

# AGENDA

## **Conservation Easement Program Oversight Committee**

Central Conference Room, Planning & Development Services, Northwest Annex

5280 Northwest Dr, Bellingham, WA

Or join by Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83883628481>

Meeting ID: 838 8362 8481

Thursday February 19, 2026

3:00-4:30pm

**1. Welcome (10 minutes)**

- a. Introductions
- b. Public comments
- c. Review agenda

**2. Approval of meeting summary for January meeting (5 minutes)**

**3. Updates and announcements (15 minutes)**

- a. Staff updates on all applications (Lauren and Alex H.)
- b. Review feedback from landowner survey (McKale)
- c. Next steps on Funding Work Group memo

**4. Discussion items/business (25 minutes)**

- a. Lummi Island easement: Salish Center for Sustainable Fishing Methods
- b. Hoyt ag conservation easement

**5. Old or new business (30 minutes)**

- a. CEP Tour

**6. Next meeting (5 minutes)**

- a. Agenda items
- b. Work Plan 2026

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Included in the meeting packet:

- Meeting summary from January meeting
- Landowner Survey Results

If you require assistance to participate, contact the meeting facilitator, Alexander Harris:  
360-922-2318 – [aharris@co.whatcom.wa.us](mailto:aharris@co.whatcom.wa.us)

# Conservation Easement Program Oversight Committee

Meeting Summary – January 15, 2026

Start Time:	3:00pm
Location:	Online and in-person at Northwest Annex, 5280 Northwest Drive, Bellingham

Attendees – Members	Affiliation	Present
Paul Schissler	Farm Supporting Business	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Dave Kershner	Non-farmer, unincorporated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Alison Moon	Real estate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
VACANT	Farmer	
McKale Jones	Farmer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Mike Finger	Farmer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Henry Bierlink	Non-farmer, incorporated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Paul D’Agnolo	Ag Supporting Programs	<input type="checkbox"/>
Alex Jeffers	Easement-holding entity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Quorum Present</b>	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
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PDS Staff	Affiliation	Present
Lauren Templeton	CEP Administrator	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Alexander Harris	CEP Outreach Coordinator	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>

Attendees – Guests	Affiliation	Present
Riley Starks	Salish Center for Sustainable Fishing Methods	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Skylar Magee	Lummi Island Heritage Trust (LIHT)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Ashli McVey	Lummi Island Heritage Trust (LIHT)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>

## 1. Welcome, Introductions, Public Comments, and Agenda Review

- Chair convened the meeting just after 3pm
- Agenda reviewed and approved.
- Public comments: none
- Introductions: Skylar and Ashli introduced themselves. Skylar is the Stewardship Manager for LIHT and Ashli is the Executive Director for LIHT. Riley Starks also

introduced himself – he is the Executive Director of the Salish Center for Sustainable Fishing Methods.

## 2. Approval of Previous Meeting Summary

- Dave moved to approve the draft meeting summary for November meeting, Mike seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

## 3. Updates and Announcements

Staff updates on all applications (Lauren and Alex H.)

- Jacoby ag conservation easement: this easement will close soon. Staff will be requesting a new supplemental budget request from Council.
- Three working forest easements are moving forward (Canyon Creek, Maple Falls, and Red Mountain). Staff are figuring out how different state and federal funding sources can work together. These should close later in 2026.
- Steensma ag easement: approved by council, easement development continues to move forward. This should close in 2026.

Update on landowner survey (McKale)

- McKale and Dave have been leading this effort, and they have reviewed the results.
- McKale has already reached out twice and received 5 responses.
- Committee members agreed that no further outreach was needed.
- Agreement to discuss the results with the committee at the next CEPOC meeting.

Update from Funding Work Group (Paul S.)

- Funding work group (Paul S., Paul D., Dave, and Alison) has worked with staff to learn about other funding sources that may be available to help with easement acquisition.
- Paul estimates that the work is about 90% finished.
- Alex H. mentioned that this work spurred greater collaboration with the Parks Department and Public Works to learn what opportunities exist to supplement limited Conservation Futures dollars. Alex H. said that he and Lauren are working with Parks to send an interdepartmental memo to the County Executive regarding these funding opportunities.

