

SPONSORED BY: _____
PROPOSED BY: _____ PDS
INTRODUCTION DATE: _____

RESOLUTION # _____

**AUTHORIZING WHATCOM COUNTY CONSERVATION EASEMENT PROGRAM
STAFF AND WHATCOM COUNTY EXECUTIVE TO PROCEED WITH THE
ACQUISITION OF AN AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION EASEMENT**

WHEREAS, Whatcom County government recognizes agriculture and forestry as major contributors to the local economy and a high quality of life for Whatcom County citizens; and

WHEREAS, The Growth Management Act and the County Comprehensive Plan support the retention of agricultural and forestry lands of long term commercial significance and encourage the use of innovative techniques to do so; and

WHEREAS, Ordinance #92-002 enacted a property tax levy known as the Conservation Futures Tax as authorized by RCW 84.34.230 to provide a funding source to assist in acquiring “open space land, farm and agricultural land, and timber land, and a significant Conservation Futures fund balance is available for additional farm land protection efforts”; and

WHEREAS, Ordinance #2002-054 adopted Whatcom County Code Title 3.25A that authorized the creation of a Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program that offers voluntary farm agreements that include the purchase of agricultural conservation easements on farmable land within Whatcom County; and

WHEREAS, Ordinance #2002-054 and WCC 3.25A established a Purchase of Development Rights Oversight Committee to provide review and assistance to PDR staff; and

WHEREAS, The Whatcom County Council adopted the PDR Guidelines through Resolution #2002-040 which includes specific direction for program administration and conservation easement acquisitions; and

WHEREAS, Ordinance #2018-065 amended Whatcom County Code Title 3.25A to direct the PDR Program to also offer voluntary agreements to purchase forestry and ecological conservations easements on working forestlands and important ecosystem areas within Whatcom County; and

WHEREAS, Ordinance #2021-037 amended Whatcom County Code Title 3.25A to change the program name to be the Whatcom County Conservation Easement Program (CEP); and

WHEREAS, Council, pursuant to Conservation Easement Program Guidelines, must affirm or modify the properties as submitted by the CEP Oversight Committee; and

WHEREAS, Council has reviewed the application and background materials at a public meeting, with input by County staff and CEP Oversight Committee members; and

WHEREAS, Council has determined the proposed conservation easement is in accordance with their policy priorities and the requirements of Title 3.25A and the Conservation Easement Program Guidelines; and

WHEREAS, The CEP Oversight Committee voted on September 18, 2025 to recommend approval to purchase an easement on the Steensma property; and

WHEREAS, Whatcom County has been awarded funding from the Department of Ecology to contribute to the purchase of the easement and staff are pursuing additional funding opportunities; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Whatcom County Council that:

1. The Conservation Easement Program proceed with the acquisition of an agricultural conservation easement on the following property pursuant to the process outlined in the CEP Guidelines: ACE2025-3 Steensma.
2. The Executive is authorized to enter into a Purchase and Sale Agreement for an easement on this property, provided:
 - a. The appraisal is completed and the conservation easement is drafted in accordance with the CEP guidelines, and
 - b. The landowner agrees to the offer price and conservation easement conditions, and
 - c. Budget authority has been adopted by the Whatcom County Council.
3. Expenditures of Conservation Futures Funds, within budget authority, are authorized to cover expenses associated with purchase of the conservation easement, including title search and insurance, appraisal services, easement monitoring, and enforcement fees.

APPROVED this _____ day of _____, 2025

ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON

Cathy Halka, Council Clerk

Kaylee Galloway, Council Chair

APPROVED as to form:

Approved by Greg Greenan by email on 12/04/25

Senior Deputy Prosecuting Attorney