

Skagit County Conservation Futures Program Advisory Board
Meeting Summary
May 14, 2019

Members in Attendance

Jim Glackin Andrea Xaver Scott DeGraw Wendy Pare
Owen Peth

Members Absent

Steve Sakuma
Keith Morrison

Staff and Others in Attendance

Kara Symonds, Skagit County Public Works
Tara Naylor, Skagit County Public Works

Scott called the meeting to order at 7:00 AM

Member Update

Wendy gave some updates related to the Washington State Conservation Commission. Carol Smith was appointed the new director of the Commission. Smith previously worked at the Commission managing the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program and replaces Mark Clark who retired. Ray Ledgerwood also retired and Shana Joy replaced him as the Regional Manager Coordinator. Finally, Jean Fike is now the Puget Sound Regional Manager and she will be based out of the Skagit Conservation District Office. Jean previously worked at the Washington State Department of Natural Resources.

Kara shared the County news that Tim Holloran, the County administrator, is retiring on 5/31. Owen shared that he had a meeting with Jenna of the Drainage District Consortium on replacing the outlet of Joe Leary slough. The plan is to replace 12-4' pipes with barn door style gates. Andrea shared a recent (4/29) Skagit Valley Herald article on how farms are changing in the Skagit Valley according to the 2017 Ag Census. Of the six farm size categories, only two increased since the last census of 2012: 1-10 acre and 500-1000 acre farms.

Jim shared that there was recent news on Seattle City Light and Ecology worked on an agreement where Ecology will purchase water from SCL to cover homes that were built after the instream flow rule and some limited new construction. Andrea added that the PUD is looking at a waterline up Little Mountain Road.

April Meeting Summary

Andrea moved to approve the 04/09/19 meeting summary; Owen seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

FLP 199 Application

The group discussed the landowner and Ducks Unlimited presentation from the April meeting. The group reviewed the concerns including impacting neighbors, attracting birds, and their long-term farming goals. Scott will discuss the project with neighboring landowners and report back to the group on his discussions in the June meeting.

Farmland Outside of Ag-NRL

The group discussed SPF's presentation from the April meeting. Andrea reiterated that there is farmland that was removed from the Ag Reserve designation in the mid-nineties so there is farmland to protect that isn't necessarily zoned Ag-NRL. Andrea asked if Kara could bring a map of zoning and UGAs to future meetings for reference.

FLP Contractors

The group reviewed the six FLP monitoring agent rankings. Tara rolled them up into one spreadsheet. Kara, Tara, Andrea, and Owen will interview the top three ranked candidates and report back at the June meeting.

Appraisal Review

The group reviewed a summary of appraisals that Tara put together using data from the past four years of Farmland Legacy Program appraisals. The Program conducts a full before and after appraisal for each acquisition and the offer to the landowner is the difference between the before and after valuations. The 'before' valuation is comprised of the land value in fee simple and the 'after' valuation is the land value after the encumbrance of the easement (and removal of development rights). As Mr. Suttles has previously reported to the group, the before values have remained fairly consistent over the years. However, the after values are increasing at a faster rate, i.e. land that is encumbered by an easement is selling for more per acre. Since the Program offers the difference in values between the before and after figures, the offers have been decreasing (due to the after value rates increasing). This information was brought to the committee as context for valuations of easements.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 AM