2015 Island County Conservation Futures Fund

Lone Lake Working Lands – Phase 1

1. Applicant Information:

Applicant: Whidbey Camano Land Trust
Contact: Danielle Rideout
Address: 765 Wonn Rd, C-201
Greenbank, WA 98253
Phone: 360-222-3310 **E-mail:** danielle@wclt.org

2. Property Owner Information:

Kramer 1	**Kramer 2**
Tom & Donna Kramer	Ken & Kim Kramer
R32907-313-5540	R32907-321-5250
5418 Country Lane, Langley	5277 Country Lane, Langley

3. Project Budget Summary:

- Total expected Conservation Easement Value:	$ 150,000
- Costs of Services (Staff time, Appraisals, Surveys, Phase I Env, etc.):	$ 35,000
- **TOTAL Project Cost:**	**$ 185,000**
CFF Amount Requested:	**$ 165,000**

Project Description:

The Whidbey Camano Land Trust proposes to acquire two agricultural conservation easements on approximately 30 acres of productive farmland along Lone Lake's south shoreline. These conservation easements are the first phase of a larger effort to permanently protect 112 acres of historic working lands (see location map) that include prime farmland soils, forest, wildlife habitat and a scenic landscape in public view. The properties in this proposal are held in two ownerships: Ken and Kim Kramer and Tom and Donna Kramer.

The subject properties have been in farming since 1887. The Kramers are third generation landowners. Majority of the soils on the subject properties are classified by the United States Department of Agriculture as "prime farmland if irrigated". Grazing pastures on the three properties are consistently rotated and the quality of hay is high, as is necessary to be marketable for horse feed as well as winter feed for cattle. Past agricultural enterprises have included beef cattle, vegetables, strawberries and chickens.

Lying along the south shore of Lone Lake, this area serves as habitat for an array of wildlife ranging from amphibians to bird and mammal species. The properties are part of an important north-south corridor between Lone Lake and Deer Lagoon, the latter an Audubon Important Bird Area. The open fields and adjacent forest provide needed foraging, breeding and nesting sites for many species, between Lone Lake and Deer Lagoon.

One of the project's most obvious public benefits is the scenic views it provides. The properties' rolling topography and pastoral landscape are part of the iconic backdrop along Bayview Road, one of the main roads leading to the City of Langley. Public access to Lone Lake is directly across the Lake from the project site, and lake users and neighboring property owners alike enjoy the scenic views from the lake and surrounding lake front properties.

The landowners desire to keep their properties in agricultural use; their properties have been carefully stewarded and protected for three generations, but without conservation easements, this protection is not guaranteed. Development in the future is not unrealistic; there is already a high-density residential subdivision to the east and as evidenced by South Whidbey's other two lakes, shoreline residential property is attractive and in demand. Both landowners worked with the Whidbey Island Conservation District to complete an NRCS-compliant Farm Conservation Plan. In 2013, Ken and Tom Kramer received the Farm Cooperator of the Year award from the Whidbey Island Conservation District for being an outstanding example of small scale production agriculture that balances natural resources conservation.

