

Ag Water Board

Regular Meeting March 20, 2019, 1-3 pm

Ag Water Board office, 204 Hawley Street, Lynden

AWB Board: Andy Enfield Marty Maberry Scott Bedlington
 Mike Boxx Jeff De Jong Kevin Te Velde (Jeff)

Others: Fred Likkel Hank Kastner Henry Bierlink
 Bill Clarke Loren Vander Yacht Steve Jilk
 Meg Harris Eric Hirst Dillon Honcoop
 Jay Chennault Chris Elder _____

x = present o = absent with notice t = teleconference p = proxy

*Lynden FFA Ag Issues Team presented "Will Traditional Farming Survive?"
for followup comments contact Tammy Brandvold at BrandvoldT@lynden.wednet.edu*

- I. Review & Approve December 19 Minutes and Financial Report
Jeff moved approval of the December 19 Minutes and March Financial Report, Andy seconded, motion passed unanimously.

- II. Water Quantity/Supply
 - A. Bill Clarke Report
 - i. Foster Task Force – hasn't met in 2019, discussion about having the Legislature extend the report deadline from December 2019 to 2020. Several pilot projects are not ripe yet including the surface to groundwater conversions in the Bertrand which we are planning to implement only after we develop a crediting system for the farmers participating through the Drainage Based Management process.
 - ii. Areas for water right adjudications – still being debated in the Legislature. Should know more next week when the capital and operating budget drafts are released. Still trying to avoid having the Nooksack being designated as a priority candidate.

 - B. AWB dialogue with tribes – no new progress. Fred noted that the Nooksack's did not have any new habitat projects this year and might be more amenable to participating in discussions.

 - C. Watershed Management Board and Planning Unit update
 - i. Ecology takes over Hirst response and moves towards "rule making"
 - ii. Opportunity! – Bill has drafted some ideas to be incorporated in the rule amendment. The board went over these ideas and discussed how to advance them. Ecology plans to have a draft of the rule amendments by summer so getting our ideas in the mix prior to that is our goal. The issues we'd like to see incorporated are:
 1. Remove year round closures – some question about changing to only summer closures or removing all closures and simply deferring to the minimum in-stream flow setting. Also what streams do we advocate for? Just streams in the WIDs or all WRIA #1 streams?

2. Anticipate Foster changes – it is likely that the rule amendment will be in place before the Foster Task Force and the Legislature makes adjustments to the Water Code to address the concerns in *Foster*. Adding a clause to the Nooksack rule that anticipates Water Code changes would provide the flexibility to Ecology they don't have now.
 3. Identifying management tools – adding language to the rule that allows Ecology to approve use of the management tools we develop so long as the net effect does not decrease stream flows.
- iii. Plan to advance these ideas – Bill suggested finalizing our ideas, adding a cover memo illustrating the purpose for these changes, and shopping them to local partners including all members of the Water Management Board and Ecology.
 - iv. Understanding the minimum flow rule – Jay Chennault brought a portion of his presentation to the Baker to Bay Symposium illustrating how the flow rule may be effected by climate change. It also points out that out-of-stream uses do not have a large effect on the river meeting minimum in-stream-flows. He estimated that water use may cause the stream to go below minimum flows between 7-9 days annually.
 - v. Measurement – Jay also noted that only 4 of the 30+ streams with flow rules have operating stream gauges (Hutchinson, Middle Fork, Bertrand, and mainstem at Ferndale). Ecology has several more but many are inactive. Costs of USGS gauges are approximately \$20k for installation and \$21k annually for O/M.
 - vi. Planning Unit
 1. updating Management Plan
 2. cooperation with Drainage District caucus – Loren was present to represent the DID concerns in our discussions.
- D. County pilot program idea – Heather Good, Public Works – Heather noted the County has allocated \$50k in 2019 towards addressing water use efficiencies. This was the result of urging by the Environmental caucus through the Planning Unit. The County is seeking ideas on how to best apply these funds. Residential and irrigation were the primary areas they planning to focus. She acknowledged the relinquishment hurdle and asked if there were ways the County could help reduce its impact. Other ideas were research project demonstrating new irrigation techniques like pulsing which would result in improve water use efficiency. Irrigation system evaluations are available through WSU's WISE program operating out of Skagit County Extension. The use of Trust Water was discussed. It is an option but since most farmers with water saved through efficiencies also have fields that need additional water rights, or neighboring fields need water, a local water bank makes more sense.
- E. Drainage Based Management
- i. Expect Ecology funding – should know by next week when the State budget drafts are released.
 - ii. Puget Sound Partnership Near Term Action funding possible – The PUD is coordinating the Water Supply NTA as well as the California Creek Augmentation

project. Both of these have substantial overlap with the pilot projects for DBM in Drayton and Bertrand.

- iii. One of the elements in the WRIA #1 5-year Action Plan – with the renewed focus on implementing the workplan after a year of responding to 6091 work we can expect movement on DBM from the Watershed Management Board.
- iv. Meetings to set up where, when, and how DBM occurs
 - Likely beginning in Drayton, Bertrand
 - Establish a Core Group that works together in each drainage – 2 WID, 2 County, 2 Tribe, PUD, WDFW, DOE. Henry sensed there was interest and commitment from all but the County and Tribes. Both have staffing concerns that need to be addressed.

III. Water Quality/Drainage

- A. Letters to farmers re high fall fecal counts – Fred anticipates a follow up letter this fall.
- B. Portage Bay open in Spring – both Family Farmers and the County have prepared press releases announcing the good news of the shellfish beds openings.
- C. Fred noted that with the onset of good weather manure applications were started and that famers have noticed intense interest in their application practices.
- D. FLIP – Fred talked to the WIDs with Nooksack River frontage and they had suggested 5-6 potential projects that might be able to use the\$600k in funding that will likely be available this fall.

IV. Communication/Education

- A. Media Relations report – Fred distributed a report from Family Farmers. He highlighted several issues surrounding the growing engagement in EA WA and the labor issues. He noted that the H2A bill in Olympia was having a hearing next Thursday and that groups like WAFLA and WGL were encouraging attendance by farmers.

V. Adjournment - Next Meeting – June 19

Respectfully submitted by Henry Bierlink, Ag Water Board

Approved by _____