

MEMORANDUM

DATE: September 3, 2010

TO: Board of Island County Commissioners
Elaine Marlow, Budget Director

FROM: Timothy Lawrence, PhD
Director Washington State University Extension – Island County

SUBJECT: Narrative – 2010 WSU Extension – Island County, Budget

Introduction

The mission of Washington State University Extension is to provide the people of the State of Washington with science-based information to help them make informed decisions. This information goes beyond the traditional agricultural, gardening, food safety, and youth development, and extends to a much larger spectrum that can provide benefits to all the residents and visitors to Island County. It's the role of WSU Extension-Island County to identify and meet the needs of this community and serve them as best we can.

This budget follows the August 19th directive to eliminate funding for the 4-H and Master Gardener programs and a 5% reduction in the Noxious Weed budget. Despite the current budget short fall it is our intent to meet those needs and to expand programs especially in North Whidbey and Camano. For example, we would like to improve and expand the functionality of the North Whidbey WSU Extension Center on Green Valley Road to serve 4-H, Master Gardener, Beach Watchers and residents of the NAS. We have expanded our presence on Camano Island with our new Noxious Weed Coordinator Thane Tupper having office space in the Camano WSU Extension office and being there at least part of one day each week. We are also working with Master Gardeners who live on Camano and are currently working with programs in Snohomish or Skagit counties to have a demonstration garden on Camano.

In 2011 we are working in collaboration with Whidbey Island Conservation District to bring the Washington State University Extension Forest Stewardship Program-Coached Planning to Island County. This is a collaborative education program for Washington State family forest landowners. The program is conducted by WSU Extension in cooperation with the Department of Natural Resources Forest Stewardship Program, Rural Technology Initiative (in collaboration with UW and WSU), US Forest Service Cooperative Programs, Washington State Parks, Conservation Districts, USDA-Natural Resource Conservation Service, and consulting foresters. Island County residents will learn to evaluate the health of the forest area on their property, as well as a means of improving the fish and wildlife

habitat. They will learn silviculture alternatives and the most appropriate approach for their property. In addition, they will learn common forest plants, how to protect soil and water, and learn the rights and responsibilities of forest property owners.

The WSU Shore Stewards program continues to educate shoreline residents on positive steps they can take to ensure a healthier marine environment in Island County. So far 53 new participants have enrolled in the program for 2010, this brings the total number of people who have completed the program to 717 in Island County, and 4 months left to add others. The program has conducted numerous classes, presentations at various events, community association meetings, and workshops on Whidbey and Camano Islands. Various Shore Stewards articles and features in local papers have helped in that effort. Continuing classes, presentations, workshops, mailings, articles, newsletters, and personal contacts will be given in 2011, with a goal of having at least 100 new Island County residents practicing better stewardship of our environment and resources. Scott Chase the Shore Steward's coordinator has just received some additional funding to work with Camano and Snohomish Beach Watchers on a citizen science project for Port Susan; this will increase our presence on Camano and Scott's FTE to 0.87.

Island County Beach Watchers consist of over 250 active volunteers who monitor 38 sites for species diversity; provide educational opportunities at Rosario Beach in Deception Pass State Park, Cama Beach State Park, the Coupeville wharf, whale watching cruises and other venues throughout the county. WSU Beach Watchers volunteers do an outstanding job increasing awareness for all ages of visitors and residents of Island County. For example, Beach Watcher Volunteers and WSU Extension personnel helped organize and participated in intertidal education for more than 700 5th graders in 2010 – the only science training these children received for the entire year!

Twenty-one new Beach Watchers will be in the second half of our 2010 Beach Watcher training, which begins in October, and the recruitment process for the 2011 class is well underway. Our Beach Watchers Coordinator Sarah Woehrman moved on to a new position with NAS – we wish her well but were sorry to see her go – she was a great asset to the program. This is the second coordinator we have lost partly due for economic reasons. We were surprised to learn that despite the Island County Beach Watcher program being the largest of all programs in the Puget Sound the pay level for the coordinator is the lowest of all Beach Watchers coordinators. Thus, we have taken this opportunity to move the coordinator under the WSU umbrella. This position has just been approved at a higher level, and we hope to have a new coordinator onboard by the middle of October. No County funds are used to support the Beach Watchers coordinator or any of the program's activities. The new job description calls for greater involvement of the coordinator to teach and in the development of curriculum including for the Sound Waters conference.

