



STATE OF WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF THE INTERAGENCY COMMITTEE  
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**TOPIC #5: WWRP FARMLAND PRESERVATION PROGRAM UPDATE**

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**Approved by the Director:** 

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**Proposed Action:** Briefing:

- ▷ Excess Funds in the FPP category
- ▷ Development of a model agricultural conservation easement

**Excess Funds**

Currently there is a total of \$4,429,819 in requests in the Farmland Preservation Program (FPP) category of WWRP. At a \$70M appropriation for WWRP (the level in the Governor's budget), a total of \$5,820,000 would be available for FPP projects, leaving about \$1.4M uncommitted. If the WWRP appropriation were at the requested level of \$100M, there would be about \$4.3M in uncommitted funds.

As approved by the IAC last fall, we will be seeking authority for a second year FPP grant cycle to make use of these uncommitted funds. If at the time the budget passes it looks like a second year cycle is feasible, IAC staff will convene the Farmland Preservation Program Advisory Committee to address several changes that members previously suggested:

- Change the way we evaluate "threat"
- Change the way we take into consideration the underlying zoning
- Establish procedures to evaluate the adequacy of water rights
- Review eligibility criteria regarding feedlots

**Next Steps**

Staff will bring any recommended policy changes to the Board at the June 7-8 meeting for adoption, along with a recommended timeline for the second-year cycle. We would schedule the final approval of second-year FPP projects for the November 1-2, 2007, IAC meeting.



### **Model Agricultural Conservation Easement**

IAC has a model conservation easement that we ask sponsors of less-than-fee land acquisition projects to utilize. Since this easement was designed to protect habitat land, it is not applicable to farmland preservation projects. As a result, IAC has contracted with a private law firm with expertise in this area to develop a conservation easement for use by IAC FPP grant recipients. We will incorporate the model easement into a policy manual for adoption at the June 7-8 IAC meeting.

In drafting the model conservation easement, several policy issues came up that will warrant IAC discussion and decision. For example:

- What percentage of the property should be allowed for buildings, impervious surfaces, etc. ("building envelope")?
- Should small footprint structures such as wind turbines, cell towers and billboards that allow a farmer to earn supplemental income be allowed, and if so, what would be the limitations?
- How do we ensure that unused water rights will not be lost?
- How do we handle conversions?
- What activities on the property would trigger notification of IAC? Obtaining IAC consent? Example: intent to transfer property or a property interest; improvements outside the building envelope.

### **Next Steps**

At the June IAC meeting, staff will present the board with a list of policy issues to address before adopting the policy manual containing model easement.