

21. OFFICE OF FARMLAND PRESERVATION – BRIEFING

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“GREEN SHEET”

Meeting: August 8-9, 2008
Agenda Item 21: Office of Farmland Preservation – **Briefing**
Prepared By: Don Larsen
Presented By: Don Larsen, Environmental Planner, Wildlife Program

Background:

In July of 2007 the state legislature established the Office of Farmland Preservation (OFP) within the Washington State Conservation Commission (WSCC) to address factors that lead to the loss of farmland and develop solutions. OFP is still in its early stages of developing these solutions to problems that also have impacts on fish and wildlife habitat. In addition an 18-member Farmland Preservation Task Force was created by the legislature to provide guidance to the legislature, governor, and OFP. The Task Force consists of six farmer representatives from around the state, legislators, county commissioners, and officials from the WSCC, State Department of Agriculture, Conservation Districts, and Office of the Governor.

The WSCC is a small state agency created to assist and guide Conservation Districts (CDs). Washington's 47 CDs are a unique form of non-regulatory government designed to match local needs with technical and financial resources to help private landowners solve on-the-ground conservation issues. CDs work with landowners on a voluntary basis, providing incentive-based conservation help on private lands.

The WSCC and CDs are responsible for a variety of programs that directly and indirectly affect fish and wildlife habitat, such as the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, Irrigation Efficiencies Program; and Columbia River Basin Water Management Program. In addition, CDs often play a leading role in working with landowners to implement federal Farm Bill conservation programs that include wildlife habitat as a program purpose along with traditional soil and water conservation.

Governance of the WSCC is provided by a ten-member board: two members appointed by the Governor; four members elected by CDs; and four members representing the state departments of Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Ecology.

WDFW, the WSCC, CDs, and OFP share many common interests. A specific goal within WSCC's Strategic Plan is "Assist with recovery of at-risk species and keeping common species common." Opportunity exists to partner with the WSCC and CDs to maximize the benefits for wildlife habitat through a wide range of natural resource conservation efforts.

Policy Issue(s) you are bringing to the Commission for consideration:

Briefing only.

Public involvement process used and what you learned:

N/A

Action requested (identify the specific Commission decisions you are seeking):

None, briefing only. This is a Commission request from the December 7-8, 2007 Commission meeting.

Draft motion language:

N/A

Justification for Commission action:

N/A