ATTACHMENT B

ESTIMATED PROJECT BUDGET

ISLAND COUNTY CONSERVATION FUTURES FUND

PROPOSED PROJECT APPLICATION

PROJECT NAME = Fakkema Farm Conservation Easement YEAR 2015

	Category	CFF	Other Funding Sources	Total Funding
Planning				
	Salaries and Benefits	$ -	$ -	$ -
	Consultants/Sub-Contracting	$ -	$ -	$ -
	Goods and Services*	$ -	$ -	$ -
	Travel & Per Diem	$ -	$ -	$ -
	Other	$ -	$ -	$ -
	Total Planning	$ -	$ -	$ -
Maintenance and Operations				
	Salaries and Benefits	$ -	$ -	$ -
	Consultants/Sub-Contracting	$ -	$ -	$ -
	Goods and Services*	$ -	$ -	$ -
	Travel & Per Diem	$ -	$ -	$ -
	Other	$ -	$ -	$ -
	Total Maintenance / Operations	$ -	$ -	$ -
Management & Administration				
	Salaries and Benefits	$ -	$ -	$ -
	Consultants/Sub-Contracting	$ -	$ -	$ -
	Goods and Services*	$ -	$ -	$ -
	Travel & Per Diem	$ -	$ -	$ -
	Other	$ -	$ -	$ -
	Total Management & Admin	$ -	$ -	$ -
Equipment				
	Technology Capital Items*	$ -	$ -	$ -
	Technology Supplies*	$ -	$ -	$ -
	Equipment*	$ -	$ -	$ -
	Other	$ -	$ -	$ -
	Total Equipment	$ -	$ -	$ -
Property Acquisition				
(does not include appraisal costs, survey, engineering or other technical services)				
	Conservation Easements	$ 150,000.00	$ -	$ 150,000.00
	Other Acquisition Costs	$ 15,000.00	$ 20,000.00	$ 35,000.00
	Total Acquisition Costs	$ 165,000.00	$ 20,000.00	$ 185,000.00
	Total Budget	$ 165,000.00	$ 20,000.00	$ 185,000.00

* For all line items listed with "*", please provided an attached detailed list of items and costs

*Line-item budget descriptions:

Conservation Easements: The Land Trust is requesting $165,000 from Conservation Futures in 2015. While the Land Trust will apply for matching funds in 2016, the Land Trust anticipates that federal and state farmland grant programs will have limited funds, so no match has been identified at the moment. The amount shown on this table is the entire project cost.

Other Acquisition Costs: Other direct costs include Land Trust staff time, legal costs for legal agreements, appraisals and appraisal reviews, land surveys, Environmental Assessments, closing costs, and other allowable direct costs. It is noted here that, for the 2015 CFF cycle, the County limits other costs that CFF will reimburse to 50% of appraisal, survey and title costs. Other grants have different criteria.

Project Narrative:

A. Conservation Values & Resources:

1. Habitat:

Biological function and environmental benefits: The properties are part of an important north-south habitat corridor between Lone Lake and Deer Lagoon, the latter an Audubon Important Bird Area. In particular, birds travelling between Lone Lake and Deer Lagoon use the open fields and adjacent forest for important foraging and nesting habitat.
Lying along the south shore of Lone Lake, the entire project area is a needed habitat many species of amphibians, birds, and mammals. The landowners have identified the following wildlife on the properties: salamanders, western painted turtles, frogs, Pileated woodpeckers (a state-sensitive species), various raptors, songbirds and waterfowl, otters, beaver, and coyotes among other common species like raccoons, crows, and deer.

Connectivity to and enhancement: Water quality in Puget Sound is a growing concern as the increase in development and impervious surfaces has resulted in the increase of ground water contaminants and accelerated flow of water runoff into the Sound. Limiting development and impervious surfaces on these properties will have a great benefit to Puget Sound as water from Lone Lake and the surrounding watershed drain into Deer Lagoon via a ditch running through these properties. Protecting this corridor is a priority to the Land Trust. The area falls within the Land Trust's Useless Bay Priority Area and is in close proximity to the Land Trust's 54-acre Useless Bay East conservation easement and Deer Lagoon, majority of which is protected by Washington State Parks and Island County.

Site significance: These properties are of high local importance because there are so few open areas of farmland remaining on the south end of Whidbey Island, especially with the habitat complexity these properties have along the lake. The hay fields, with the nearby forest edge (to be protected in a future phase) are attractive to and heavily used by raptors and mammals like deer and coyote while the areas along the lake are used by concentrations of waterfowl, amphibians, and mammals like otter, mink, and beaver. In the future, these properties could have larger geographic significance if the salmon begin to use the waterway. Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife identifies the ditch as a potential salmon stream that is blocked. Fish identified for this outflow are coho and chum salmon.

2. Water Resources:
   The aquifer susceptibility on these properties is a combination of "moderate" to "high" according to Island County's Water Resource Management Plan. In addition to removing a development right, the conservation easements will also limit the amount of impervious surfaces allowed, thus keeping the land open for ongoing recharge. Preventing further development here also protects ground water resources by removing the additional demand for ground water that is associated with increased development.

