

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

**Meeting Minutes**

Tuesday, May 14, 2013

**Members in Attendance:**

Keith Wiggers	Scott DeGraw	Carolyn Kelly
Mike Hulbert	Andrea Xaver	

**Staff in Attendance:**

Kendra Smith, Program Director	Linda Christensen, Skagit County
Ryan Walters, Skagit County	Dale Pernula, Skagit County
Dan Berentson, Skagit County	

**Others in Attendance:**

Allen Rozema, Skagitionians to Preserve Farmland  
Tom Bugert, Outreach Director, Washington Wildlife and Recreation Coalition

**Open**

Meeting opened at 7:00 a.m.

There were not additions or deletions to the agenda

**Meeting Minutes**

February: Keith Wiggers moved to approve the February 12, 2013 meeting minutes as presented and Mike Hulbert seconded. The motion passed.

March: Keith moved to approve the March 25, 2013 meeting minutes with corrected typos and Mike seconded. The motion passed.

April: Keith moved to approve the April 9, 2013 meeting minutes with corrected typos and Mike seconded. The motion passed.

**Member Update**

Andrea Xaver requested an update on the Transfer of Development Rights project at a future meeting. Mike will check with Kirk Johnson.

Allen Rozema gave an update on the draft SEPA document and mentioned that there are many rules that favor agriculture. He will forward the draft to Kendra Smith and Carolyn Kelly. He also stated that another bill is being introduced that might protect the draft SEPA document which will also protect agriculture interests.

## **Financials**

Kendra said to date, no new properties have closed. The second half payments will be distributed this month per the conservation easement contracts.

## **Old Business**

### USDA Funding

Carolyn recapped the April meeting with Monica Hoover from USDA stating how the CFAC group can support their farmland conservation program. She continued to say that unfortunately, the USDA program has stalled due to tribal and other issues being proposed. Carolyn asked that the CFAC again look at the 2011-2012 ranking applications and determine whether to move forward with or without USDA funding.

Kendra demonstrated on the white board the advantages and consequences of waiting for USDA approval for funding or moving forward without their funding.

Carolyn emphasized that the applicants have agreed by signing the letter of intents, knowledge of previous NRCS/USDA easements and not the issues currently being proposed that are stalling projects. Carolyn is hesitant to accept any new rules on the property owner's behalf. Kendra has contacted each applicant and explained the reason for the extended delay due to USDA complications.

Two applicants communicated with Kendra that they believe that we should not give up on the USDA funding and still try to use it. Carolyn said there is nothing said in the Farmland Legacy Program that states that we have to wait for USDA funding in order to move forward. Scott DeGraw said a lot of money and time was spent on the Strategic Plan document, working out the scoring/ranking system with outside funding sources. The process needs to move forward.

Allen developed a form where each property owner agrees to proceed with or without outside funding.

Kendra reminded the group that if we close a property without USDA funding approval, we can't retroactively submit for matching reimbursement. However, the Washington State Recreation Office (RCO) funding has more flexibility where we can request matching reimbursement after closing. Presently RCO's funding commitment has not been obligated.

Carolyn suggested that a letter be sent out to all the applicants that the program is moving forward.

### Ranking Spreadsheet Discussion

Kendra prepared scoring information on each of the pending applications in anticipation of the need to re-rank the properties if USDA funding is not used. She explained several scenarios showing how the current money available could be spent and outside funding reimbursement. It also showed how much money would not be available to fund properties this year. The CFAC decided to forgo the ranking discussion until the county has received notice on the RCO funding commitment.

#### Ducks Unlimited Funding

Kendra suggested that the CFAC recommend moving forward with the two applications that have match funding through Ducks Unlimited.

Keith moved that Kendra move forward with the two applications that have matched funding through Ducks Unlimited and Andrea seconded. A special note was made that these two applications received a high score during the CFAC ranking process. The motion passed.

#### **New Business**

##### Washington Wildlife and Recreation Presentation

Tom Bugert, Outreach Director for the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Coalition (WWRC) spoke about the challenges by the legislation special session. Funding is a stake for Skagit County and others for their farmland preservation program. A decision could be made as early as mid-June, but no later than June 30. Tom encouraged all to contact the elected officials in our district to push for funding support. Presently Tom is pulling together a stakeholder committee where people, such as the CFAC, can come together to suggest changes to the current farmland program. Allen spoke about the importance of this type of committee and reasons that the current ranking formula needs reworking.

Ryan Walters was added to the agenda

##### Property Subdivisions

Ryan asked the group how they recommend changes to the easement language regarding property subdivisions and boundary line adjustments (BLA), thinking in terms of values and not language. Ryan suggested numerous questions to the CFAC. Ryan said that the language needs changing if the easement is not constrained by USDA rules.

Keith would like time to conduct research before he responds. Scott said that the more we allow change, the more it will be abused and the more money we will spend protecting the farmland. Scott also said that the applicants need to be completely clear on future repercussions if changes are made. Allen said careful pro and con consideration is needed.

Carolyn suggested a joint meeting with the Skagitationians to Preserve Farmland board and other boards to discuss easement language.

Ryan said that the current language in the easements will be changed in the very near future. He also said that if a BLA or property division is not going to be allowed, then an ordinance through the Planning Department must be made. Dan Berentson felt it would be beneficial to have an appeal process in place.

Ducks Unlimited Property Closing Discussion Continued

With respect to the two properties going forward, Ryan said these two easements will have new language that will address BLA changes for their existing legal lot of record.

Carolyn suggested that a property division sub-committee be formed and report back to the CFAC.

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 a.m.

Submitted by: \_\_\_\_\_  
Linda Christensen

Approved by the CFAC Board on:

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Chair Carolyn Kelly