

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

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday November 10, 2015

Members in Attendance

Scott DeGraw	Carolyn Kelly	Owen Peth
Steve Sakuma	Keith Wiggers	Andrea Xaver

Members Absent

Mike Hulbert

Staff in Attendance

Kara Symonds, Skagit County Public Works
Linda Christensen, Skagit County Planning & Development Services

The meeting opened at 7:00 a.m.

Member Update

Proposed Conservation an Development Incentive (CDI) Program

Andrea mentioned that the proposed CDI program was previously called TDR. She encourages all CFAC members to get involved and rally for the Farmland Legacy Program.

Carolyn has problems with the CDI staff report. She read onerous facts about strings attached for Federal funding. She is bothered by the term; *strings attached*, and concerned the use of this language could hurt the VSP, at least through the public eyes. She felt the staff report should not have mentioned federal money in a negative tone. Carolyn said receiving areas must be better defined and figuring out the program's details later is ridiculous. Andrea added that staff has not done their homework.

Carolyn is troubled with the market based value and not an appraised based value.

Andrea said CDI might use language that compromises the Farmland Legacy Program. She is concerned a private firm will be hired to administer the proposed program.

Several CFAC members had comments on how this program will cover staff time.

RCPP

Carolyn explained there is one million dollars of federal funding secured through the RCPP for properties in the Thomas Sub-Creek Basin. \$500K is secured for the Conservation District and \$500K secured for the landowner.

Meeting Minutes

Carolyn moved to approve the August 11, 2015 meeting minutes and Owen seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Joint meeting with Skagitians to Preserve Farmland (SPF)

Scott explained the advantages of having a joint planning meeting with SPF to discuss the large property near Cook Road and the opportunity to share RCPP funds.

On a side note about RCPP funds, Carolyn said Roylene Rides At The Door from NRCS has remarked there is federal money for ag land conservation not being applied for. An idea is for a combined county application (Whatcom, Snohomish, Skagit) and request State money as match. Roylene told Carolyn there are ways to use language in the easement to show no attached string language. There will be farm plans, but no buffers.

Monitoring

Eric Nelson, the County's monitoring contractor, submitted his monitoring report update. He is current on nearly all monitoring tasks and submitted the USDA reports to meet the federal deadline. The monitoring worksheet shows 65% of the work completed through August. Monitoring is at 80% completion and will finish the remainder by years end.

Carolyn asked what percentage of the easements are 39/1. The worksheet shows all the 39/1 easements. She wants to know because the Farmland Legacy Program pays for the monitoring, even though they are not a part of the FLP. Carolyn wants to forecast costs for the proposed CDI program. Scott added up the 39/1 properties which came out to be about 20% of the total easements and the average monitoring for these properties was 2-3 hours per year.

Eric reported there were no new violations. Most properties in the program do not have structures.

Keith mentioned baseline information used for monitoring is best derived from the appraisal. It's challenging to have an accurate baseline for the earlier properties in the program because appraisals were not done. Kara said, using aerial photographs are helpful.

Financial update

Kara reported the amounts in the FLP cash and investment accounts vs expenses.

Other Business

Kara is working on finalizing the easement incorporating RCO language. She also gave an appraisal update and that at least one pending easement will be sent to the landowner this month for approval and signature.

Kara will bring information regarding the four new property applications to a early 2016 meeting.

Scott asked what the plan is to bring in new applications. Kara responded there are several interested parties; however, there is upfront work, e.g. lot certification. It was mentioned that the FLP could be a presentation topic at the 2016 Ag Summit and cited in the annual FLP report. An outreach plan is needed. A FLP brochure could be inserted in all property tax notices.

Keith pointed out there could be an opportunity for landowners to have their cash sooner without using grant funds.

Owen asked staff to make a new easement map with FLP number. Linda said she would contact the GIS department.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 a.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, December 8, 2015.