   The farm's Conservation Plan also address resource concerns surrounding water usage and water runoff and have various recommendations that the landowners are working with the Conservation District on including hedgerow planting and filter strips along the ditch, manure and fertilizer management and field rotations. Limiting development and managing the farm according to a Conservation Plan are two effective measures that reduce the amount and the impact of surface water discharge.

3. Working Farm:
   Agricultural Soils: Majority of the soils on the subject properties are classified by the United States Department of Agriculture as "prime farmland if irrigated". Prime Farmland soils are of national importance for meeting the nation's needs for food and fiber. In conjunction with a mean annual precipitation of about 30 to 32 inches, the Kramers have a combined 20 acres used for non-irrigated pasture and hay production and are yielding about 2.9 tons per acre. According to the Conservation District, hay and pasture fields of this farm typically have permanent ground cover levels well above 90 percent, and slopes less than 10 percent. Under these circumstances, the likelihood of sheet, rill, or wind erosion problems is generally very low.

   Resource Suitability: These properties have been owned and successfully farmed by the same family since the 1880s and are currently managed to ensure viable long-term agricultural use. Current agricultural uses on the property are primarily beef and hay production. The Kramerse raise cattle for beef, and the Whidbey Island Conservation District has recognized that "the grazing management practices on the Kramer Farm are close to state of the art." While the operations are on a small scale, the products are of highest quality and meet a local demand – the hay is of high quality that nearby residents are willing to purchase for their horses and have the convenience to purchase nearby as opposed to elsewhere and further away on the Island.

Site significance: Over the last century, the conversion of farmland to non-agricultural uses has increased. As the average farm size in Island County continues to decrease, large swaths of farmland like this and their scenic qualities become rarer.

4. Working Forest: Future phases of this project will include working forestland.

B. Appropriate Public Use and Enjoyment:

Because these are working lands, public use on the property is not appropriate or necessary here. The scenic, pastoral views across the property from Bayview Road, one of the main entrances into the City of Langley, are enjoyed by residents and visitors alike. Additionally, there is public access on the north side of Lone Lake, one of the few places for freshwater recreation on Whidbey Island, where visitors' experiences are greatly enhanced by the scenic backdrop to the south, provided by the property.

C. Plan Consistency and Partnerships:

Protecting these properties will help accomplish goals stated in the Natural Resources Element of the County's Comprehensive Plan, which calls for the protection of agricultural lands of significance, and important habitats including forests and wetlands. In a public survey that was conducted for the plan, many respondents identified agricultural properties as important candidate sites for protection. Protection of this parcel will further the following goals from the Natural Resources Element:

- **Goal 2 – Rural Character:** To retain the county's rural quality and character.

- **Goal 5 – Agricultural Protection:** To conserve agricultural lands for the continued profitable production of crops, timber and livestock.

- **Goal 7 – Protection of Community Assets:** To protect natural scenic, cultural and historic resources as community assets.

In addition to the support of the landowners to protect this land, the Land Trust has support from partners like the Whidbey Audubon Society and will work closely with the Whidbey Island Conservation District to ensure that the conservation easements are written in concert with the completed Conservation Plan.

D. Land Capacity Impact:

The Kramers are operating a small-scale, sustainable farm that supplements their livelihoods, continues the historic uses of the land, and preserves a well-known landscape on Whidbey

Island. The properties are not within or near any Urban Growth Areas, and protection of this scenic, open space helps them achieve their goal of avoiding development pressure and keep the farm in the family, while simultaneously benefitting neighboring property values that would be negatively impacted by the loss of the viewshed.

E. Potential for Loss:

Fifty years ago, the land surrounding Lone Lake was predominantly farm and forest, with five dairy farms and only ten houses on its shores. Today, the Kramers' farmland (and the neighboring properties that are future phases of this project) on Lone Lake are the last of their kind on any of south Whidbey Island's lakes. They and the previous generation have refused offers from developers because of their desire to keep the land in family ownership. If all of the land in the project area were to be developed, a quarter of the lake's shoreline, comprising its most scenic views, would be lost.

