

**WHATCOM CONSERVATION DISTRICT
Public Meeting Minutes
January 8, 2008**

I. Time and Place of Meeting.

A regular meeting of the Board of Supervisor of the Whatcom Conservation District was held at the Ag Service Center, 6975 Hannegan Rd, Lynden, Washington on January 8, 2008, at 7:00 p.m.

II. Attendance and Quorum.

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

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Jerry Van Dellen	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Dick Yoder
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Sabina Gouran	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Joyce Jimerson
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Ed Stone		

Also in attendance were:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	George Boggs, District Manager	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Alex Hall, NRCS
<input type="checkbox"/>	Dawn Bekenyi, Admin. Assistant	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Sonya Schaller, WCD
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Bob Barker, Associate Supervisor		

III. Meeting Called to Order.

Jerry Van Dellen as Chairman of the meeting called it to order at 7:01 p.m.

IV. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting.

Sabina Gouran moved that the minutes of the December 11, 2007 Board meeting be approved as mailed. Dick Yoder seconded the motion. The motion passed.

V. Financial Report.

The financial report was mailed to the Board with their draft minutes from the December meeting.

George Boggs, District Manager, asked if there were any questions regarding the Financial Report. There were questions about the fund supporting employee's accumulated leave and how that is regulated. The leave policy is written into the District Employee Manual. George Boggs said that the Employee Manual is in need of updating. Dick Yoder asked that the Board be given an analysis on leave and leave utilization. Sabina Gouran suggested looking at how the Port of Bellingham deals with leave. Dick Yoder said he would not want any employee to lose any leave that they already have or to decrease what they are getting.

Sabina Gouran moved to approve the Financial Report. Dick Yoder seconded the motion. The motion passed. Upon motion made and duly seconded, the Treasurer's Report was approved.

Accounts Payable –

There were no District invoices or incurred expenses in the accounts payable to be reviewed or approved. The Board further authorizes the payment of District expenses incurred subject to their review and approval at the next Board meeting.

VI. Action Items.

A. Approval of Contracts.

There were no contracts to approve.

B. Approval of Conservation Plans.

George Boggs explained that Edaleen Dairy needs this Nutrient Management Plan in order to get their CAFO Permit from the Department of Ecology and Washington State Department of Ag. Chris Clark developed this highly detailed plan. Dick Yoder and Joyce Jimmerson had questions regarding any changes that those agencies may make to the Plan and how setbacks from watercourses are determined. It was noted that this plan is completed and can be approved and certified at the same time. There was discussion regarding high nitrates in the locale of the Edaleen Dairy and that in the future a Groundwater Management Area may be designated to monitor improvements. Dick Yoder mentioned that crop farmers are rarely scrutinized as much as livestock farmers for nitrate pollution.

Dick Yoder moved to approve and certify the completed Edaleen Dairy Nutrient Management Plan reviewed and submitted for Board approval. Joyce Jimmerson seconded the motion. The motion passed.

The Derr Farm is not required to have a Dairy Nutrient Management Plan because it only operates for dairy replacement. The Nutrient Management Plan has been completed by Chuck Timblin in order for the farm to be eligible for the Purchase of Development Rights program.

Sabina Gouran moved to approve the Nutrient Management Farm plan for Vernon Derr. Ed Stone seconded the motion. The motion passed.

C. Employee Matters

Pay Scale Adjustment

As requested, Dawn Bekenyi provided the Board with salary survey results for 2006 and 2007. The Whatcom Conservation District has money in the budget to accommodate a raise for its employees. The Board discussed how to administer the raise in a fair way. Dick Yoder expressed disagreement with a blanket "percent raise" because it increases the gap between the highest and lowest paid employees. Dick Yoder had done calculations to determine that every employee could get a raise of an equal dollar amount (i.e. \$3.10/hour) with the available funds. Bob Barker said that he also calculated that a partial percent raise representing current inflation would be necessary for all employees so that no employee had a decrease in salary. His example was a 5% increase. From that, a 3% salary increase could be given to every employee for inflation and the remaining 2% would be pooled and split up equally between all employees. Sabina Gouran said that government agencies set this year's inflation rate from 3.3% to 3.8%. She said that planners at other agencies are getting more money than planners at the WCD. The WCD could begin to lose planners if they are not attracted to stay with the district. Jerry Van Dellen asked how often this issue would be revisited in order to split funds equally between employees, he wanted to know if we would be splitting up the extra funds every 6 months or would we revisit the policy again next time a cost of living increase or step increase was warranted? His question was aimed at the fact that available funds for a raise could dry up by next time the increases would be considered, making the whole issue a moot point. George Boggs said we are playing catch-up and that he recommends a 10% raise to every employee because we have the budget and employees deserve it. Bob Barker said that since newer employees get step increases while those at the top of the rung do not, it balances out the gap between their wages. Questions came up about what our policy is on the pay scale. George Boggs read the WCD Employee manual to refresh everyone on the policy of the pay

scale and step increases. Dick Yoder asked that the board decide on a figure that works for giving employees an equal raise. Dick Yoder said that he would be on a subcommittee to monitor the pay scale.

