Introduction

At a meeting held in the Kittitas County Auditorium at 9 a.m., April 4, 2014, a group of individuals representing the Washington State and Kittitas County Farm Bureau, Futurewise, and Kittitas County met to discuss several issues related to policies that were proposed to be added to the County’s Comprehensive Plan. Some policies proposed or not recommended for change were questioned by the Farm Bureau, and it was determined by the group that a number of changes could be made to the policies and reworded to meet the concerns of the Farm Bureau. Following is a draft of the recommended changes as was discussed at the meeting and subsequently revised based on comments and suggested revisions from the parties. These policy changes will be placed within the proposed Comprehensive Plan amendments scheduled to be heard for consideration on May 5, 2015. The group through this negotiation agreed upon acceptance of the first four revisions of the following GPOs. GPO8.28 still has issues by the groups related to the existence and protection of wildlife corridors. The Farm Bureau feels that the mandate of preserving the habitat is too broad and does not permit for specific definition of the area. Futurewise, Ridge, KCCC indicate that the language without the mandate does not provide enough protection to wildlife corridors in cluster plats. Given these issues, staff proposes the language below. The fact that the corridor is “considered” means that some analysis has to be provided before clustering of development can occur and that consideration would contain some measure of protection accompanying development. In addition, the existing requirement to provide for permanent protection of the open space and resource land (KCC 16.09.2.e and 3.d) and protect habitat areas (KCC 17A.07) maximizes the availability of rural land for either resource use or wildlife habitat and decreases the impact of the rural development on the surrounding ecosystem (WAC 365-196-425 (5)(ii) & (iv)).

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GPO 8.5 In order to protect and preserve Resource lands, non-resource development and activities on Rural lands adjacent to resource Rural lands shall require preservation of adjacent vegetation, existing landforms (e.g. ravines) or use of other methods that provide functional separation from the resource land use may require buffering.

GPO 8.7 The use of cluster platting and conservation platting shall be limited to innovative land use techniques should be encouraged in specific rural areas to lessen the impacts upon the environment and traditional agricultural/forestry uses and to provide services most economically. The use of other innovative land use techniques that protect rural character and resource land uses will be evaluated for future implementation.

GPO 8.17 Land use development and conservation tools to prevent sprawl within the Rural area that is not compatible with will be researched and adopted when it is determined that such tools protect the unique Kittitas County rural character or agricultural activities as defined in RCW 90.58.065 (2)(a) will not be allowed.
GPO 8.21.B:  Functional separation and setbacks found necessary for the protection of water resources, rural character and/or visual compatibility with surrounding rural areas shall be required where development is proposed. The first sentence of this policy shall not apply to agricultural activities as defined in RCW 90.58.065 (2)(a). When required by the county shoreline master program or critical area regulations, buffers shall be provided.

GPO 8.28  Clustering of development is encouraged in the rural area where it results in the protection of open space and protects against conflicts with the use of farming or other resource lands. When clustering of development is proposed on land that shares boundaries with public lands and provides existing public access to recreational uses on adjacent public lands, The County shall encourage the inclusion of easements for wildlife habitat networks, public access connections shall be considered during development review, and recreational use. The open space portion of the cluster development shall be located to protect wildlife habitat and migration corridors.