While none of the current landowners have the desire to sell their properties, they are strongly motivated to protect their land now before continued development pressure wears down current family members or future generations, essentially removing the last, large remaining stretch of open space along the shoreline.

F. Assessment of Stewardship Viability:

If this proposal is successful, the properties will remain in private ownership, and the landowners will continue to be responsible for managing their property. The Land Trust, as holder of the conservation easements, will be responsible for upholding the easements. The Land Trust may incorporate the Conservation District's Farm Conservation Plan into the easements, or require the creation of a stewardship plan to ensure the compatibility of current and future activities with the purposes and terms of the conservation easements.

The Land Trust monitors all of its conservation easements annually and has designated funds to ensure long-term capacity to steward its easements and defend them legally should they ever be violated or compromised. The Land Trust has not identified any potential risks or liabilities to protecting the conservation values and resources on these properties. All long-term maintenance costs are the responsibility of the landowner. This project does not include any request for funds for capital improvements.

G. Financial Strategies:

This is the Land Trust's first grant application for this project. While the Land Trust will apply for matching funds in 2016, the Land Trust anticipates that federal and state farmland grant programs will have limited funds available. Having Conservation Futures grant funding secured

will improve the project's competitiveness in next year's state and federal grants. There is a significant cost efficiency to purchase easements now. The properties are zoned Rural Agriculture, which limits development potential, but zoning is not permanent and lake front properties are in high demand. Current zoning makes the cost of easements low for protecting highly visible, scenic land that will likely be susceptible to high-density residential development in the future. The properties are adjacent to the Lakeview Terrace subdivision, and without permanent protection under a conservation easement, future demands could convert these lands into additional lake front homes as is seen at other lakes on south Whidbey Island.

The Land Trust is acquiring the minimum controlling interest by purchasing conservation easements. As discussed in Section F, the Land Trust also secures funds for its long term stewardship and legal defense responsibilities related to upholding the easements.

BONUS POINTS

H. Annual Commissioners Goals for Current Cycle:

1. <u>Jointly protects conservation and economic resources:</u>
   The Kramers' primary objective in their Conservation Plan is to maintain their land in "productive agriculture, with conservation of natural resources for the future." This objective fits with the Commissioners' goal to jointly protect economic and conservation resources. With the growing popularity and demand for local agriculture, as evidenced by Whidbey Island's success in farmers markets, CSAs (Community Supporting Agriculture), and the growing number of small farms, protecting this property keeps a productive, small scale farm in operation and in a way that is mindful of the natural resources the property also possesses.

