



Jefferson County Conservation Futures Committee

Thursday, April 18, 2013, 4:00 – 7:00 PM

Tri-Area Community Center, Port Hadlock, WA

FINAL MINUTES

* **Decisions and action items are indicated in bold font.**

Members Present: Phil Andrus, District 2; Scott Brinton – Agriculture; Lige Christian, District 3; JD Gallant – District 3; Ray Hunter, Interest – Fallow Farms; Richard Jahnke, Interest – Coastal Areas; Janet Kearsley, District 1; Raven, Interest – Natural Habitat; Lorna Smith, Interest - Ecotourism; Sarah Spaeth, Interest - Jefferson Land Trust (JLT); Jerry Gorsline, District 2; John Wood, District 1

Members Absent: None

County Staff Present: Tami Pokorny, Water Quality Division; Kate Pike, Brisa Services, Recorder
Please note: The effort to create an audio recording of the meeting was unsuccessful and the contents of these minutes are an approximation of what was said.

Guest Observers: Craig Schrader

I. Call to Order:

Chair John Wood called the meeting to order at 4:09 PM.

II. Review of Agenda:

The Agenda was approved as submitted.

III. Approval of Minutes:

The minutes of November 26, 2012 meeting were approved as written.

IV. Guest Observer comments:

None

V. Old Business:

VI. New Business:

Chair John Wood introduced new member, Raven, and recorder Kate Pike.

Election of New Officers

On a **MOTION** by Phil Andrus, a second by Jerry Gorsline, and a unanimous carry, **Richard Jahnke was elected Chair.**

On a **MOTION** by Lige Christian, a second by Jerry Gorsline, and a unanimous carry, **Lorna Smith was elected Vice-Chair.**

Chair Rick Jahnke conducted the meeting from this point forward. John Wood was thanked for his service as chair.

Quarterly Meeting Requirements

Staff commented that the option exists to open up county code to revise the current requirement for the Conservation Futures Committee to meet quarterly.

On a **MOTION** by Jerry Gorsline, a second by Lige Christian, and a unanimous carry, **it was decided to recommend alteration of code to require meetings “as needed”**.

2013 Project Presentations

Duckabush Floodplain Presentation

Sarah Spaeth, Jefferson Land Trust, presented a PowerPoint regarding the proposed project. Jefferson Land Trust is sponsoring this application to request \$5,000 towards the acquisition of a fee-simple property and a conservation easement on an adjacent property. The site is located within a beautiful, rich channel migration zone within the “powerlines reach” of the Duckabush River.

The subject properties (5 parcels) are contiguous and total of 37.1 acres. Property owned by the Berntsen-Poetter family (21.9 acres, 2 parcels) has been listed for sale, and a fee simple acquisition is sought. The Gregory family (15.2 acres, 3 parcels) is interested in selling a conservation easement to preclude development on 2 of its 3 parcels. The primary goal of this project is to protect existing high quality habitat for Puget Sound Chinook salmon, although coho, chum, pink and steelhead salmon, as well as coastal cutthroat trout, are also present in the Duckabush River. Several of these species are ESA listed as Threatened.

Ms. Spaeth mentioned a JLT-owned property located just downstream from the project area one property over. This parcel is being stewarded by a JLT volunteer through its Preserve Stewards Program. The area, including the subject properties, is also used as a destination for Northwest Naturalists Program participants. Numerous wildlife tracks and sign were discovered in this area recently including those of elk, bobcat, bear, deer, mink and river otter. After the Berntsen-Poetter purchase, controlled public access will be allowed. Currently there is no public access to the Duckabush between the WDFW-owned estuary and USFS property well upstream.

Although the request is relatively small, there are two reasons to provide CF funds to this project: 1.) To demonstrate local support, and 2.) To make the sites eligible to receive CF funding in the future for operations and maintenance needs. The entire project has been approved for funding by the Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB/“surfboard”), but so far only enough funding (\$345,275) is available to support the fee-simple acquisition. Additional SRFB funds are being sought in the 2013 cycle for the Gregory acquisition which will also include the demolition and restoration of the “white” house nearest the river. If successful, the SRFB contribution will represent 99% of the total project cost for both properties.

The project is supported by the *Dosewallips and Duckabush Comprehensive Flood Hazard Management Plan* and the *Puget Sound Chinook Salmon Recovery Plan*. Aside from protecting floodplain processes and habitat for these species, the project would include benefits for water quality, could help reduce water demand and flooding impacts, enhance public access to the river, and provide opportunities for in-channel habitat projects. The Wild Fish Conservancy has identified a number of sites in the area for the possible installation of engineered log jams.

The site contains productive habitat including relatively mature forest stands, wetlands, streams, and side channels. In the short term, restoration on the Berntsen-Poetter property will include removal of invasive weeds, improvements that include an on-site system, and solid waste as well as the replanting of conifers into cleared areas.

