

**WHATCOM COUNTY**  
Planning & Development Services  
5280 Northwest Drive  
Bellingham, WA 98226-9097  
360-778-5900, TTY 800-833-6384  
360-778-5901 Fax



**Mark Personius, AICP**  
Director

## Memorandum

**TO:** Honorable County Councilmembers  
Honorable Executive Sidhu

**THROUGH:** Mark Personius, PDS Director *MP*

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

**DATE:** May 11, 2021

**SUBJECT:** Request to amend Whatcom County Code 3.25A and the PDR Program Guidelines as recommended by the Purchase of Development Rights Oversight Committee

---

The Purchase of Development Rights Program messaging and outreach were evaluated in 2019. After such evaluation, the Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) Oversight Committee recommends changing the program's name to the Whatcom County Conservation Easement Program. This proposed name better represents the program's purpose: purchasing conservation easements that will protect important agricultural lands, forestland, and ecological areas in Whatcom County. Since the program's establishment, development rights have been removed by placing conservation easements on properties. These conservation easements also protect the land by placing other restrictions, such as limiting the amount of impervious surfaces and prohibiting any use not conducive to agriculture, forestry, or the protection of ecological areas.

In addition to this proposed program name change, the PDR Oversight Committee and PDR Program staff have reviewed Whatcom County Code 3.25A and the PDR Program Guidelines and have identified additional changes that will improve the program's administration. The major change is revising the program's site selection criteria to better identify properties with high conservation value. In 2018, the program expanded to include the protection of forestland and important ecological areas as secondary goals to the program's primary goal of farmland preservation. The current site selection criteria is designed to rank farmland and does not accurately evaluate valuable forestland or important ecological areas. The proposed program guidelines and scoring criteria, as presented in the attached documents, continue to prioritize the protection of agricultural applications while also identifying important forestland and ecological areas for protection.

The PDR Oversight Committee and PDR Program staff recommend this proposed name change and updated guidelines as detailed in the attached ordinance. We look forward to discussing these recommended changes with you.

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