

WHATCOM COUNTY

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Mark Personius, AICP
Director

Memorandum

TO: Honorable Whatcom County Councilmembers
Honorable Satpal Sidhu, Whatcom County Executive

THROUGH: Mark Personius, Director, PDS *MP*

FROM: Becky Snijder van Wissenkerke, PDR Program Administrator *BLS*

DATE: December 18, 2019

SUBJECT: Presentation of the Purchase of Development Rights Program and request for approval to proceed with acquisition of four conservation easements

Whatcom County PDR Program staff would like to update Council with an overview of current applications to the Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) Program including a request for approval to purchase easements on four projects.

The PDR Program continues to experience ongoing success both in terms of applications received and funding secured. In 2019, Whatcom County purchased one agricultural conservation easement protecting 65 acres. Furthermore, three additional conservation easements were approved for purchase, totaling 172 acres. One such easement will be the first forestry conservation easement purchased through the PDR Program, protecting 84 acres of working forestlands.

Whatcom County has also been awarded \$1,300,000 through the NRCS Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) to coordinate with the Whatcom Conservation District, Whatcom Land Trust, and AgWaterBoard to enact agricultural conservation easements in priority areas within Whatcom County. This award serves as secured funding that allows Whatcom County to more effectively work with agricultural community partners to prioritize and protect prime agricultural lands. Partners will review the first round of applications for this specific award in the spring of 2020.

PDR Program staff wants to provide a program update and request approval to proceed with acquisition of appraisal services for the Hirsch Korn application and to enter into a Purchase and Sale Agreement to acquire development rights and agriculture conservation easements on the Roper, McLeod, TeVelde, and Hirsch Korn application parcels.

The Roper application is located in Anderson Creek watershed, off of East Smith Rd. This application will result in the elimination of 4 development rights and effectively protect 26 acres of working farmland.

The McLeod application is located in Wiser Lake/Cougar Creek watershed, off of East Wiser Lake Rd. This application will result in the elimination of 7 development rights and effectively protect 16 acres of working farmland.

The TeVelde application is located in Fishtrap Creek watershed, off of Bender Rd. This application will result in the elimination of 1 development right and effectively protect 19 acres of working farmland.

The Hirschhorn application is located in Anderson Creek watershed, off of Mt Baker Highway. This application will result in the elimination of 1 development right and effectively protect 13 acres of working farmland.

Thank you for receiving this program update and considering the above referenced request.

Request Summary

PDR Program Staff requests approval of the ranked list recommended by the PDR Oversight Committee, approval for the Administrator to proceed with the acquisition of title search and appraisal services for the Hirschhorn application pursuant to the process outlined in the PDR Guidelines, and approval to authorize the Executive to enter into a Purchase and Sale Agreement to acquire agriculture conservation easements on the Roper, McLeod, TeVelde, and Hirschhorn applications, provided appraisal is completed, conservation easement is drafted which meets the PDR Program guidelines, landowners have agreed to the offer price and conservation easement conditions, and budget authority has been adopted by Whatcom County Council.

Please contact PDR Program Administrator, Becky Snijder van Wissenkerke, at (360)778-5956 with any questions.