

# Ag Water Board

## Regular Meeting March 17, 2021, 1 pm

Ag Water Board office, 204 Hawley Street, Lynden

Zoom Meeting ID: 899 7122 0489 Passcode: 388662

<b>AWB Board:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> t__ Andy Enfield	<input type="checkbox"/> t__ Marty Maberry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> x__ Scott Bedlington
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> x__ Mike Boxx	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> x__ Jeff De Jong	<input type="checkbox"/> o__ Kevin Te Velde
<b>Alternates:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Vern Vande Garde	<input type="checkbox"/> Terry Lenssen	<input type="checkbox"/> Greg Ebe
	<input type="checkbox"/> Rich Appel	<input type="checkbox"/> Landon Van Dyk	<input type="checkbox"/> Rod Tjoelker
	<input type="checkbox"/> Jon Maberry	<input type="checkbox"/> t__ Brad Rader	<input type="checkbox"/> Keith Boon
	<input type="checkbox"/> Rod Vande Hoef	<input type="checkbox"/> Rolf Haugen	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> x__ Larry Stap
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> x__ Ed Blok	<input type="checkbox"/> Pete Vlas	<input type="checkbox"/> Harmon Brar
<b>Others:</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> x__ Fred Likkel	<input type="checkbox"/> t__ Kasey Cykler	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> x__ Henry Bierlink
	<input type="checkbox"/> t__ Bill Clarke	<input type="checkbox"/> t__ Alan Chapman	<input type="checkbox"/> t__ Alex Jeffers
	<input type="checkbox"/> t__ Gary Stoyka	<input type="checkbox"/> t__ Emma Ledsham	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> x__ Dillon Honcoop
	<input type="checkbox"/> t__ Tom Perkow	<input type="checkbox"/> t__ Chris Elder	<input type="checkbox"/> t__ Jay Chennault

*x = present*                      *o = absent with notice*                      *t = teleconference*

Scott called the meeting to order at 1:06.

- I. Review & Approve – Jeff moved approval of the December 16, 2020 board minutes, Larry seconded, motion carried unanimously.
- II. Financial/Administrative
  - A. Financial Reports – Henry reviewed the reports noting that a \$20k reimbursement from the Ecology grant had made the Program Expenses figure misleading. Actual Program Expense to date is approximately \$22k. Larry moved to approve the reports, Mike seconded, motion carried unanimously.
- III. Water Quantity/Supply
  - A. Adjudication debate
    - i. Legislative education – Family Farmers campaign, Bill’s coalition building – Bill observed that the default position of the legislative leaders is to support the [Governor’s](#) request which honors the Tribes’ insistence. Key legislators would be open to changing budget language if supported by Ecology. Ecology is open to deleting the prohibition on filing an adjudication before June 1, 2023 which has sent mixed signals. Our Alternative Proviso language developed with the [irrigation coalition](#) is hurt by the support for the Governor’s language by the tribes, Whatcom County, City of Bellingham, and the PUD.
    - ii. Tribal correspondence – consider response to several recent letters. Correcting the misinformation in these letters is desirable but likely not effective in changing any positions on adjudication. Scott directed the legal committee to weigh best ways to respond.
    - iii. Litigation options – litigation advisory committee report – The Committee examined several strategies to delay and minimize the effects of an adjudication. These paths will be followed if an adjudication is filed. A rezone of all irrigated lands in the AG zone to R5 or smaller would be pursued.
  - B. County Executive proposal
    - i. Tribes refuse participation if not conducted under adjudication

