

# Ag Land Program – Technical Review Committee

## Meeting Notes

Monday, May 5, 2008

2:30 – 4:30 pm

### Members Attending:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Larry Stoner	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dick Yoder	<input type="checkbox"/> Greg Ebe
<input type="checkbox"/> John Gillies	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bill Querhn	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bob Tull
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Vicki Hawley	<input type="checkbox"/> Doug Dostal	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Chuck Antholt

### Others Attending:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Paul Grey	<input type="checkbox"/> Mary Dickenson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Henry Bierlink
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Samya Lutz	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> David Stalheim	<input type="checkbox"/> Jason Stoner

x = attending                      o = absent with notice

1. Review agenda, April 21 meeting notes – it was noted that the Meeting Notes had the wrong date. It was changed to April 21<sup>st</sup>.
2. Report from discussion with County Council Natural Resources Committee – 4/22 – David, Paul, Chuck, and Henry attended. David reported that the NRC was supportive of our progress and anxious to see results from our efforts. There was a sense of urgency expressed by Laurie, Carl, Seth and Bob. David reported to them on the overall ag program and how the TRC fit into this picture. Issues that were briefly discussed included the potential inclusion of Whatcom-LaBounty as one of our prime soils for ag protection (issue in front of the AAC), the composition of the TRC (some questions but not a large concern), and potential rezones (not until the TRC recommendations are considered). David noted that an RFQ for help with Cluster Design specifications was in place which would provide support for the TRC's efforts.
3. Review the Ag Land Program, roles of AAC and TRC – A review of the purpose and goals of the TRC and a draft workplan discussion took place. There was a consensus to try to get our work done by the end of 2008 and then discuss the recommendations with the AAC and then the County Council in early 2009. Issues that surround our work of note at the meeting were the impact of market pressures on land prices (a large concern, but uncertain), the results of the Future of Farming Taskforce appointed by the State, and the status and future of the Right to Farm Ordinance. David had explored how well landowners had been notified of the Right to Farm provisions and found that it had irregularly applied. PDS is working to improve this.
4. Identify the number of potential housing units (densities) we seek to move, purchase, etc. from the ag and rural zones. Discuss value of these densities – David and Samya

presented a development right analysis in both the ag zone and the targeted rural zones. This study revealed . .

Gross Potential Development Rights in Ag Zone (draft 5/5/08)

<b>Acreage</b>	<b># of Parcels</b>	<b>Potential Development Rights</b>
<= 5.0 ac.	1827	583
5.1-15.0 ac.	1043	507
15.1-38.0 ac.	1091	636
>38.1 ac.	727	410
	<b>4688</b>	<b>2136</b>

Gross Potential Development Rights in Rural Study Areas (draft 5/5/08)

<b>Zoning</b>	<b>Potential Development Rights</b>
R10A	765
R5A	1135
R2A (split)	5
AG (split)	1
	<b>1906</b>

Henry provided a table that sought to paint the picture of the magnitude of our task and the possible values of the densities we seek to remove from the ag zone and the targeted rural zones. PDS will help complete this table incorporating much of the information they developed in the development right analysis.

It was noted there was a slight (<100 acre) discrepancy between the PDR target areas and the areas identified in the Rural Lands Study warranting additional protection. It was agreed that the areas targeted by the TRC should be the Agricultural Zone and the Rural Lands Study areas.

PDS provided the TRC members with maps of the ag areas by Township. The TRC members who know the areas were asked to take them home and mark up their questions about the potential development rights assumed by the County in the map. The point of this exercise is not to argue over the interpretation of each property as to the densities available there but to reinforce or challenge the data presented by the County so that we can be sure that, in the aggregate, we are operating with the best information possible.

5. Review American Farmland Trust’s Farmland Protection Toolbox – A copy of the AFT Toolbox was distributed. Henry noted that we already have many of these tools operating here but that some of the others were worthy of consideration and new,

unique to Whatcom, tools may need to be developed. TRC members were encouraged to review this paper.

6. Out-of the box Idea Discussion – Henry solicited thoughtful discussion starters based on the wealth of experiences in the TRC. He submitted an idea for a Natural Resources Bank as an example of a discussion starter. The concept intrigued the group but an immediate roadblock to be considered was the federal mandate for wetland protection. David asked if we should consider not including the wetland mitigation efforts. Henry resisted that since so many of the potential receiving areas for TDR’s would be limited by marginal wetlands. There was some discussion about what to do with a concept like this. For now it is in the mix for future consideration.
  
7. Public Involvement and education – Paul updated the group on the response to the questionnaire which now stood at over 23%. He promised to have initial results and analysis ready for the May 19 TRC meeting. The distribution of the results of the survey was discussed. The TRC would like to have the chance to discuss it before it goes to the media. It was noted that while public opinion is always important the informed discussion on difficult land use issues in front of the TRC and County Council should not be lead by public opinion but informed by it.
  
8. Resources – Available
  - Natural Heritage Plan – 1991 – copies at 3/3 mtg.
  - Purchase of Development Right Program summary – distributed 2/11
  - AAC Rural Land Study – distributed 2/11
  - TDR Program Market Value Estimates – 2003 – Pruetz report – distributed 3/3
  - Agricultural Transfer of Development Right Presentation: The Snohomish County Experience – available through WFF office – 4/21
  - Proposed Ag Land Work Program – a Powerpoint Presentation by Kraig Olason to the County Council, October, 2006 – 4/21
  - Maps:
    - potential build out in the ag zones
    - open space ag areas
    - CAO – Wetlands
    - CAO – Frequently Flooded Areas
    - CAO – Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas
  
9. Resources – Needed?
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The next meeting date for the TRC will be May 19<sup>th</sup> at 2:30.