$28,545-
Other Interest Earnings	\$68-
Space Facility Lease LT&DNR	\$350-
Private Contributions	\$137,835-
Misc. Revenue	\$79-
Other Misc. Revenue	\$1,162-

Higher than usual Private Contributions is attributed to \$137,500 in 2023 contributions from City of Burlington Agricultural Heritage Credit program.

**Administrative**

**CFAC 2024 Meeting Dates**

March 12	July 9	November 12
April 9	August 13 (tbd)	December 10
May 14	September 10	
June 11	October 8 (tbd)	

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 AM