

Skagit County Conservation Futures Advisory Committee
Meeting Summary
April 11, 2023

Members in Attendance

Audrey Gravley	Andrea Xaver	Jim Glackin	
Keith Morrison	Scott DeGraw	Trisha Logue (ex-officio)	Jack Moore (ex-officio)

Members Absent

Owen Peth	Margery Hite
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Staff and Others in Attendance

Grace Kane, Skagit County Public Works
Kai Ottesen, Belle Bean Services
Sarah Stoner, Skagit County Public Works

Scott called the meeting to order at 7:00AM.

Review Agenda

Agenda approved.

March 14 Meeting Summary

Andrea made a motion to approve minutes with one typo correction; Keith seconded. All were in favor.

Easement Status, Property Updates

The group discussed updates on the six properties currently in queue for agricultural conservation easements. The queued applicants encompass 730 acres and 15 development rights.

The group discussed status of FLP-175 currently pending a conversion request with Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO). The conversion is still pending RCO director review.

Sarah reports that the second appraiser now on assignment is still pending. They report delays due to their project load.

Marketing & Application Process

Annual Report 2022

The group reviewed and discussed a preliminary draft of 2022 Farmland Legacy Annual Report. Distribution of the report will be same as last year (*Skagit Herald, La Conner Weekly News, Anacortes American*) with the addition of *The Concrete Herald*.

Discussion included how much of the information and articles to repeat each year. The report will repeat some articles every other year, since not all information has to appear as-is each year.

Also discussed was the inclusion of the Ag Lands Preservation Code properties. Five properties in 2022 were protected using the Ag Lands Preservation mechanism (227 acres in total), while five properties in

2022 were protected using the Farmland Legacy program (162 acres in total) which is a Purchase of Ag Conservation Easement (PACE) program that extinguishes residential development rights on farmland. The [Agricultural Land Preservation code](#) provision allows for the subdivision of a lot of record into a one-acre tract for an existing house when the property owner places a conservation easement on the remaining farmland.

FLP Property Ranking: Original, Core, Edge Criteria

Scott opened the discussion on FLP Property Ranking & Scoring system with a level-setting historical overview.

The Edge and Core scoring was developed in 2011 with consulting help from AFT. This replaced the original scoring system from 1997 that the FLP/CFAC first used. CFAC members opted to keep the original scores on the score sheets as well, for comparison as they transitioned to the new system. The original score rating never was removed. It's time to move forward with only the Core and Edge scores.

The group reviewed two recently scored properties as examples of how the Original Score remains flat; it does not reflect the threat of conversion or mass preservation of farmland like Edge and Core Scores:

- FLP 167, adjacent to Mt Vernon city limits, scored highest in Edge category, which rates the threat of conversion for a specific property. 61 Edge Score, 36 Core Score (47 Original Score).
- FLP 249, north of La Conner, scored highest in Edge category score, which prioritizes the mass preservation of farmland for a specific property. 85 Core Score, 45 Edge Score, (45 Original Score).

Scott explains that CFAC's next big step in the process is to clarify categories in the scoring mechanism. After this is done, CFAC can work to develop a proposed 'multiplier tool' based on a formula tied to the scoring. This proposal would be put forward to the Board of Skagit County Commissioners.

As further historical background, Scott shares that NRCS grants require an appraisal. When Scott joined the CFAC as a member in 2008 is roughly when FLP/CFAC shifted to appraisals as the valuation tool. This shift was in part due to requirement of grants. Historically, at the program's inception in 1997, a valuation formula tool was used.

Member Updates

Andrea made mention of the featured property in *Skagit Valley Herald* latest real estate insert, *RE Weekly*: a 7.5-acre farmland parcel for sale. Andrea stresses this real estate offer as a clear example of the importance to save every piece of farmland no matter the size.

Jim points out his observation that the price per acre of farmland is increasing. A farmland property sold recently at \$20,000 an acre. The farmland was improved with greenhouse and nursery stock that wasn't included in the valuation. Jim is not sure if the property being discussed had water rights. Jim and Keith concur that \$13,000 per acre is a more reflective of the current average for farmland.

Jack Moore, new Planning Development Services Director for Skagit County, is in attendance with introductions and a welcome.

Jim shared that the subcommittee he is chairing (FLP Acceptance Criteria Recommendations currently looking into parameters for acceptance of Non-Development Right Ag Land Applications) is delayed in reporting on proposals this month due to a family emergency.

Financial Summary

The financial summary is updated for 2023.

Administrative

CFAC 2023 Meeting Dates

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

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 AM