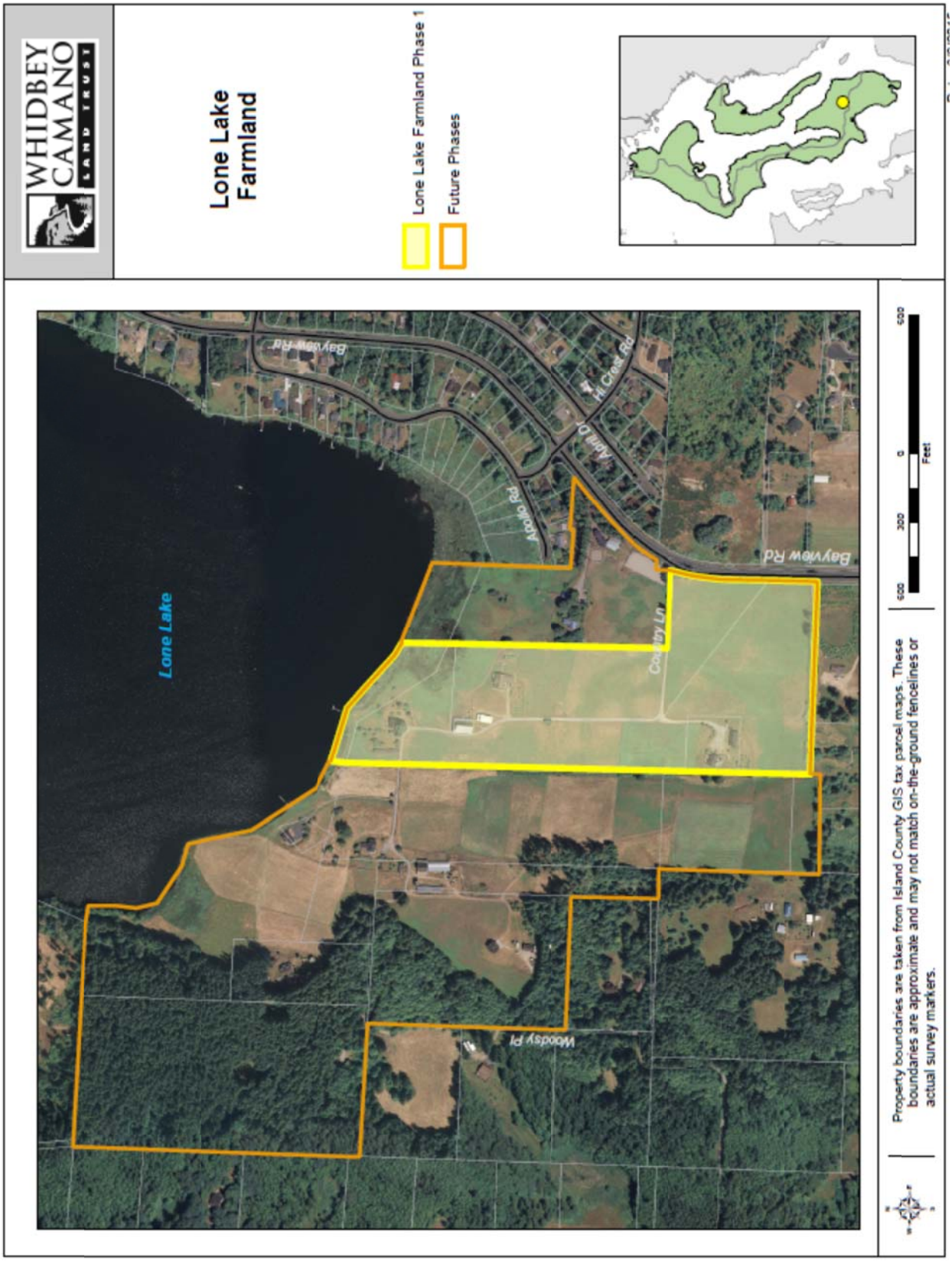
WHIDBEY CAMANO LAND TRUST
Lone Lake Farmland
Lone Lake Farmland Phase 1
Future Phases
Lone Lake
Bayview Rd
Hi Crest Rd
April Dr
Apollo Rd
Country Ln
Woodsy Pl
600 300 0 600
Feet
Property boundaries are taken from Island County GIS tax parcel maps. These boundaries are approximate and may not match on-the-ground fencelines or actual survey markers.

Photo above: Tom and Donna Kramer's property farmed by Tom and Ken Kramer. The Kramers grow high quality hay that is either kept for winter feed for their cattle or sold to local horse owners.

Photo below: Majority of the subject properties' soils are of well-drained prime farmland soils suitable for pasture and growing hay.

Photo above: View of subject properties looking east towards Bayview Road. Photo taken from property within project area, on a parcel that will be protected in a future phase.

Photo below: Ken and Tom Kramer with next two generations of family.

Photo above: Both the Kramers are raising cattle on a small scale level. The Whidbey Island Conservation District recognized the Kramers' grazing management practices as "close to state of the art" and awarded Tom and Ken Kramer Farm Cooperator of the Year in 2013 for being an outstanding example of small scale production agriculture working in concert with natural resource conservation.

Photos above: From species like raptors that feed off of the fields to amphibians and reptiles that live along the lake, the properties provide important habitat for a wide array of species.

PHOTO CREDIT: All photos were taken by Tom Kramer on the subject properties.