The Sound Waters conference is a one-day WSU Beach Watcher educational event that draws nearly 600 participants. For the past 15 years Sound Waters has

occurred in Coupeville. However, it has outgrown the capacity of the Coupeville High School and it will be offered at the Langley High School to accommodate more participants and to draw new audiences including visitors from King and Snohomish Counties. With the new Oak Harbor High School auditorium, there is a very good possibility that the 2012 event will occur in North Whidbey and then be rotated around the island in subsequent years. Sound Waters generates substantial revenue that helps support the BW Coordinator and BW activities.

The Waste Wise program continues with educational programs on compost, recycling, and septic 101 classes throughout the County. When the County begins its curbside recycling effort Waste Wise will play a major role in increasing awareness of proper sorting of recyclables and other means of reducing waste. Janet Hall conducted at least four Septic 101 courses in 2010 and that will continue into 2011. Together with the Master Gardener program Waste Wise will be helping homeowners with maintenance of the mound treatment systems – including landscaping options to reduce their viability without compromising their functionality. Janet continues to serve as Assistant County Extension Director and working with the Beach Watcher and Lighthouse coordinators in managing Extension's day-to-day operations at Fort Casey and the Lighthouse. We are pleased that we have extended our agreement with State Parks to continue our collaborative arrangement to operate the Lighthouse and keep it open to the public.

The Lighthouse program is doing very well after facility's closure for much of last year. Visitations have exceeded 45,000 visitors this year and sales receipts at the gift shop are substantially surpassing all previous years. The new interpretative display, which is being paid for primarily by the Lighthouse Environmental Programs, will be completed by the end of the year and should further increase visitations and sales. The new Lighthouse Coordinator John Shoosmith is doing a good job and we are working to coordinate student interns from WSU and other educational institutions to work with State Parks and the Lighthouse Docents on historical research, archeological discovery, marketing of the Lighthouse and the Park, and engineering feasibility studies to rotate the light in the museum. These are just a few of the initial ideas that will add to the educational opportunity for the students, the WSU and Park volunteers, and the visitors to the Park.

The budgetary reductions to the Island County 4-H and Master Gardener programs will undoubtedly have a profound impact on the services provided to Island County residents by WSU Extension. The 4-H program serves more than 263 4-H'ers, and the 104 4-H leaders all of whom contribute more than 34,000 hours/year, 26,000 hours at the County Fair alone. Without a paid staff person overseeing the activities at the fair; assuring the safety of the participants and volunteers; compliance with WSU standards for 4-H educational activities; and adherence to 4-H policies and rules, there will be no 4-H presence at the fair. Participants who normally enter the 4-H class will be able to compete in the open class, but WSU Extension will not assume the risk or liability. This is something we do our best to avoid and plans for fund raising activities have already begun. But the 4-Hers are stepping up to the

plate with kids offering the prize money for their animals to help pay for the county short fall, families offering prized jumping horses for sale with stipulations that the revenue will be donated to WSU Island County 4-H to keep their coordinator, etc. Clearly this program is one that is important to many people in Island County, and I feel they will mandate that we keep this program. We will do our best to support the 33 4-H clubs in the county, but unless we find the resources to pay for the coordinator, all risk activity will be curtailed. In addition to the county fair this will include the spring show and other 4-H shows and demonstration. The 4-H programs are available to all youth in Island County regardless of their or their family's religious, ethnic, or cultural background. 4-H helps develop skills for future farmers, instills positive leadership skills, and proven educational activities that will stick with these young people for the rest of their lives.

Elimination of the Master Gardener Program will also impact thousands of Island County residents who rely on the information provided by Master Gardener volunteers for information about growing food; using pesticides and fertilizers safely and judiciously; diagnosing disease and pest problems; planting and maintaining appropriate landscaping for storm water management and reduction of invasive species; to mention but a few. Every week Master Gardeners are found at local farmers markets giving free advice; they often work with local businesses conducting mini workshops; and the annual Whidbey Gardening Workshop draws hundreds of residents and visitors to learn more about gardening. Without a coordinator these activities will be curtailed, and it will be difficult to ensure volunteers are current with their continuing education requirements when presenting themselves to the public as a WSU certified and Master Gardener. Other programs that will be impacted include the WSU Spring Plant Sale, the Whidbey Island Garden Tour and the collaboration with Island County on tree planting. WSU Extension – Island County will continue to support the 132 Master Gardeners in the program, but with the loss of the coordinator will limit Master Gardener activities in the county and impact plans for expansion of the program on Camano Island. Other Master Gardener activities that may eventually be impacted by these cuts include: the Lord's Garden which donates produce to the local food bank and senior programs; the Children's Garden at the NAS Youth Center; and the demonstration garden at Greenbank Farm.

