

Bertrand Watershed Improvement District

Minutes – Regular Meeting – April 8, 2024

Attendees

“(t)” indicates presence via tele-conference, “(p)” indicates proxy vote.

Board – Present	Board – Absent with Notice
Vern VandeGarde Pete Vlas Greg Ebe Scott Bedlington	Mike Schoneveld

Staff and Consultants	
Name	Organization / Affiliation
Gavin Willis	Ag Water Board
Henry Bierlink	Ag Water Board
Frank Corey	Whatcom Conservation District
Bill Clarke (t)	Clarke Law
Katie Faber (t)	AESI
Elizabeth Hayes	Whatcom Conservation District
Fred Likkel	Whatcom Family Farmers
Jay Chennault (t)	AESI

Other Guests	
Name	Organization / Affiliation
Alan Chapman (t)	Whatcom Conservation District
Lauren Templeton (t)	Whatcom County PDS
Chris Elder (t)	Whatcom County Public Works

Proceedings

Vern called the meeting to order at 2:00pm

1. Consent Agenda

- a. Agenda was reviewed.
- b. Minutes from March 11 were reviewed.
- c. Financials and voucher in the amount of \$8,597.25 were reviewed.
- d. Greg moved to approve the consent agenda. Scott seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

2. Administration

- a. Board signed a reformatted copy of previously approved Res. 2024-01.

3. Ag Water Board / Water Supply

- a. Bill provided an adjudication update. Adjudication will likely be filed in May. Claims filing deadline likely end of summer 2025. No update from AG office on claims form comments. ECY has completed review of Whatcom county parcels that have water use associated with them, their count is 30,000 parcels.

- i. Gavin is working with Whatcom County to provide water rights office hours for ag users. Might be good for AWB to formulate a request to ECY for technical assistance funding in the next state budget.
 - b. Chris Elder presented on county's goals for rezoning agricultural land.
 - i. Rural study areas are 28,000 acres. What does "heightened agricultural protection measures" mean?
 - ii. What would be reasonable in a compensatory rezone? Compensation could be financial, or connected to water supply.
 - iii. Gavin will send Chris' report out to the board.
 - iv. Board member noted that the threat of adjudication and potential lack of water makes preserving R5 zoning more important for landowners. If there was a way to guarantee ag water (instead of just domestic permit exempt use) landowners may be more willing to consider giving up development rights. Water supply uncertainty is a significant driver of rural development. Allowing farming to be viable is the best way to protect ag land.

4. FEMA

- a. Still waiting on approval for procurement process.

5. Drainage / Habitat / Flood

- a. Fred provided a FLIP update. County seems to recognize a need for action on a shorter timeline.
 - i. Nooksack tribal staff also met with Gavin and Fred about projects in the mainstem in Reach 2.
- b. Fred provided a CLASS update. Expect to have contract for funding for rest of WSE modeling in place by the end of the week.
 - i. Board member noted that city continues to develop and issue building permits without stormwater management plan in place.
 - ii. Willamette Partnership group will be getting funding again to facilitate CLASS work, which will likely help move things along.
- c. Discussion about potential storage project in Upper Bertrand. Maybe talk to the Land Trust about acquiring it to keep options open. Gavin or Henry will pursue those conversations.
- d. Buffers update: new program is in place, Frank is finalizing a one-page flyer. Gavin and Frank will send out a letter to priority landowners in the WID once the flyer is finalized.

6. Water Quality

- a. Elizabeth provided a WQ update. Elevated counts over the last samplings appear to have been from ducks and Canadians. Elevated border counts at Bertrand compared to last year, but lower on Double Ditch.

7. Communications / Education

- a. Water rights information event had nearly 400 attendees. Presentations will be available on the WFF website.

8. Other

- a. Gavin provided OPMA training.

9. Next Meeting

- a. Next meetings are scheduled for May 13 and June 11.

Meeting was adjourned at 3:39pm

Submitted by Gavin Willis, Ag Water Board

Approved by Vern Vande Griend