- ii. State may provide some funding which may be used to fund bridge building work by Maia Bellon and Jay Manning.
    - iii. Meanwhile, tribes are participating in Drainage Based Management which will likely evolve as the model for the collaborative process envisioned by the Executive.
  - C. Regional Water Supply task force - [Aspect Consulting's data collection report](#) is final. The next step is to evaluate management options in the three pilot areas – Drayton, Bertrand, and South Fork. This will provide the background information to inform Drainage Based Management.
  - D. Launch of Drainage Based Management
    - i. \$100k provided by Puget Sound Partnership
    - ii. [Outline developed](#) by the County who is leading this effort. Henry indicated he felt they had outlined the process well and that this presents our best chance to demonstrate a better path to resolution of issues.
  - E. WID projects with supply implications – these and previous work on management tools indicate how we would be able to wisely manage natural resources should the funds and elimination of the hurdles in water law be provided:
    - i. S Lyn – PUD pipeline, Lynden MAR, Bellingham Middle Fork
    - ii. Drayton – Deep Aquifer, [Water Bank](#), augmentation
    - iii. Bertrand – surface to ground conversions
- IV. Water Quality/Drainage/Flood
  - A. Quality update – Fred reiterated highlights of reports he had made to each of the WIDs. Generally good numbers recently after some high counts in early fall. Some elevated counts in both Portage and Drayton may necessitate expansion of the time and areas for closures. Fred noted that there was a growing consensus to move beyond just rigid closure dates and incorporate high risk events tied to rainfall and river flow.
  - B. DNA Project – in process, delayed by COVID work in the lab.
  - C. Beaver trapping – [Sumas WID monitoring program](#) – a potential model for other beaver challenges areas to follow. SWID is contracting with Critter Control at \$500/mo. to develop a more strategic trapping program.
  - D. Update on Floodplains by Design discussions and potential projects – overlap with DBM – Fred observed that the lack of cooperation on water supply is stalling future work on flood management. Fred noted the Floodplains by Design group had helped to fund some educational videos developed by Family Farmers.
- V. Communication/Education
  - A. Media Relations report – Dillion contributed a report touching on:
    - As of March 16, 195 people have used the Phone2Action tool, for a total of over 19,600 messages sent to elected officials. Targets for that outreach include Executive Sidhu, the Senate Ways & Means and Ag, Water & Natural Resources Committees, the House Rural Development, Ag & Natural Resource, Capital Budget, and Appropriations Committees, and the 40<sup>th</sup> and 42<sup>nd</sup> District Senators and Representatives. We have heard through back channels that the County has taken notice of the number of messages that they have been receiving, and a few supporters who used the tool for both this and other campaigns have said that they heard back from officials (primarily conservatives) indicating that they intend to fully support farmers in this and other issues.

- In a positive development, as of March 12 our ad campaign on Facebook is up and running. We don't have any numbers on reach yet, but are glad that Facebook has finally lifted the moratorium on advertisement of political issues.
- We have continued sharing our messaging on the KGMI Farming Show, with Dillon Honcoop talking with Fred Likkel about the latest developments in the process, and highlighting again the many pitfalls of adjudication. This segment aired on 3/6 and again on 3/13, as well as being available online.
- Dillon Honcoop will be discussing the issue on a different radio program, KGMI's Saturday Morning Live, this week. Host Charlie Crabtree is concerned about adjudication, and is particularly interested to talk about the impact beyond farming, including potentially on exempt well owners. The interview will be live Saturday at approximately 8:10 am.
- Anecdotally, we have received a number of inquiries from small local media outlets, students doing research projects, and other local citizens wanting more information about adjudication, which suggests that we have successfully positioned ourselves as local experts on the issue.
- Our infographic campaign had good reach numbers, and we have plans to develop and release more infographics in the same style in the future.

- B. South Fork participation – Fred reported that a Press Release is nearly ready announcing the partnership between South Fork farmers and Whatcom Family Farmers to represent the interests of the South Fork in water supply issues.

VI. New Business

- A. Conservation District – Alan update the group on the current election which ends March 23<sup>rd</sup>, the recruitment of an appointed Commissioner which is due March 31, and the General Manager search.
- B. Scott made note that his files indicate AWB was formed in 2015 and he was tasked with the Presidency. He encouraged others to begin thinking of finding some new blood to fill that responsibility. Others expressed their appreciation for his leadership. And some observed that Andy had volunteered just as the Zoom call was ended.

VII. Adjournment - Next Meetings

Scott adjourned the meeting at 2:22. Next meeting is June 16

Respectfully submitted by Henry Bierlink, Ag Water Board

**Approved by** \_\_\_\_\_