

**WHATCOM COUNTY
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT**

Elizabeth Kosa
Director



NATURAL RESOURCES

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MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Satpal Singh Sidhu, Whatcom County Executive, and The Honorable Members of the Whatcom County Council, collectively serving in their capacity as the Whatcom County Flood Control Zone District Board of Supervisors

THROUGH: Elizabeth Kosa, Public Works Director *ek*
Mark Personius, Planning and Development Services Director *mp*

FROM: Gary Stoyka, Natural Resources Manager *gs*
Jon-Paul Shannahan, Environmental Programs Manager

DATE: April 14, 2026

RE: Review and Approval of Agreement No. SEAPSRSL -2025-WhCoPW-00037

Please find attached for your review a copy of the Agreement No. SEAPSRSL-2025-WhCoPW-00037 Nooksack Riparian Resilience Project (NRRP) with the State of Washington Department of Ecology. The authorized agreement will be signed electronically through DocuSign.

Requested Action

Public Works respectfully requests that the Flood Control Zone District Board of Supervisors authorize the County Executive to sign this agreement.

Background and Purpose

Partners of the WRIA 1 watershed planning process have a long history of interjurisdictional collaboration around shared salmon recovery and watershed restoration goals. Restoring effective riparian buffers is a primary recovery action identified in the local recovery plans. Recent planning processes have identified improved landowner incentive programs as a high priority to advance watershed and salmon recovery goals. This NRRP will explore and design new incentive programs that will appeal more broadly to landowners, and fund almost \$2 million in riparian conservation easements in high priority watershed reaches targeting working and agricultural lands.

Working in collaboration with Planning and Development Service's Conservation Easement Program staff, we plan to hire consulting firms to identify existing landowner incentive programs and gaps and barriers to these incentive programs while exploring other innovative options to address these gaps and barriers. These novel ideas will be vetted and tested with the agricultural community via a social marketing study, and the results of these efforts will inform a new Targeted Landowner Outreach Plan for advancing more permanent riparian buffers. With these new incentive tools and a refined messaging and coordination with restoration practitioners, we will purchase 2-4 high priority riparian conservation easements in selected watersheds of WRIA 1.

Funding Amount and Source

This agreement will provide \$2,244,875 to support the Nooksack Riparian Resilience Project. Budget authority to implement the work in this grant is provided in a supplemental budget request. Please contact Jon-Paul Shannahan at x6294, if you have any questions or concerns regarding the terms of this agreement.

Encl.