

Skagit County Conservation Futures Advisory Committee
Meeting Summary
April 12, 2022

Members in Attendance

Andrea Xaver	Jim Glackin	Scott DeGraw	Hal Hart (ex-officio)
Audrey Gravley	Keith Morrison	Owen Peth	Trisha Logue (ex-officio)

Members Absent

Margery Hite

Staff and Others in Attendance

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

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

Review Agenda

Agenda approved.

March Meeting Summary

Andrea noted one minor syntax typo to correct. Jim made a motion to approve; Andrea seconded. All were in favor.

Easement Status / Property Updates

The group reviewed the map of queued properties; Sarah provided updates on the properties in the queue. The queued applicants encompass 370 acres and 8 development rights.

The group discussed water rights relative to the Farmland Legacy Program and relative to the value of farmland in the Skagit in general. Also, general discussion regarding appraisal values relative to development rights and to 1-acre building lots created from the [Ag Land Preservation Code, SCC 14.16.860](#).

Marketing & Application Process

Annual Report 2021

Sarah walked the group through a digital draft of the 2021 Annual Report.

- Distribution date of May 5, 2022, Thursday, for 2021 Annual Report insert into Skagit Valley Herald; insert May 10 into Anacortes American; insert May 11 into La Conner Weekly News.
- Follow up direct mailings of the annual report to stakeholders both local and regional with signed letters from the Commissioners and Public Works Director Grace Kane.
- Plus email of digital link to stakeholders both local and regional; and social media announcements sharing the digital version of annual report.

Final file is due to Skagit Publishing April 25, 2022, Monday. Corrections and input from CFAC members are due by noon April 20, Wednesday.

FLP In the News, March 2022

Sarah shared that the reporter for La Conner Weekly News contacted her as a follow up to Sarah's presentation at the February 2022 Ag Summit. The resulting article printed in the [March 16, 2022 issue of La Conner Weekly News: "Ring Lane acreage now protected from development."](#) This is the third local media feature of FLP in the past seven months, September 2021 to March 2022.

Any mention of FLP in the news before September 2021 appears to date back to 2015, totaling three media mentions of FLP in the prior decade (between 2009 – 2020).

FLP on Social Media: Faces of Farmland Legacy

Sarah shared that beginning in April 2022, she is posting on social media a "Faces of Farmland Legacy" feature. Tied in with the current month, posts include photos of the farm or farmer. These posts are photo-dependent since social media relies heavily on images. For this month of April, Viva Farms and the Johnsons are featured. They both protected their farmland in April (2020 and 2013).

The Morrisons are scheduled to be featured on the County Facebook page in June, with an FLP easement protecting their 119 acres as of June 2015. Keith Morrison shared a quote recently about their farm's struggles and what the work—of farming and of farmland preservation—means to him which was shared along with the photos of Darrin and Keith on their land.

Easement Review Subcommittee

(Members: [Andrea](#), [Keith](#), [Owen](#))

Purpose: 1. Review the current FLP easement template to identify what might be obstacles to a landowner signing the Conservation Easement; recommend what might be considered for elimination, and/or not relevant to conservation of the ag land; 2. Review the current FLP conservation easement and the Subcommittee's recommended changes from a legal standpoint to ensure that the contract is watertight and ironclad.
Subcommittee chair: Owen

Owen reports that, with careful review by the Easement Review Subcommittee, each member now has a clear understanding of the purpose and function of all the restrictions included in the easement. Owen notes that it was interesting to see how the conservation easement changed over time; it's unclear under whose direction those changes were made. Owen would like to see the reasoning on why certain things are now included when they were not previously. Owen would like a sit-down with County Public Works legal counsel for input on the subcommittee's suggested changes.

The subcommittee will write up the proposed easement changes via Track Edit.

Valuation Process Review Subcommittee

(Members: [Scott](#), [Margery](#), [Audrey](#), [Jim](#))

Purpose: make recommendations, if needed, to improve the overall valuation process (versus the appraisal process which is simply one tool for valuation. Evaluate barriers to participation: Is it our appraisal amounts that is the issue? Or do we need to have our appraisals approached differently? See below including a review of the FLP Property Ranking/Scoring Process Review—how the scoring process relates to valuation.
Subcommittee chair: Scott.

Scott reports that the Valuation Process Review Subcommittee met in March. The subcommittee's three considerations include: 1. bringing scoring into the process; 2. coming up with four to five 'pricing

premiums’ or ‘multiplier’ characteristics that are critical to valuation of farmland under threat; 3. the use of other appraisers. Scott notes that the program’s currently contracted appraiser will soon be retiring.

Jim recommends a more directed appraisal that includes future risk; Sarah inquires about a procedural change with the CFAC providing Sarah as program coordinator with more directed appraisal values rather than simply requesting an appraisal. Trisha suggests the concept of having the appraisal—and then an additional separate ‘multiplier’ tool tied to certain features (for example, tied to the property’s proximity to I-5 or other scoring attributes).

Member Updates

Andrea shares the recent news that Vancouver BC is restricting foreign purchases for the next two years. Scott mentions that, for some time prior, there was a surcharge tax on property purchases from foreign entities. Jim recommends that the group drive by the new Amazon building in Arlington, and the development of 300 or so homes. Owen points out the Amazon building in Skagit County near the port.

Sarah shares her observation that with the Ag Lands Coordinator position at the County now full time since late May 2021, she is able to move properties through the Farmland Legacy queue faster than was able in the previous decade when the position was allocated at 0.3 FTE. This is great news in support of the preservation program—and the faster speed of protection also translates to the need to increase the number of properties in the queue than previously. Strategy and continued marketing work are essential.

Financial Summary / Conservation Futures Fund 122

The group reviewed the status of the 2022 revenues and expenditures to-date. Total properties closed in 2022 to-date: \$90,000 in easement acquisitions representing 90 acres and 1 development right.

Administrative Business

CFAC 2022 Meeting Dates

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

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 AM