

BEFORE THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
OF WHITMAN COUNTY, WASHINGTON

OPTING-INTO THE RUCKELSHAUS)
VOLUNTARY STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM)
CONSISTENT WITH ESHB 1886 AND)
RCW 36.70A)

RESOLUTION NO. 072645

WHEREAS, under ESHB 1886, known as the Ruckelshaus Process Bill, a county may elect to "opt-into" the Ruckelshaus *Voluntary Stewardship Program* (Program), provided that it do so voluntarily prior to January 22, 2012; and

WHEREAS, prior to opting-into the Ruckelshaus *Program* a county is required to confer with tribes, environmental and agricultural interests in an open and transparent manner consistent with the requirements of ESHB 1886 and provide public notice before opting-into the program; and

WHEREAS, Whitman County planning staff, in cooperation with the Washington Farm Bureau, Washington Cattlemen's Association, The Nature Conservancy, and the Washington State Association of Counties, has organized two public workshops to consider all options in compliance with ESHB 1886 and the requirement to protect critical areas with respect to agricultural activities within unincorporated Lewis County under The Growth Management Act, Chapter 36.70A RCW. These workshops also sought to inform and seek feedback from affected stakeholders and interested members of the public, including Whitman County cattlemen and wheat farmers; local conservation districts; state agencies such as the Department of Ecology, the Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the Department of Commerce; environmental organizations such as the Palouse Prairie Foundation; and Indian tribes who have a history associated with Whitman County; and

WHEREAS, following said consultation and public meetings, and in consideration of comments taken at the two public meetings, the stakeholder group, including the Farm Bureau and planning division recommends that Whitman County should "opt-into" the Ruckelshaus *Voluntary Stewardship Program*; and

WHEREAS, after taking public comments prior to action by the Board of County Commissioners this 9th day of January, 2012, it appears to be in the best interest of the public to opt-into the Ruckelshaus *Voluntary Stewardship Program*; NOW THEREFORE

BE IT RESOLVED that the Whitman County Board of County Commissioners officially elects to opt-into the Ruckelshaus *Voluntary Stewardship Program* and adopts the following findings:

- a. Farming is vital to the economy of Whitman County and this resolution is to cover all watersheds in Whitman County;
- b. Whitman County watersheds provide critical and economically important functions that may be impacted by farming and other activities;

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- c. Biological diversity within Whitman County watersheds is important to water and habitat quality and viability and may be vulnerable to potential adverse impacts, including agricultural activities;
- d. There is local leadership within the Whitman County conservation districts, local government, and other agencies and stakeholders to make the *Voluntary Stewardship Program* successful;
- e. Data relevant to the *Voluntary Stewardship Program* is available and there are watershed plans and implementation strategies that can be integrated into the *Program*;
- f. Technical assistance is available locally as necessary to develop and implement the *Voluntary Stewardship Program*; and
- g. With adequate funding, there is a likelihood of success with a local effort to establish and implement the *Voluntary Stewardship Program*.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Whitman County nominates the Snake River watershed for consideration by the State Conservation Commission as a potential priority watershed, and that by adoption of this resolution Whitman County is eligible for state grant-funding to accomplish the intent of the *Voluntary Stewardship Program*, and that Whitman County will proceed as required under ESHB 1886 to implement the requirements of the *Voluntary Stewardship Program* once adequate funding is provided by the state.

DONE IN OPEN SESSION this 9th day of January, 2012.

APPROVED AS TO FORM:
 Denis Tracy, Prosecuting Attorney

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
 OF WHITMAN COUNTY, WASHINGTON

 By: Deputy Prosecuting Attorney

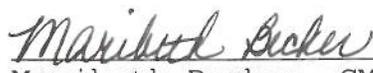


 Chairman

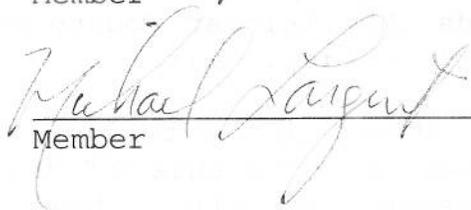
ATTEST:



 Member



 Maribeth Becker, CMC
 Clerk of the Board



 Member