

Minutes: Port of Port Townsend Farm Steering Committee – Wednesday, February 21, 2024

The Farm Steering Committee met for a regular business meeting at the WSU Extension Office Kivley Center, 97 Oak Bay Road, Port Hadlock, WA.

Members present: Janet Aubin, Martin Frederickson, Keith Kisler, Laura Llewellyn, Martin Mills, David Seabrook, Kellie Henwood, Al Latham, Rebecca Benjamin

Other Attendees: Heidi Eisenhour Jefferson County Drainage District and Sara Spaeth (for Erik Kingfisher) Jefferson Land Trust

Staff: Port Executive Director Eron Berg, Deputy Director Eric Toews, Administrative Assistant Joanna Sanders, and University of Washington Rick Sepler.

Welcome and Introduction by Eron Berg

Review of Meeting Objectives #1 and FSC Ground Rules by Eric Toews. He covered Open Public Meetings Act Rules, Public Records Act Compliance, Level of Commitment and Responsibility, Decision-Making Process, and Meeting Structure/Content.

Role of the University of Washington by Rick Sepler. An existing conditions report would be drafted by the students and presented on March 6.

Planning Process Timeline and Objectives: Schedule and Key Milestones were reviewed by Eric Toews. He explained the development of a “road map” to guide future farm use, identifying key issues requiring research/resolution, and near, medium, and long-term action items. Port Commission Goals include benefiting and supporting local farmers, expanding ag production, improving habitat especially for Migratory Fish, and achieving a 9.5% return on Port-Invested dollars.

Questions and Discussion:

A binder with key documents and useful information would be provided in addition to documents and information available on the Port’s website. The NOSC geomorphic assessment would be printed in color.

Periodic review of Comprehensive Plan is in process in 2025. The agriculture section of the Comp. Plan would benefit this project. Heidi Eisenhour asked to understand items in the plan that would be helpful.

Eron Berg responded to questions about the 9.5% return on investment. There is flexibility as to when that 9.5% would need to be achieved. The goal is to make a difference in the ag community with those investments carrying their own weight.

FSC discussed, shared thoughts, and observations from the Farm tour:

- 1) trying to imagine ag production leasing,
- 2) how to use the land given the flooding impairments,

- 3) considering the near, mid and long-term seasonal uses by farmers,
- 4) how to transition unusable areas to useable,
- 5) how to improve the limited amount of rentable infrastructure,
- 6) possibility of leasing area for food composting,
- 7) possibility of providing farmer/worker housing,
- 8) what actions/solutions can be implemented on the creek/canary grass,
- 9) where would consensus come on conditions assessment,
- 10) options for conveying more water off the property, restoring the creek and addressing the “bathtub” topography situation,
- 11) how much dredging of the creek and mowing of the canary grass might be done,
- 12) what does the science literature say about conservation restoration,
- 13) is the drainage district responsible for maintaining creek flow and,
- 14) we may need a plan for the plan,
- 15) what are the limitations written into the conservation easement on what is allowable for habitat or stream restoration and what is written as “needs to be maintained as agriculture land,”
- 16) in other low grade stream ecosystems, would it be expected to have a low flow marshy wetland stretch and should we be fighting against it or should there be a marshy zone in the alternatives.

Ideas for additional information and documents to consider:

- 1) A soon to be released Glen Gately paper on the effect of reed canary grass on dissolved oxygen with historic perennial wetlands outlined,
- 2) Legal implication of the drainage district/map and data about the drainage district,
- 3) Four upcoming open houses on Chimacum Creek Watershed Management/Improvement (2/28, 3/7, 3/12, 3/19) advertised on Jefferson County Conservation district website,
- 4) needs identification data/market value (broader community and ag needs), including data through Jefferson Landworks Collaborative,
- 5) identify partners for the additional investments to make it viable (such as housing or new barn),
- 6) exploration of funding/access to local food infrastructure grants,
- 7) data set and/or map of amount year-round leasable acreage (Al Latham circulated a map),

- 8) regulations for a meat processing/slaughter facility (possibly Doyle Yancy feasibility study),
- 9) 2018-19 Puget Sound Processing report (Kellie Henwood noted report it on their regional small farms website),
- 10) possibility of Port-own infrastructure for example pickle processing,
- 11) Corner Farm Stand as stakeholder/possible opportunity for meat market,
- 12) explore meat and vegetable processing/cold storage to expand fresh products sold at market or outside county, grow the demand,
- 13) viability/affordability for cooperatively leasing a cold storage, would the airport be a better location,
- 14) USDA rural energy grants may be available to build a solar array to generate power,
- 15) just released is 2022 Ag Census with helpful data, demographics, production, and trends,
- 16) identify unsuitable farm uses,
- 17) consider possibility of expanding the WDFW lease for immediate revenue generation,
- 18) information about the Port exercising the water rights,
- 19) what is the irrigation capacity and would the Port purchase the irrigation equipment? Distributed were copies of the farm's equipment list, and
- 20) another action item would be replacing the creek culvert at Naylor Creek.

Adjourned at 7:35 p.m.