

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

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, July 8, 2014

Members in Attendance

Scott DeGraw, Chair

Owen Peth, Vice-Chair

Carolyn Kelly

Andrea Xaver

Steve Sakuma

Staff in Attendance

Kara Symonds, Skagit County Public Works

Linda Christensen, Skagit County Planning Department

Open

Meeting opened at 7:00 a.m.

Member Update

Carolyn Kelly announced a newly created Regional Conservation partnership Program (RCPP), RCPP, allows for partnerships of farm and conservation organizations working with state and federal agencies to deliver federal farm bill conservation assistance to farmers to help tackle specific natural resource and environmental concerns in a specific state or region. As noted on the National Sustainability Agriculture Coalition website blog, <http://sustainableagriculture.net/blog/rcpp-apf/>, partners can develop and submit pre-proposals until July 14. NRCS will select pre-proposals by July 28. Full proposals are due by September 26, with NRCS making final selections by October 27. Carolyn said that the Washington State Conservation Commission will be applying for funds. NRCS anticipates that for fiscal years 2014 and 2015, nearly \$400 million will be available through RCPP.

Carolyn also mentioned the farm tour scheduled for August, sponsored by SPF. Additionally, Carolyn recently gave positive comments for the buffers on the Neff Farm through Washington Grow.

Meeting Minutes

Carolyn Kelly moved to approve the June 10, 2014 meeting minutes as corrected and Andrea Xaver seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Financials

Kara Symonds reported that not much has changed since her report in June. She is currently working on RCO and USDA reimbursement requests.

Old Business

Landowner Offer Based on Points

Scott discussed the American Farmland Strategic Plan that was proposed a few years ago to get clarity on purchase offers through the point system, without outside funding. Scott asked the group if the policy of offering funding based on points only versus waiting for grant match dollars. It was discussed that it is important that the landowner know up front, probably at the time of application, the options they can consider. Whether the options are to receive funding with or without outside funding, can considerably lengthen or shorten the payout process. Scott is requesting a list of properties that have currently been submitted for grants. Carolyn suggested that the Board of County Commissioners support state money be allocated in a separate fund versus where conservation funding is currently located. Carolyn will compose a letter.

Application Process

Kara Symonds reviewed the current application process which has not been updated since the early 2000's. She will update the process and bring a draft to the next meeting. Scott said it would be beneficial to apply the new process with each of the pending properties.

New Business

Farmland Legacy Annual Program Report

The 2009 report is the most recent report. Kara said that Steve Berentson, Public Information Officer for Skagit County, is taking charge of a new report.

Introduction of new CFAB Members

In the near future, new CFAB members will be formally introduced during the Board of County Commissioner agenda time.

Signs

Carolyn said that SPF has signs ready for installation. Andrea will help with this effort. It will be a media event.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 a.m.

The next meeting will be Tuesday, August 12, 2014.