## 4. Discussion Items

Proposed Jensen easement

- Lauren and Alex H. presented to share more details about the Jensen application.
  - This family developed a working ag easement with the CEP 15 years ago. Now they'd like to develop an easement on additional parcels. The previous easement was funded through USDA NRCS, and staff are now pursuing another NRCS opportunity to fund the proposed easement. Staff have prepared a grant application and will submit if CEPOC
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approves. If approved and funds are awarded, this easement would be sometime in 2028. Lauren shared that this easement scores very high.

- Alex J. said WLT has worked with the family for a long time. He said this is exactly what we should be looking at – big contiguous blocks of farmland adjacent to already conserved farmland.
- Henry said he was supportive of this easement. He said it could be good ground for blueberries someday. Henry suggested we look into riparian funding for this site, since he thought there was likely fish presence in the ditches on the property.
- Mike made a motion to approve the easement. Alex J. seconded. Approved unanimously.

#### Proposed Legoe Bay easement

- Alex H. shared that this property is owned by the Salish Center for Sustainable Fishing Methods. The property is 2 acres and located on Legoe Bay on Lummi Island. Alex H. said this property has been used for many years as a reef net gear yard. This is a passive form of fishing that involves fishing barges posting up in a specific location and waiting for the fish to swim into nets. Alex H. recommended CEPOC consider the value of the property itself instead of the current uses of the current landowners, since these landowners are unlikely to own this property forever.
  - Alex H. shared that Paul S., Alex H., Lauren, and Riley met with LIHT staff on the site to discuss the easement. LIHT has expressed interest in co-holding (and monitoring) this easement. Alex H. identified some of the tradeoffs associated with doing an easement on this property.
  - Paul S. said now is the right time to identify all the questions that need to be answered before CEPOC makes a decision. Paul S. said there have been people reef netting at this location for many many generations, for centuries if not millennia.
  - Lauren shared that it was helpful to be on site and understand the geographical importance of this site being in close proximity to the fishery resource. She said there is restoration potential on the slough on the northern part of the property. Lauren also mentioned this could be an easement that focuses on protecting areas of cultural significance (heritage easements).
  - Dave asked if Riley could share more about the ecological benefits of reef netting.
  - Riley shared some details about reefnetting. He said this fishing practice has been heavily used by Lummi fishermen for about 1800 years, with this particular bay being used continuously for this purpose for the past two hundred years.
  - Riley shared that this is one of the most sustainable fishing methods due to the low fossil fuel use and the ability to completely avoid bycatch (zero mortality of non-target fish). He said because of this, there's definitely going to be a commercial reef netting industry in 100 years.
  - Riley clarified that you need upland storage in close proximity in order to have a viable reef net operation. This site is one of very few sites that can support reefnetting on Legoe Bay.
  - Alex J. asked if Riley thought the greatest value of this property to be the upland storage space for commercial reefnetting. Riley said yes, but also the beach that is used to launch directly to the bay.
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- Alex H. said the CEP has limited Conservation Futures dollars, and a backlog of numerous projects. Alex H. proposed that if CEPOC were to approve this easement, it could be conditioned on Conservation Futures not being used on the easement acquisition. Another option is that the county is not involved in this easement, and the easement could be developed between the LIHT and the landowner.
- Alex J. commented he would need to better understand what is being protected in the public interest by doing this easement. He said he needs to learn more to clarify his own opinion about whether an easement on this property is needed to protect reefnetting in Legoe Bay.
- Paul S. said that there might not need to be public money spent on this easement. Paul said this site is supporting a working fishery, which is part of the food system, which is itself a goal of the CEP.
- Dave asked if this site was also used to support an offshore commercial seaweed operation. Riley said they had the first commercial seaweed farm in Washington.
- Alex H. said he and Lauren could work with LIHT to draft a conservation values statement.
- Skylar said LIHT will have to go through their internal process to determine if he can spend time on this.
- Agreement for CEPOC to circle back in March.

## **5. Old/New Business**

### Elect Chair and Vice Chair

- Paul S. is termed off, and Alison is stepping off the committee.
- McKale said she would be happy to be chair, especially if staff would be willing to take on the Chair role.
- Mike made the motion for McKale to be the Chair and Dave to be the Vice Chair. Henry seconded the motion. Passes unanimously.

### Recruiting new members

- Paul S. said there's a need to recruit new members for the following seats: farmer/forester, realtor, farm supporting program.
- Alison and Alex J. said they will think on who else might be interested in the realtor role.
- Alex H. great said he will ask someone he knows for Farm supporting business

## **6. Agenda for next time**

- Survey results
- Work plan
- CEP field tour

Meeting adjourned at 4:30pm.

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