A committee member asked why the project had included both the Berntsen-Poetter as well as the Gregory properties. Ms. Speath responded that from a strategic and also from a habitat protection standpoint, it often makes good sense to join nearby properties into a single project. Ray Hunter commented that it would be unfortunate if the steep slope across the river could be logged. The possibility of Marbled Murrelet nesting habitat in some of the larger Douglas firs and opportunities to build local support were also mentioned.

Short Family Farm Presentation

Sarah Spaeth, Jefferson Land Trust, presented a PowerPoint regarding the proposed project. JLT is sponsoring this application which is requesting \$43,500 toward the acquisition of a perpetual conservation easement for 256 acres. The project site includes low lying pastureland, adjacent upland pasture, forest patches consisting of prime soils, and 7,500 feet of riparian habitat for migrating coho and steelhead. Trumpeter swan, waterfowl species, raptors and other wildlife inhabit the farm.

Currently, the Short Family Farm is owned by nine siblings and is one of the largest farms in Center Valley and East Jefferson County. It contains peat soils of statewide significance for agriculture. A conservation easement would enable the Roger Short family to purchase the portion of the farm that is currently owned by his eight siblings, would allow Mr. Short to retire, and provide for additional investments in infrastructure for the next generation of farmers.

The Short Family Farm furnishes a broad community benefit, supplying grass-fed beef to restaurants, retailers, hospital and schools. Promotion of the agricultural community through educational opportunities will continue. Matching funds for the project through the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program and the federal Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program are pending. There are currently four residences and numerous agricultural buildings. Under current zoning, ten more home sites could be developed. The conservation easement will designate two residential building envelopes for existing structures, allow additional agricultural structures, but prevent subdivision and additional residential, commercial or industrial development. The conservation easement will also limit the amount of impervious surfaces, preclude or limit mining of peat, and provide some additional habitat protections. For example, JLT will work with the Conservation District (CD) to plant a buffer along Naylor Creek in such a way as to retain habitat for Trumpeter Swans in that area. WDFW has been interested in the Short property for years for its benefits to waterfowl.

Because each funding source has its own requirements, the conservation easement must be written in such a way as to be compatible with all of them. The CD has taken a long hard look at this property and what would work in terms of reestablishing plantings along Chimacum Creek. In order to control reed canary grass, Mr. Short obtained a WDFW permit to physically remove it to allow passage of water and salmon. In future restoration efforts, JLT will rely on the CD to determine the sort of buffer plantings which are most appropriate. JLT has applied for funding from the state for some fencing along Chimacum Creek for better pasture management and to help improve water quality.

Raven asked, "Would the Shorts and their heirs consider ceasing animal husbandry altogether" to which Sarah responded, "They haven't been asked." Lorna Smith requested a photo of the project location from the early 1900s.

Tarboo Forest Conservation Project Presentation – Phase II

Peter Bahls, Northwest Watershed Institute (NWI), presented a PowerPoint regarding the proposed project. Jefferson Land Trust is sponsoring this application from NWI requesting \$167,000 towards the purchase of a conservation easement on 78 acres of NWI property as part of a project to permanently protect a total of 236 acres of forestland. This would be the second largest conservation easement project in Jefferson County.

The acreage was purchased by Leopold-Freeman Forests LLC (158 acres) and NWI (78 acres) in 2010 and 2011 from a Danish corporation planning clear cuts and large lot development. Phase I of this project, approved for JCCF funding of \$167,000 in 2012, covers half of the cost of conservation easement on both the NWI and Leopold-Freeman LLC land. The Phase II proposal would complete the project and has a total project acquisition cost of \$378,035. Matching funds/resources are the Leopold-Freeman conservation easement value, a NWI conservation easement donation and the contribution of acquisition-related costs totaling \$211,035. This is part of a larger project to protect and restore the watershed. It has already involved dozens of organizations and hundreds of individuals including school kids who help plant seedlings.

The NWI parcel has strict requirements and is now FSC certified. Future harvests cannot reduce the timber volume below current levels. The Freeman family isn't committed to FSC certification at this point for the Carl Leopold Forest. In any case, the easement will have a strong habitat component and will contribute a match of at least 56% of the total project. Its value will exceed the cost of the development rights alone as a result of the additional forest protections. The property contains three major tributaries and several minor ones which feed into Tarboo Creek within the adjacent Tarboo Wildlife Preserve. The Leopold-Freemans also intend to continue their family's tradition of wildland conservation and stewardship.

Sarah Spaeth commented that the protection of working forestlands is an important conservation goal for JLT. Mr. Bahls remarked that "working forests" should also *work* for fish, water quality, timber and other forest resources. There was discussion of the value of the property for education and outreach about innovative forest management techniques similar to a project in British Columbia. Mr. Bahls conducts regular tours of the property and this would continue in the future on the Leopold-Freeman property at the discretion of the owners. A trail will link the subject properties with the Preserve.

The feasibility of the project is very high if Phase II is fully funded. The property is already in NWI ownership which is the ideal situation. If the applicants had delayed purchasing these properties, they would be clear cuts by now. NWI must repay lenders for the actual purchase price of \$550,000 by September 2014 or forfeit its 78-acre property as collateral and lose the potential for a donated easement on the 158 acres from Leopold Freeman LLC.

