

South Lynden Watershed Improvement District

Minutes – September 12 2023, 3 PM

Board Attending:

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Landon VanDyk | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jeff DeJong | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pablo Esquivel |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rod VandeHoef | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ed Blok | |

Others Attending:

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gavin Willis | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Henry Bierlink | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fred Likkel |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Anna Beebe | <input type="checkbox"/> Shelley Macy | <input type="checkbox"/> Frank Corey |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Alan Chapman | <input type="checkbox"/> Bill Clarke | <input type="checkbox"/> David Haggith |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jay Chennault | <input type="checkbox"/> John Courtney | <input type="checkbox"/> Sarah Faubion |
- x – present o – absent with notice t – teleconference p – proxy*

Landon called the meeting to order at 3:05.

1. Consent Agenda

- a. June 13 minutes were reviewed.
- b. Financial report was reviewed.
- c. Jeff moved to approve the consent agenda. Ed seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

2. Ag Water Board / Water Supply

- a. ECY has indicated that April 1 is their current target date for filing the adjudication. Given staffing issues and how complicated the process will be, that could be pushed back further.
- b. AWB will be co-hosting an event on Sep 13th about how to prepare for the upcoming adjudication. Will include a brief introduction from Robin McPherson from ECY, and then presentations from consultants at AESI, Aspect, and RH2.
- c. A memo about the federal settlement process has been completed by Ramsey and distributed to members of the WMB Local Government Caucus. It has also been sent to tribal lawyers. We understand that the federal settlement team will be meeting with the tribes later this month.
- d. No update from the Watershed Management Board.
- e. The WMB Local Government Caucus has been meeting. County consultants have been looking at potential water supply options. One option they have done some preliminary investigations of relates to a series of out-of-stream reservoirs and pump exchange systems. These reservoirs would be filled in the winter, and would be used to distribute water for irrigation in the summer. WID board and staff note that high costs make this project unlikely to be completed, but it is a starting point for discussions.

- f. AWB staff met with tribal staff about water projects. The meeting was overall positive. The general message is that tribes want to exhaust all natural solution options before going to artificial solutions.

3. Drainage / Habitat / Flood

- a. Fred provided an update on flood issues. The county has been modeling a number of different ways to manage flows and the flow split. Widening the river channel between Nugents Corner and Everson, along with ring dikes around the cities of Everson, Nooksack and Sumas are all being considered. Sending some floodwaters down Scott Ditch is also under consideration.
 - i. Board members noted that impacts to agriculture from flooding include soil compaction from the weight of floodwaters, damage to irrigation and drainage infrastructure, and more. Questions of what might mitigation for those impacts look like, and why can't we do more to protect the farmland in the first place?
- b. Fred provided an update on issues with the CREP program.
 - i. The CREP program works with FSA and the state to fund riparian buffers, primarily on farmland. The program initially only was utilized on eligible streams that contained ESA-listed species.
 - ii. Approx. 20 years ago, FSA staff at the state level expanded the program to include all salmon-bearing streams. However, they did not approve that change through the proper channels. As a result, about 50% of CREP projects in Washington state are not eligible for federal funds.
 - iii. A waiver was issued so that landowners did not have to pay back any monies they had received through the CREP program on ineligible projects. However, the projects now are either being cancelled, reduced in size, or being re-offered through different programs at significantly reduced rental rates. Landowners have been told that they have until September 30th to sign any new contracts.
 - iv. Whatcom Family Farmers, along with a number of agricultural and environmental organizations, is planning to send a letter to the governor asking him to use state funds to maintain the contracts that will be cancelled by the FSA.
 - v. A discussion followed about whether the SLWID should sign the letter. No consensus was reached, and the item was tabled.
- c. Sukh Kahlon has requested assistance from the SLWID for beaver management on Scott Ditch near Nolte Road.
 - i. Scott Ditch is dammed in 2 locations, and water flow is obstructed to the point that the water is overtopping the banks and moving into the farmland. Sukh is concerned that the dams will prevent stormwater conveyance to the point that his fields will flood in the coming rainy months.
 - ii. It was noted that beaver trapping will be necessary in order to prevent any dams from being rebuilt after removal.

- iii. Landon said that he will coordinate beaver trapping between the impacted landowners and CDID #21.
- iv. Jeff motioned that the WID utilize its permits to remove the relevant beaver dams on Scott Ditch near Nolte Rd. Ed seconded. Motion carried unanimously.
- v. Gavin will follow up with Sukh and coordinate beaver dam removal.

4. Water Quality

- a. Anna provided an update on water quality data from Portage Bay. The numbers have been trending in a good direction over the past couple of years. If counts continue to stay low, Portage Bay might see some conditional areas move to approved for year-round shellfish harvest.

5. Education / Communications

- a. Website – southlyndenwid.com

6. Other Items from Commissioners

- a. None.

7. Next Meetings

- a. The next meeting is scheduled for October 10th at 3 PM. That meeting will need to cover expiring board member terms, 2024 budget, and the upcoming board of equalization.

Landon adjourned the meeting at 4:40 pm.

Submitted by Gavin Willis, Ag Water Board

Approved by _____