

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

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, March 11, 2014

Members in Attendance

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

Staff in Attendance

Kendra Smith, Farmland Legacy Program Director
Linda Christensen, Skagit County
Dan Berentson, Skagit County
Ryan Walters, Skagit County
Eric Nelson, Monitoring Contractor

Open

Meeting opened at 7:00 AM

Member Update

Andrea Xavier asked that the Farmland Legacy Program (FLP) newsletter be updated. The previous one is dated 2009.

Meeting Minutes

Keith Wiggers moved to approve the January 14, 2013 meeting minutes and Andrea seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Financials

Cash Flow Statement

Kendra Smith reviewed the cash flow statement and explained that this document is a fluid document tool demonstrating funding “what ifs.” The yellow highlighted items are the “what if projections.” for funding sources. Currently there are 10 properties pending that are listed in the 2013 USDA Agreement; however, the county is currently studying whether this agreement needs an amendment due to language issues. There are two pending properties that have not been submitted for USDA funding. Scott DeGraw discussed whether it is best to close on properties now with the money in hand or wait for USDA funding approval. He asked that the CFAC come to a consensus on how they will proceed; a policy never established.

USDA Contract Status

Kendra spoke about the 2013 contract amendment and her discussions with Roylene Rides at The Door and Jeff Harlow both over the phone and via email (the CFAC had been sent the email). The amendment involves buffers on salmon streams, a Resource Management System conservation plan and the area of the actual easement. Kendra illustrated properties with waterways and how we can possibly modify the acres in the easement. Carolyn said that the CFAC has not discussed if this is the right way to proceed. This discussion is preliminary. Carolyn mentioned that the Voluntary Stewardship Program may play a big part in the future of the easements. Kendra mentioned the Wetland Reserve Program, which could be another option for the FLP, if landowners wanted to place the riparian portion of their property into a riparian easement and get paid for it; however, there are caveats to this type of easement.

Scott is concerned on how to move forward because the 2013 rules have not been finalized and the FLP is moving into 2014 agreements; the USDA 2013 Agreement is a moving target and the 2014 agreement language has not been finalized by USDA. Carolyn suggested that the county have a face-to-face with USDA and ask specifics on where this program is headed. Carolyn will make an outline for this meeting; possibly a telephone conference to discuss the 2013 agreement amendment. Dan is concerned with e-mail's going back and forth between the County, and USDA because it becomes a "he said she said" type of dialog.

Carolyn distributed the guide to the new Farm Bill and ranking worksheet. Keith said it would be good to know which properties have fish bearing streams which will help the CFAC make decisions on which properties that we can possible move forward and keep others pending. Keith did say that it is important to know how the 2013 contract will be amended.

Monitoring Report

Eric Nelson reported there were no violations in 2013; however, a couple of properties are currently in legal review for particular issues. One of the properties in for review was funded by the Washington Recreation and Conservation Office.

Eric said that a letter will be sent to all landowners reminding them about the easement monitoring compliance requirements. He mentioned there is a trouble spot in regards to the parcel number re-numbering for the 39/1 easements. Dan Berentson said he will work with the Assessor's Office and Eric for a solution to lessen the confusion. Kendra said that parcel numbers sometimes change with different activities such as platting, but what is important is the legal description.

Global Easement Template

Ryan Walters provided an overview on why the easement template needs to be revised. The County legal department wants one global easement that will include the 39/1 split, which is a short plat, that the Planning Department uses. There are many inconsistencies and many

format issues have been fixed. The easement terms are the same except for the subdivision pages. Scott wants the easement to be proofed by a third party at closing to double check accuracy. This discussion will be continued at the next meeting.

Washington State Recreation and Conservation (RCO)

Kendra explained the 2 year process for submitting a RCO funding application and how they take this information to the legislators for funding in the following year from the submission. Kendra asked the CFAC if they want her to move forward with RCO funding request and consensus of the group is to proceed.

Ranking Properties

Ranking will be discussed at the next CFAC meeting. Owen Peth mentioned that the USDA scoring sheet might need refinement, i.e. size of farm. Kendra has a concern if USDA gives the county a quick submittal turnaround before the CFAC has had a chance to rank. Is it ok for her request the ranking information via e-mail? The CFAC agreed.

Triple J

Kendra distributed maps and discussed the property ownership and subdivision issue. There are two requests to subdivide by different property owners. This is allowed in their easement with certain restrictions. It is up to the Planning Department to process the plat applications.

Next Meeting

In addition to other topics, fees to charge property owners for changes to their easements will be discussed. Keith will bring examples of language and fees that the Land Trust uses. Also, CFAC elections will be held.

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 AM.

Submitted by: _____

Linda Christensen

Approved by the CFAC Board on: May 19, 2014

Chair Carolyn Kelly