The proposed project lands are specifically identified for stream corridor priority conservation and sustainable forestry in the Implementation Strategy for the Tarboo/Dabob Bay sub-area of JLT's *Jefferson County Conservation Plan*. The proposed properties are also identified in The Nature Conservancy's *Puget Sound Ecoregional Plan*. The conservation easements and properties will be monitored and stewarded collaboratively by JLT and NWI.

The property provides habitat for a variety of sensitive species including western toads which breed in wetlands and then move up into the forests. Mr. Bahls mentioned the high rate of carbon sequestration the forest is providing and he observed that the CF ranking criteria does not credit projects for size. Ultimately the properties could be a resource to members of Native American tribes for canoe trees and

other rare and important cultural resources. Also, the properties provide a scenic backdrop to the historic Yarr Barn built in 1947 which is registered on the state's historic preservation list.

In addition to the FSC certification, NWI has been granted EQIP funding to improve forest habitat.

Phil Andrus asked how Mr. Bahls and Ms. Spaeth to propose how this year's available funding (\$220,000) should be allocated between projects. Mr. Bahls responded that he felt that the Tarboo Forest project was worthy of full funding due to the high threat level, very large size and extensive habitat values. Ms. Spaeth expressed that she valued both projects and that the decision would be difficult and ultimately must be left to the committee. The Winona Basin – Bloedel II project would be the single largest acquisition of lots in the history of the Quimper Wildlife Corridor. She felt it was no less valuable due to smaller size – it is also part of a larger project with particular importance for its urban setting and wide diversity of wildlife.

Winona Basin – Bloedel II Presentation

Sarah Spaeth, Jefferson Land Trust, presented a PowerPoint regarding the proposed project. Jefferson Land Trust is sponsoring this application for the City of Port Townsend to acquire 22 Fowler Park lots. They are located in the Quimper Wildlife Corridor, an area that spans the northern margin of the peninsula between DNR property near McCurdy Point through Tibbals, Winona, and Levinski wetlands on to Chinese Gardens and Fort Worden. The lots that are the subject of the current request are located in the Winona Basin that was platted in the 19th century into 50' x 100' lots. The request to the JCCF is \$80,000 to support the acquisition of a total of 38 lots. Fourteen lots in adjacent blocks, valued at \$120,000 are to be donated as match. An additional cash match from the community totals \$95,000. Total project cost will be \$295,000. The seller is the same individual whose property was the subject of a successful 2012 conservation futures application.

The Winona Basin is identified by the City in relation to stormwater, flood plain and urban habitat protections and in the Jefferson County Comprehensive Plan as well as by stakeholders in *JLT's Jefferson County Conservation Plan*.

Family health concerns are compelling the landowner to now consider parting with land that has been of interest to JLT for 18 years. Access to "Cappy's Forest" for recreation is a long tradition for Port Townsend residents. However, development threats to the lots and the corridor continue. Despite the depressed economy, a home was just built near last year's CF project. The integrity of the Corridor has, and continues to, face threats from development. However, if a critical threshold of acquisitions is reached, it would be possible to vacate the City's right of ways and maintain the resulting areas for wildlife habitat and trails.

JLT has been stewarding properties in the Quimper Wildlife Corridor since 1991 and according to an approved management plan since 2008. The City of Port Townsend and JLT will protect this area of high priority habitat in the Winona Basin/Quimper Wildlife Corridor, which encompasses a total of 3.8 acres, to serve as wetland buffer, wildlife habitat and mature forest (Douglas fir, hemlock, cedar). The project is located directly adjacent to parcels that were acquired in 2012 with JCCF and community funding.

Although the application lists "local benefit" as a result of a staff error, Ms. Spaeth is confident the benefits of the project are broad. For example the trail system is becoming nationally known among mountain bikers and was touted in a national magazine. It's used for many other forms of passive recreation (walking and horseback riding) by the community and visiting public and provides field classrooms for schools, naturalists, wetland biologists and birders including the Cedar Root Folk School which provides natural history instruction for local children.

Ms. Spaeth stressed the proximity of Winona wetland to this property and the buffer it provides. During the CF site visit, several bird calls were heard (a rail, owl, redwing blackbird, and pileated woodpecker). Evidence of mountain beaver was also observed. Over 200 species of birds are known to visit the Corridor. Even elk and bear have been seen. Ms. Spaeth emphasized that the project presents a unique and long-awaited opportunity to protect an important area of the corridor in a single transaction.

VII. Other/ Administrative

In the interest of time, further staff update was postponed. Tami Pokorny reminded the members that Monday, April 22, is the deadline for any further questions regarding these applications.

VIII. Guest Observer Comments

None

IX. Adjournment

The meeting was belatedly and casually adjourned by Chairman Jahnke after several members had already risen and begun to engage in personal conversation (7:21 PM).

These minutes were recorded by Kate Pike and Tami Pokorny and submitted to the BoCC by Tami Pokorny.