

**ISLAND COUNTY CONSERVATION FUTURES
CITIZENS ADVISORY BOARD**

Date: May 31st, 2016
To: Board of Island County Commissioners
From: Todd Peterson, Chair, Conservation Futures Citizen Advisory Board (CAB)
Subject: 2016 Conservation Futures Program Grant Recommendations

On Monday, May 16th, 2016 the CAB held a properly noticed Public Meeting in Coupeville, Washington to consider the 2016 Conservation Futures Fund (CFF) program applications.

The following CAB members were present:

- Todd Peterson
- Susan Bennett
- Dick Toft
- Terica Ginther
- Penny Pfiester
- Dave Parent
- Linda Kast Meehan
- David Smith

The CAB elected Todd Peterson as Chair and Linda Kast Meehan as Vice Chair.

One member of the public, Stephen Bennett of Freeland, attended the meeting. No member of the public commented on any project.

Applicant representatives made project presentations to the CAB.

Island County staff present were Don Mason (GSA), Janet Stein (WSU), Steve Marx (Public Works Assistant Director) and Jan M. vanMuyden (Parks Superintendent).

The purpose of the CFF program is to acquire lands of public conservation importance through a variety of means, except through eminent domain, and protect them in perpetuity. These lands include open space, wetlands, wildlife habitat, farm and agricultural, and timber lands that are under pressure from increasing urban development pursuant to ICC 3.22.010 – ICC3.22.050, RCW 84.34.020, RCW84.34.210 and RCW 84.34.220.

Island County manages the CFF program, and under the program the County, a city or town, a park district, a municipal corporation such as a Port District, a nonprofit historic preservation corporation, or nonprofit nature conservancy corporation or association may seek funds to secure a fee simple or any lesser interest, development right, easement, covenant or other contractual right necessary to protect,

preserve, maintain, improve, restore, limit the future use of, or otherwise conserve, selected open space land, farm and agricultural land and timber land.

CONCLUSIONS AND FINDINGS

Pursuant to ICC 3.22.060, the conclusions and findings on how the CAB recommendations satisfy the fund allocation and selection criteria are contained in the following attached documents:

- May 16th, 2016 CAB Public Meeting Summary/Minutes.
- CAB Scoring of each project.

RECOMMENDATIONS

After reviewing the material provided by staff and holding a public meeting to hear the applicant's presentations and public comments, individual CAB members scored each of the proposed projects. Based on the combined totals, the five maintenance and operations projects were scored in the following order:

1. Swan Lake Noxious Weed Management Project (\$25,414 over 2016 and 2017)
2. Trillium Community Forest Project (\$14,500)
3. Camano Ridge Addition Project (\$25,000)
4. Double Bluff Park Project (\$25,000)
5. Four Springs Preserve Projects (\$10,000)

These proposed projects represent a total amount requested in 2016 of \$99,914.

MANAGEMENT & OPERATION APPLICATION

Swan Lake – Noxious Weed Management

Project Sponsor: Island County Noxious Weed Control Board
CFF Funds requested: \$25,414 (\$13,530 in 2016 and \$8,195 in 2017)
Matching Funds: Possible assistance by community volunteers

Public Support and Consistency with Local Plans:

Among the reasons the public values Swan Lake is the opportunity it provides to see a wide variety of resident and migrating birds. The setting of the Lake offers expansive views of farm land to the east. The lake lies in close proximity to Joseph Whidbey State Park.

Chapter 17.10 of the RCW covers the responsibility of property owners to control noxious weeds.

Project Summary:

This project proposes two years of work to eradicate the noxious weed hairy willow-herb at Swan Lake: Year 1 (2016) complete a noxious weed survey, mapping and control; year 2 (2017) undertake additional control work. The project proposal states: "It is imperative that the current infestation of hairy willow-herb at Swan Lake be controlled immediately before it continues to spread and becomes the same ecological threat it has become in the Crockett Lake

area.” The project will also determine the presence of, and if found, control smooth cord grass, a Class A noxious weed.

Summary of the CAB Recommendation:

Members of the advisory board cited the necessity of timely action before hairy willow-herb can expand its range at Swan Lake as it has at Crockett Lake. One member recommended that the County levy a tax for noxious weed control as other counties do. Another member pointed out the importance of enforcing private property owners’ compliance with regulations requiring abatement of noxious weeds.

Trillium Community Forest – Invasive Species Removal and Public Use Enhancement

Project Sponsor: Whidbey Camano Land Trust
CFF Funds requested: \$14,500
Matching Funds: 100 volunteer hours

Public Support and Consistency with Local Plans:

The public demonstrated support for the Trillium Community Forest by donating millions of dollars for its acquisition.

Chapter 17.10 of the RCW covers the responsibility of property owners to control noxious weeds.

