

July 15, 2011

## **FIRJUNE – JULY PROGRESS UPDATE**

With the assistance of a steering committee and consultant team (Shannon and Wilson), the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is evaluating a range of alternatives to restore tidal processes, tidal marsh habitat and tidal channel habitat at WDFW's 264 acre Fir Island Farm. The steering committee and consultant team have been meeting monthly since December 2009 and met most recently on June 16, 2011.

Most of the baseline data collection and draft baseline assessment memos for the study have been completed. The draft baseline assessment memos are posted on WDFW's Fir Island Farm website as they are completed. Water surface elevation, temperature and salinity data collection in the sloughs and ground water wells are ongoing.

With the assistance of the steering committee and consultant team, WDFW hosted an open house at the headquarters of Diking District #3 in Conway on June 2, 2011. Invitations and notices were sent out and posted in mid May. Written comments were solicited at the open house and during the 2 weeks following the open house. The comments received have been reviewed and considered by WDFW, the Steering Committee and consultant team. The comments received and WDFW's responses will be posted on WDFW's website the first part of August.

In addition to hosting a public open house, the steering committee and consultant team's attention in June and July was focused on implementing the alternative analysis phase of the study. Evaluation factors developed during the baseline phase of the study were used to develop 4 evaluation criteria that included restore ecosystem health, balance natural resource benefits, respect agriculture community and maintain public access and recreation opportunities. In addition to these 4 criteria, 5 factors were incorporated into a social/political criterion. These included, WDFW future drainage/flood liabilities, CDD#22 Dry Slough drainage impacts, snow goose reserve functions, CDD#22 legal, Hayton Family Farm impacts. The technical and social/political evaluation criteria were used by the steering committee to compare and contrast the different restoration alternatives and select a preferred restoration alternative that is consistent with the goals of the feasibility study. During the July 15, 2011 meeting the steering committee agreed to support restoration alternative 2A as the preferred restoration alternative. The committee's recommendation will be presented to WDFW's Region 4 Director for approval. Once approved, restoration alternative 2A will be taken forward into the design phase of the study.

Study related information can be accessed at WDFW's web site via the following pathway: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/> (WDFW Homepage) under Conservation, click on [WDFW Lands](#) click on [Wildlife Areas](#) (select) [Skagit](#) and click on [Fir Island Farms](#).