DRAFT Tenmile Clean Water Project Meeting Minutes – June 11, 2014

In Attendance: Robin Barker, Dorie Belisle, Albert deBoer, Chris Clark, BillDerr, Ryan Derr,Steve Carter, Carolynn Carter, Jack Morgan, Eric Sundstom, Naomi Murphy, Dick Carr, Dan Thompson, Marge Laidlaw, Bob McWhorter, Art Zawicki, Andy Ross, Lee First, Steve Douge, Bob Seaman, Andrea Hood, Danielle Love, Brian Mum

The decision was made to postpone approving the May 14, 2014 draft minutes until the June 11, 2014 meeting. The last paragraph of the 5/14/14 minutes summarizes a good discussion about community involvement and folks wanted to make sure folks had had a chance to review it.

Bob McWhorter, Bob Seaman, BillDerr expressed interest in having a round table discussion with one of the local radio stations. Si has also expressed interest. Lee will coordinate, hopes to have this happen in July, or later.

Congrats to Naomi for an informative letter to the Bellingham Herald and Cascadia Weekly!

A tour of farm buffers has been organized for July 12, using carpools, to depart from the Laurel Farm Store at 9am. We have some ideas for stops, more suggestions are welcomed. Please spread the word about this to your neighbors, especially those you think might be inspired to take protective actions on their property.

Several more announcements were made: two Rome Grange water forums are in the works (see Agenda). Bellewood Acres is hosting an Oyster Festival on September 6, and our group is invited to have an information booth. Lee will coordinate – contact her if you want to help with this effort.

Chuck Timblin presented his topic "Farming for Clean Water." His presentation will be posted on the RE Sources website. His presentation was enlightening and sparked many interesting discussions, including:

1. Precariousness of Portage Bay Shellfish harvesting status. 4 marine stations in Portage Bay are not currently meeting criteria. Andrea Hood explained that DOH will continue to sample until end of year, when annual review is conducted (after the onset of the wet season). Anything but low counts will most likely result in closure of the beds.
2. Problems with buffers include they're not well received, no assurance they will work, they have problems of their own, where they are applied may not be a source of pollution, they remove land from production, there are better alternatives.
3. Farming for clean water – what's involved? A sense of responsibility, a comprehensive approach, a willingness to use farming practices that reduce risk. At its best, it eliminates the need for buffers.
4. The wet Western Washington climate makes protecting water quality more difficult—caution is required when near waterways.
5. Examples of field borders and hedgerows were provided, and benefits explained.

6. Chuck estimates that at least 60,000 cows are present in Whatcom County and 15,000 horses. There is also considerable other livestock in the area.
7. Big dumb buffers (i.e., fixed width buffers regardless of conditions) are not as effective as farming with caution—for clean water.
8. Lots of problems with enforcement. Agency roles, focus of efforts, role of education. Lively discussion.

Water quality for May and June 2014 were shown on a map of the watershed. Considerable discussion ensued. June counts were generally lower than in May. May's sampling occurred at the end of a rain event, and June's sampling occurred after 14 days without much rain. Fecal coliform levels were elevated in areas, which lead to discussion of upstream land uses as well as how water moves through the Tenmile Watershed. Upstream land uses are varied, and the placement of staff gauges (water height measurement) at various places within the streams was discussed. With a network of staff gauges, we could gain insight into how quickly or slowly water moves through the system.

Use of Geographical Information System (GIS) computer software could facilitate more detailed analysis of the water quality data. Whatcom County and the Whatcom Conservation District both have GIS systems that may be available. College students may be help with stream flow measurement.

The use of other bacteria than fecal coliform, as indicators of contamination from different sources was discussed. It may be helpful and far less expensive than genetic testing (Microbial Source Tracking).