

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 January 15, 2026

3:00-4:30pm

- 1. Welcome (10 minutes)**
 - a. Introductions
 - b. Public comments
 - c. Review agenda

- 2. Approval of meeting summaries for November meeting (5 minutes)**

- 3. Updates and announcements (15 minutes)**
 - a. Staff updates on all applications (Lauren and Alex H.)
 - b. Update on landowner survey (McKale)
 - c. Update from Funding Work Group (Paul S.)

- 4. Discussion items/business (25 minutes)**
 - a. Lummi Island easement: Salish Center for Sustainable Fishing Methods

- 5. Old or new business (30 minutes)**
 - a. Elect Chair and Vice Chair
 - b. Acknowledge departing CEPOC members
 - c. Recruiting new members
 - d. Work Plan 2026

- 6. Next meeting (5 minutes)**
 - a. Agenda items
 - b. 2026 CEP Tour

Included in the meeting packet:

- Meeting summary from November meeting (no meeting in December)

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

Conservation Easement Program Oversight Committee

Meeting Summary – November 20, 2025

Start Time:	3:00pm
Location:	Online Meeting and In-Person at Northwest Annex, 5280 Northwest Drive, Bellingham, WA

Attendees – Members	Affiliation	Present
Paul Schissler	Farm Supporting Business	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Dave Kershner	Non-farmer, unincorporated	<input type="checkbox"/>
Alison Moon	Real estate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
VACANT	Farmer	<input type="checkbox"/>
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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Alex Jeffers	Easement-holding entity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>

Quorum Present	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
Matthew King	Salish Center for Sustainable Fishing Methods	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Corina Cheever	Whatcom Conservation District	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>

1. Welcome, introductions, public comments, and agenda review

- Chair convened the meeting just after 3pm
- Public comments: none
- No amendments to the agenda.
- Agenda reviewed and approved.

2. Approval of previous meeting summary

- Alison moved to approve the draft meeting summary for September meeting, Alex J. seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

3. Updates and announcements

- Staff had two grants approved by County Council: RCO grant for Maple Falls Forest and the Canyon Creek Forest easements. Now that the federal government shutdown has ended, staff can pursue signing the NRCS grant contract for Canyon Creek Forest and the Forest Legacy grant contract for the Maple Falls Forest.
- Landowner survey: Alex H. shared that McKale has reached out to 35 landowners by email and text to encourage landowners to fill out the survey. So far, 5 landowners have responded.
- Funding Work Group: Paul S. shared that there wasn't an update from this Work Group, but the goal will be to send a memo from CEPOC by January or February.

4. Old/new business

- New project: Hoyt
 - Lauren shared that this project would be a Buy Protect Sell project, in a way. The current landowner (Hoyt) is exploring how she can sell farmland to a farmer who is interested in buying it, using an easement to make it more affordable. Staff will be doing a Lot of Record to learn how many development rights and lots exist on the subject parcels.
 - Alex H. clarified that staff were not asking for CEPOC approval at this time. Paul S. pointed out that the property scored 58. Lauren highlighted that the minimum scoring threshold was 40.
 - Salish Center for Sustainable Fishing Methods
 - Alex H. shared that a non-profit (Salish Center for Sustainable Fishing Methods) has applied to extinguish one development right on a small parcel along the shore of Legoe Bay, which is on Lummi Island. He shared this was a small parcel which includes tidelands, marine shoreline, a fishing gear yard, and an estuarine slough.
 - Lauren shared that Whatcom County mapping has identified this property as vulnerable to sea level rise and coastal erosion, which is slated to get worse with
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- climate change. She said removing a residential development right could help prevent future losses.
- Matt King, representing the Salish Center, spoke briefly about the property. He said there is a deep and rich heritage of reefnetting at this particular location. He said reefnetting is one of the most sustainable fishing methods because it results in extremely low numbers of bycatch. Matt pointed out that most shoreline properties on this part of Lummi Island have been developed for residential uses, making it impossible for working fisheries uses. Matt said he can help approach foundations to find funding that could contribute towards the match. Matt also shared that they run a commercial seaweed aquaculture operation off Legoe Bay.
 - Alex J. asked Matt some clarifying questions about the buildings on the property and the operational logistics of reefnetting. Alex J. said he would have to learn more about the project to be convinced it was a good fit for the CEP. Paul S. said he was not sure about it either and would like more information. Alex J. said an easement encumbers a property in perpetuity, and can't guarantee the property is used for working fisheries purposes in the future.

5. Discussion items/business

- Discuss whether CEP should pursue easements on properties that don't have development rights available.
 - Alex H. shared that the CEP has recently been awarded over \$2 million to purchase easements that protect riparian areas and promote restoration. These can run alongside working ag easements that extinguish development rights; however, a Whatcom Conservation District employee recently proposed the CEP developing a riparian easement on a farm that didn't have any development rights to sell. Staff wanted guidance from the CEP Oversight Committee on whether the CEP should develop such an easement.
 - Corina with the Conservation District shared that this particular property was a CREP project that was planted 15 or so years ago. She shared that landowners are still legally allowed to removed these trees as long as the trees have been covered by an active CREP contract within the last 5 years. Paul S. said that county code should not prevent the CEP from acquiring an easement that doesn't have a residential development right.
 - Alex J. said he as open to this approach, but he wanted to make sure the CEP is being strategic about how it's using riparian easements to accomplish larger goals. He said the point system might need to be adjusted if the CEP were to pursue these kinds of easements. Alex J. said that the more that we broaden the scope of projects the CEP works on, the more important it will be to prioritize projects since available funds are very limited.
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- Alex H. shared that he's interested in hosting a site visit in 2026. He'll circle back at the next meeting to discuss this more.

Agenda for next time

- Funding Work Group update

Meeting adjourned at 4:17pm.

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