Ed Stone moved to approve a +10% adjustment to the pay scale for every employee. Sabina Gouran seconded the motion. The motion passed with the condition that a subcommittee be formed in March 2008 to monitor the pay scale and analyze the appropriateness of the percent raise.

- D. In your Conservation District, what are the top 3 factors that are threatening farmland?**
1. Water Rights: Uncertainty and Imminent Domain
 2. Development: Poor management of development and zoning, Whatcom County had 30% growth in the last 10 years. People with 5 acre parcels near towns should be allowed to split up their parcels.
 3. Economics: Less farming infrastructure (processors & suppliers) in the area resulting in farmers getting less money for their products.
 4. Free trade vs. Fair trade: linked to regulation
 5. Fairness in regulation/overregulation: varies county by county, uniform environmental regulations often determined by trade issues. Regulation should be better able to compromise and reconcile impossible mandates.

The board decided all 5 issues were important so George Boggs will submit all 5 to the Office of Farmland Preservation.

VII. Other Business.

A. George Boggs.

CREP

A continuing resolution was announced by FSA allowing new enrollments to continue under CREP. Carol Smith of the Washington Conservation Commission consults the WCD for every technical question regarding the addition of practices to CREP in the new Farm Bill. Hedgerows should be a good CREP option for Whatcom County.

Livestock

Always has its challenges. Bill Bensen's absence has put a lapse in design work for livestock projects. Chris taking leave in the summer also put us behind. In order to serve the commercial operations better, we may need two full-time equivalents, one to do engineering and one to do planning. Non-commercial livestock program has made advancements since the agreement with Whatcom County has been signed. By February 1, 2008, a County employee will be sending a call out to landowners to complete the Checklist. Cropland with berries and potatoes will be challenged to improve their practices.

Puget Sound Partnership

Ron Shulz will present a survey to the Conservation Districts to find out what their needs are for nutrient management assistance. This will assist the Washington Conservation Commission in issuing education dollars to districts. They will want to know what accomplishments will be made with the money.

John Gillies

George Boggs will be meeting with John to write the drainage manual. The grant administrator will allow changing the timeline of the grant to pay for John's work as long as it is not stretched too far out.

Important Dates

January 16-17: Commission Meeting. Frank Corey and George Boggs will travel to the meeting to assist Carol Smith on securing the Hedgerow practice in CREP.

January 31: NW Area Meeting. Jerry had attended this meeting in the past. He said it is good to find out how we can help other districts or align ourselves with other districts. Representatives from District Boards will meet at 5 p.m. at the Farmhouse in Skagit County. Need to confirm that someone from our board will be able to make it or choose a different date. That date would not work for Joyce, Sabina or Jerry. Dick would know after Friday if it would work for him.

February 12: WCD Board Meeting

February 20-21: WACD Officers and Directors Legislative Day, Board members are encouraged to go.

Jerry Van Dellen and Joyce Jimmerson will be leaving the Board in March. Joyce is going to be working full time and will not have time to stay on as a Board member. Bob Barker is interested in joining the Board again. Jerry Van Dellen suggested Mark Tollesma (sp?) for a possible future Board member.

Jerry Van Dellen asked if there were any questions about the Manager's Report. There were none.

B. Alex Hall, NRCS.

The current news is that EQIP will obligate funds by mid-February, 2008. If nothing changes from now till then, NRCS will develop 8 EQIP plans; 7 dairy and 1 forestry, totaling \$700,000 in conservation funds.

Bill Bensen's absence and the loss of another NW area NRCS staff member have set back the design of EQIP plans. There are ongoing discussions with the Whatcom Conservation District regarding NRCS paying the WCD for Technical Assistance to finish the EQIP plans.

The 2008 Farm Bill Senate Version has been passed. The final bill is now in conference and there is speculation that it will be signed into law in mid-February. It is not known what will happen with EQIP plans that are not finished by that date, they may be dropped or have to be redone or they may be fine. NRCS has a continuing resolution to work through March 15th.

VIII. Record of Board Actions.

- 08-1 Sabina Gouran moved that the minutes of the December 11, 2007 Board meeting be approved as mailed. Dick Yoder seconded the motion. The motion passed.**
- 08-2 Sabina Gouran moved to approve the Financial Report. Dick Yoder seconded the motion. The motion passed. Upon motion made and duly seconded, the Treasurer's Report was approved.**
- 08-3 Dick Yoder moved to approve and certify the completed Edaleen Dairy Nutrient Management Plan reviewed and submitted for Board approval. Joyce Jimmerson seconded the motion. The motion passed.**
- 08-4 Sabina Gouran moved to approve the Nutrient Management Farm plan for Vernon Derr. Ed Stone seconded the motion. The motion passed.**

08-5 Ed Stone moved to approve a +10% adjustment to the pay scale. Sabina Gouran seconded the motion. The motion passed with the condition that a subcommittee be formed in March 2008 to monitor the pay scale and analyze the appropriateness of the percent raise.

IX. Adjournment.

There being no further business before the meeting, Sabina Gouran moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:00 p.m. Dick Yoder seconded the motion. The motion passed.

The meeting on motion duly made, seconded and carried, adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Dated: February 19, 2008

Approved: _____

Sonya Schaller, Resource Specialist