Project Summary:

The project will remove holly, tansy, thistle and Himalayan blackberry from the Trillium Community Forest. The 2016 CFF funding appropriation will provide \$300 for signs to guide the public to information about parking and use of the Community Forest. The appropriation would also reimburse the Land Trust \$4,200 for trail infrastructure work completed in 2015. The Land Trust requests these funds to cover the over-budget expenses of completing the forest’s public parking area.

Summary of the CAB Recommendation:

While the CAB ranked the Trillium Community Forest project second in order of priority, one CAB member recommended removing the \$ 4,200 2014 CFF reimbursement. Another member supported the reimbursement, suggesting that a correctly estimated project (adding \$4,200 to the original 2014 application) would have been fully funded at that time.

Camano Ridge Preserve Addition – Public Use Enhancement and Invasive Species Removal

Project Sponsor: Island County Parks
CFF Funds requested: \$25,000 (reduced from \$50,000 listed on the project application)
Matching Funds: Possible assistance from community volunteers

Public Support and Consistency with Local Plans:

The project will provide safe and convenient parking and access for visitors to the 440-acre Camano Ridge Preserve. Friends of Camano Island Parks supported the acquisition in 2015 of the 4.77 acre Dillon property as access to the Camano Ridge Preserve.

Chapter 17.10 of the RCW covers the responsibility of property owners to control noxious weeds.

Project Summary:

This project will design and build a parking lot, and provide fencing, signs, and new trails. The project will also remove noxious weeds.

Summary of the CAB Recommendation:

Advisory board members noted that the CFF Dillon acquisition, approved in 2015, specified the construction of a parking lot for the Camano Ridge Preserve, a project that should be funded in 2016.

Double Bluff Park – Public Use Enhancement

Project Sponsor: Island County Parks
CFF Funds requested: \$25,000
Matching Funds: Community volunteers help manage the park.

Public Support and Consistency with Local Plans:

Thousands of people visit Double Bluff Park annually to enjoy the beach and marine vistas, walk their dogs or kite surf. This proposal would improve public access and safety.

Project Summary:

This project would increase parking spaces at Double Bluff Beach Park from 24 to 30. It would provide a 10-minute drop-off area close to the entrance to the beach. It would also replace fencing near public facilities, improve site drainage and provide a separate entrance to the beach for dogs.

Summary of the CAB Recommendation:

The CAB supports the addition of parking spaces at Double Bluff Park, and the provision of a separate entrance to the beach for dogs. Members of the CAB recommend the Parks Department develop a site plan for the park that adequately addresses the issue of parking. The parking proposal under current consideration is not a long-term solution.

This park is highly used by the public and will lead to increased public support for the Conservation Futures Fund. The CAB recommends installing signage recognizing the CFF for park improvements.

The CAB supports inclusion of funding for Double Bluff Park in the Commissioners' budget. Advisory board members point out the need to fund the Parks Department adequately, indicating that a staff of 4.5 persons is insufficient.

Four Springs Preserve – Tree Thinning

Project Sponsor: Island County Parks
CFF Funds requested: \$10,000
Matching Funds: Possible assistance by community volunteers

Public Support and Consistency with Local Plans:

Project Summary:

This project would trim and thin trees encroaching on the county-owned buildings at the Four Springs Preserve. The goals of the project are to protect public safety from falling branches and reduce the maintenance costs of roof repair and debris removal. The proposal calls for thinning approximately five acres of forest.

Summary of the CAB Recommendation:

The advisory board suggests raising facility rental fees by 10% to cover the cost of forest management. Several members also suggested that this project be funded by County Parks not the Conservation Futures Fund.

CONCLUSION

The Citizens Advisory Board's combined scoring ranks the five CFF 2016 maintenance and operations projects in the following order of priority:

1. Swan Lake Noxious Weed Management (\$25,414 over 2016 and 2017)
2. Trillium Community Forest Noxious Weed Removal and Public Information (\$14,500)
3. Camano Ridge Addition Public Access (\$25,000)
4. Double Bluff Park Public Access and Safety and Infrastructure Improvement (\$25,000)
5. Four Springs Preserve Public Safety and Infrastructure Maintenance (\$10,000)

In relation to the CFF's principal project evaluation criteria, the Swan Lake, Trillium, and Camano Ridge projects address maintaining ecological integrity. The Double Bluff and Four Springs projects address removing a hazard or liability. The Trillium, Camano Ridge and Double Bluff projects address the enhancement of public access.

The 2016 allocation for Conservation Futures Fund projects is \$102,000, sufficient to fund all five proposals. Alternatively, given the divergence of 200 points in scoring between the highest and lowest ranked project, the \$10,000 requested for Four Springs could be directed to complete a detailed site-use plan for Double Bluff Park, with an emphasis on parking, or to support future CFF projects.