

WHATCOM CONSERVATION DISTRICT
Special Public Meeting Minutes
September 21, 2016

I. Time and Place of Meeting.

A special public meeting of the Board of Supervisors of the Whatcom Conservation District (WCD) was held at the Ag Service Center, 6975 Hannegan Rd, Lynden, Washington on September 21, 2016, at 2:00 p.m.

II. Attendance and Quorum.

The following Supervisors, being a quorum of the Board, were present:

Larry Helm, Chair	Larry Davis, Vice-Chair
Dan Heeringa, Treasurer (via phone)	Joe Heller
Theresa Sygitowicz	

Also in attendance were:

George Boggs, Executive Director	Dawn Bekenyi, Admin. Assistant
Frank Corey, Resource Coordinator	Ian Smith, South Fork Flood Advisory Committee
Chris Hatch, South Fork Valley	Jimmy Kelsey
Darene Maxwell, North Fork Valley	

III. Meeting Called to Order.

Larry Helm, Chair, called the meeting to order at 2:05 p.m.

IV. Resource Conservation Partnership Program Grant (RCPP).

Contract with USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

Frank Corey gave a presentation on the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) grant contract with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The RCPP grant will provide technical assistance time for the Whatcom Conservation District and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) staff to do conservation projects on Ag lands. Additionally the RCPP provides dedicated EQIP cost-share funds for landowner participants of the program through NRCS. There are two categories of projects for these dedicated cost-share funds.

The first and primary category is fish passage projects. The program would replace small culverts with larger culverts or bridges for fish passage. These projects would allow better access to land for landowners and better passage for fish. Of the approximately \$800,000 in EQIP cost-share, probably \$700,000 will be for replacing culverts. Frank said that it would replace about 10-12 culverts depending on the complexity of the projects.

The second category is in-stream wood structures. These projects could match flood protection and stream stabilization with in-stream wood structures.

The project area for this grant cost-share funds is WRIA 1, the entire County.

Several residents attended the meeting to share their concerns about what they had heard about the program proposal. They were concerned about how proposed projects could potentially impact neighboring properties and how those stakeholders would be involved when choosing projects for funding.

Under this program USDA NRCS will contract directly with willing farmers and foresters to replace culverts and install engineered log jams (ELJs) to protect farmland and provide instream fish habitat. Local prioritization criteria will be developed to ensure that the flood control zones and diking districts approve of the location of projects. The ELJ projects will be modeled to show that they will not negatively impact adjacent landowners. All necessary permits and approvals, including the Army Corps of Engineers, State Departments of Natural Resources and Fish and Wildlife, and Whatcom County, will be obtained prior to construction.

There was discussion about the local prioritization criteria or project funding ranking criteria. The Whatcom Conservation District will develop that ranking criteria to be applied to all applications for RCPP projects made by agricultural producers or foresters for funding to NRCS. Once the tool is developed and adopted by NRCS then it is used by NRCS to rank the applicants for funding.

The Board encouraged stakeholders and community involvement in the development of the prioritization criteria.

Larry Davis moved to approve the agreement with USDA NRCS and authorize the Chair to sign the RCPP contract on behalf of the Whatcom Conservation District. Then direct staff to develop a process, subject to Board approval, to develop the program prioritization criteria, to include public input, with approval of the program prioritization subject to Board approval. The motion was seconded by Joe Heller. The motion passed. (Unanimous decision.)

Approve Sub- agreement with Washington State Dept. of Fish & Wildlife to provide culvert replacement designs.

The Board decided to table the WDFW partnership agreement until the Oct Board meeting.

V. Record of Board Actions.

16-69 Larry Davis moved to approve the agreement with USDA NRCS and authorize the Chair to sign the RCPP contract on behalf of the Whatcom Conservation District. Then direct staff to develop a process, subject to Board approval, to develop the program prioritization criteria, to include public input, with approval of the program prioritization subject to Board approval. The motion was seconded by Joe Heller. The motion passed. (Unanimous decision.)

VI. Adjournment.

There being no further business before the meeting, Larry Helm adjourned the meeting at 3:10 p.m.

Dated: October 31, 2016

Approved: _____

Dawn Bekenyi, Administrative Assistant