

Bertrand Watershed Improvement District

Minutes – September 11, 2023, 3 PM

Board Attending:

Vern Vande Garde Mike Schoneveld Pete Vlas
 Scott Bedlington Greg Ebe

Others Attending:

Gavin Willis Henry Bierlink _____ Fred Likkel
 Trevor Gearhart Dale Buys _____ Frank Corey
 Alan Chapman _____ Bill Clarke Brandy Reed
 Jay Chennault Katie Faber Rud Browne
x – present o – absent with notice t – teleconference p – proxy

Vern called the meeting to order at 2:00.

1. Consent Agenda

- a. June 12 minutes were reviewed.
- b. Financial report was reviewed.
- c. Scott moved to approve the consent agenda. Greg seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

2. Ag Water Board / Water Supply

- a. ECY has indicated that April 1 is their current target date for filing the adjudication. Given staffing issues and how complicated the process will be, that could be pushed back further.
- b. AWB will be co-hosting an event on Sep 13th about how to prepare for the upcoming adjudication. Will include a brief introduction from Robin McPherson from ECY, and then presentations from consultants at AESI, Aspect, and RH2.
 - i. Jay shared that ECY will be sending 20,000-30,000 certified letters (approximately 5,000 water rights and 20,000 permit exempt wells)
 - ii. WFF farmer rally on November 8 will have a similar educational event more tailored to farmers
- c. A memo about the federal settlement process has been completed by Ramsey and distributed to members of the WMB Local Government Caucus. It has also been sent to tribal lawyers. We understand that the federal settlement team will be meeting with the tribes later this month.
- d. No update from the Watershed Management Board.
- e. The WMB Local Government Caucus has been meeting. County consultants have been looking at potential water supply options. One option they have done some preliminary investigations of relates to a series of out-of-stream reservoirs and pump exchange systems. These reservoirs would be filled in the winter, and would be used to distribute water for irrigation in the summer. WID board and

staff note that high costs make this project unlikely to be completed, but it is a starting point for discussions.

- f. AWB staff met with tribal staff about water projects. The meeting was overall positive. The general message is that tribes want to exhaust all natural solution options before going to artificial solutions.

3. Drainage / Habitat / Flood

- a. Gavin provided an update on FEMA projects. Applications are still moving forward – Parklyn drainpipe and Fishtrap levee have both been obligated
- b. Fred and Dale provided an update on CLASS. Hydraulics and hydrology being worked on now – will be checking with landowners in October to see if the modeling and data matches with what they’ve observed in Mouw Ditch and the Rathbone Rd crossing.
- c. Fred provided an update on flood issues. The county has been modeling a number of different ways to manage flows and the flow split. Widening the river channel between Nugents Corner and Everson, along with ring dikes around the cities of Everson, Nooksack and Sumas are all being considered.
- d. Fred provided an update on issues with the CREP program.
 - i. The CREP program works with FSA and the state to fund riparian buffers, primarily on farmland. The program initially only was utilized on eligible streams that contained ESA-listed species.
 - ii. Approx. 20 years ago, FSA staff at the state level expanded the program to include all salmon-bearing streams. However, they did not approve that change through the proper channels. As a result, about 50% of CREP projects in Washington state are not eligible for federal funds.
 - iii. A waiver was issued so that landowners did not have to pay back any monies they had received through the CREP program on ineligible projects. However, the projects now are either being cancelled, reduced in size, or being re-offered through different programs at significantly reduced rental rates. Landowners have been told that they have until September 30th to sign any new contracts.
 - iv. Whatcom Family Farmers, along with a number of agricultural and environmental organizations, is planning to send a letter to the governor asking him to use state funds to maintain the contracts that will be cancelled by the FSA.
 - v. Greg moved to have the WID sign the letter. Scott seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

4. Water Quality

- a. Trevor provided an update on water quality data from Portage Bay. The numbers have been trending in a good direction over the past couple of years. If counts continue to stay low, Portage Bay might see some conditional areas move to approved for year-round shellfish harvest.

5. Education / Communications

- a. Website – bertrandwid.com

6. Other Items from Commissioners

- a. None.

7. Next Meetings

- a. The next meeting is scheduled for October 9th at 3 PM. That meeting will need to cover expiring board member terms, 2024 budget, and the upcoming board of equalization.

Vern adjourned the meeting at 3:41 pm.

Submitted by Gavin Willis, Ag Water Board

Approved by _____