Both the Master Gardener and the 4-H programs are two of the most popular programs within WSU Extension and something we do not want to lose here in Island County. As someone recently said to me "... these programs may not be mandated by the State, but they are surely mandated by the people." There is a lot of truth to that statement and we are proceeding to find new revenue sources to try and find bridge funding to sustain these programs. It will be a far more difficult task to reinvigorate these programs if we allow them to end, then it will be to find donations, grants, and other funding sources to keep them going.

Facts and Assumptions

4-H Program

The 4-H program will continue in a minimalistic form in 2011 regardless of the funding level (see explanation above). However, to maintain the current level of support at least \$25,000 will need to be raised through private donation or reconsideration by the County Commissioners – or some combination of private and public financing. \$20,834 for salary and benefits and \$4,166 for M&O.

Administration

Administrative costs for WSU for 2011 will include the following: Dr. Timothy Lawrence \$20,630 from Current expenses and \$1,000 from Solid Waste/Waste Wise budget; Janet Hall for administrative duties associated with the Lighthouse for \$4,240 from Current expense; Scott Chase for covering Extension duties for Camano Island \$10,968 from Current expense. Lynette Goodell (Accounting Supervisor) \$25,931 from Current expenses, \$ 338 from misc. sales, \$15,913 from MRC, \$2,000 from Solid Waste/Waste Wise contract, \$1,750 Lighthouse Program, \$ 548 from Beach Watchers. Administrative M&O \$9,327 from Current expenses.

Admiralty Head Lighthouse

None of the Admiralty Head Lighthouse \$35,602 budget comes from Current expense funding or any other Island County budget line. \$12,150 comes from the Lighthouse gift shop revenues; \$18,750 will come from Lighthouse License Plate Fund; \$2,500 comes from the Lighthouse Keepers Fund; and \$1,600 comes from other LEP funding sources.

Beach Watchers

The total budget for Beach Watchers is \$70,361 all of which comes from LEP or the Beach Watchers Foundation. \$64,331 in of the budget is for salary and benefits, and \$6030 for M&O.

Forest Planning Coaching Program

In 2011 we are working in collaboration with Whidbey Island Conservation District to bring the Washington State University Extension Forest Stewardship Program-Coached Planning to Island County. We have relocated \$1,000 from the Dairy advisory program and \$4,000 from the vacated administrative assistant position to match \$5,000 from the Whidbey Island Conservation District.

Agricultural/Livestock Advisor

With the near complete loss of the dairy industry in Island County we have eliminated Ned Zaugg but have retained the services of Joan Devries for Livestock advising from Current expense for \$3,600. Both Ned and Joan are based in the Skagit County Extension Office.

Master Gardeners

The Master Garden program will continue in some form in 2011 regardless of the funding level (see explanation above). However, to maintain the current level of support at least \$25,000 will need to be raised through the Island County Master Gardener Foundation. \$20,834 for salary and benefits and \$4,166 for M&O.

Noxious Weeds

We have reduced the Weed Board budget paid from Current expenses from \$23,634 to \$22,452 for the 5% directed reduction in this budget. We are also anticipating \$40,000 for 2011 grant from the State for Spartina control; \$1,500 for the Lone Lake project for a total budget of \$63,952.

Shore Stewards

The proposed budget for the Shore Stewards program for 2011 is \$31,000. Salary for the Shore Stewards program is \$27,175. The operational expenses for the project will remain consistent at \$1,500, and administrative support is \$2,325. All funding for the Shore Stewards program comes from the MRC.

Waste Wise

Assurances from Solid Waste that our 2011 contract for funding the Waste Wise educational program will remain consistent with 2010 levels of \$71,000. We can expect additional funding of \$1,600 from the Lighthouse Environmental Program and \$1,000 from the Department of Health for teaching of three Septic 101 courses, and one at no charge. \$65,537 for salary and benefits, \$8,063 for M&O, and \$1,000 for administrative support.

2011 Program Priorities

1. Implementation of a Forest Coaching Program
2. Maintain and Expand the Island County 4-H Program
3. Maintain and Expand the Island County Master Gardener Program
4. Expand and Develop Sustainable Funding for the Climate Stewards Program