

Skagit County Conservation Futures Advisory Board
Meeting Summary
September 12, 2023

Members in Attendance

Scott DeGraw Jim Glackin Audrey Gravley Margery Hite Owen Peth Andrea Xavier

Members Absent

Keith Morrison Trisha Logue (ex-officio) Jack Moore (ex-officio)

Staff and Others in Attendance

Grace Kane, Skagit County Public Works
Jenn Johnson, Skagit County Public Works
Kai Ottesen, Belle Bean Services
Sarah Stoner, Skagit County Public Works

Scott called the meeting to order at 7:30AM.

Review Agenda

Sarah requested the addition of Financial Report to end of agenda. Agenda approved.

July 11 Meeting Summary

Andrea made a motion to approve minutes; Jim seconded. All were in favor.

Property Updates

The group discussed updates on the properties currently in queue for agricultural conservation easements. The queued applicants encompass 730 acres and 14 development rights.

Subcommittee Reports

Valuation Process Review & Recommendations (Members: Scott, Margery, Audrey, Jim)

Subcommittee chair: Scott.

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?) Subcommittee work includes a review of the FLP Property Ranking/Scoring Process Review—how the scoring process relates to valuation.

Scott shared with the group an overview of the six-page draft report, “Review and Recommendations on FLP Valuation Process.” This report was drafted by Scott and Sarah on behalf of the CFAB members based on ongoing meeting discussions and subcommittee work over the last year. The group reviewed and discussed the draft report. CFAB is looking at having available various mechanisms available that are consistently applied.

Program Enrollment Criteria Recommendations (Members: Jim, Andrea. Support: Sarah)

Subcommittee chair: Jim.

Purpose: Make recommendations to clarify parameters for acceptance into the program, taking into considerations the mission and purpose of Farmland Legacy Program. Subcommittee work currently includes a review of farmland properties with no development rights, and the task to define recommended criteria for enrolling such properties for protection through the FLP purchase-of-ag-conservation-easement (PACE) model.

Jim reported the need for subcommittee members to schedule a meeting date. Discussion surrounded the need to table this work or to continue, and how to handle decisions surrounding existing applicants who do not have development rights. Average acreage of inquiries without development rights over the last two years is 25 acres, with low range at 5 acres, high range at 75 acres.

Easement Review & Recommendations (Members: Owen, Andrea, Keith)

Subcommittee chair: 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

Discussion tabled for November.

Monitoring Report

Kai reported that all USDA reports are submitted for the August 31, 2023, USDA monitoring report deadline. He noted that it's also great to see FLP-212 land being farmed and in use. It's been out of production for several years.

Marketing & Application Process

News Release, FLP-249

Sarah shared about the [release announcing the recently protected 60 acres in La Conner](#). Media outlets that covered it or plan to cover the news include the [Skagit Valley Herald \(September 1\)](#), La Conner Weekly News (September 6), and Skagit Food Co-op (October). Social media posts on the county's Facebook and Twitter page were well received.

Member Updates

Audrey shared that the Skagitonians to Preserve Farmland annual dinner auction is this Saturday, September 16. She also shared that the Rotary Club of La Conner held their auction in August and for the first time grossed over \$100,000. Audrey notes the generous community we live in.

Sarah reported that the Conservation Futures Advisory Board (CFAB) ordinance is in the revision process to reflect current operational aspects of the program. The ex-officio roles of the Skagit County Planning Director and Skagit County Finance Director were written into ordinance at inception of program, prior to establishment of a program manager. A new ordinance is being drafted to appoint the FLP program manager as ex-officio in their place. Ex-officio members are a standing membership position (vs. appointed) with no voting rights. Later today, Tuesday, September 12, at 11 AM is another phase of the deliberation. Skagit Valley Herald reported on this [change and comment period](#).

Financial Summary

The financial summary is updated for 2023.

Administrative

The group concluded that the October 10 meeting will be cancelled due to member absences.

CFAC 2023 Meeting Dates

~~October 10~~ (cancelled) November 12 December 12

CFAC 2024 Meeting Dates

January 9	May 14	September 10
February 13	June 11	October 8 (tbd)
March 12	July 9	November 12
April 9	August 13 (tbd)	December 10

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 AM