FUTURE ACTION ITEM #3 – Revised 11/14/18

Meyer’s Point Conservation Easement
(Stacy Pearson/Ryan Goodell)

TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF REGENTS

SUBJECT: Meyer’s Point Conservation Easement with Capitol Land Trust, a Washington non-profit corporation

PROPOSED: That the Board of Regents approve the negotiation of a Conservation Easement in favor of the Capitol Land Trust, a Washington non-profit corporation (“CLT”), on the Meyer’s Point property, and further delegate authority to the President or his designee to enter into a resulting Deed of Conservation Easement with CLT in order to complete such transaction.

SUBMITTED BY: Stacy Pearson, Vice President for Finance and Administration

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: Dr. Edward Meyer gifted the 95-acre Meyer’s Point property to Washington State University in 1990. In his bequest, he stated that the property should be used to promote environmental education, research and the arts. The Meyer’s Point property has substantial natural resources, including extensive terrestrial, wetland and aquatic habitats. The property is utilized by diverse groups of people from within and outside of the University, which groups desire to expand their use of the property. As such, and pursuant to Dr. Meyer’s bequest, the College of Arts and Sciences (“CAS”) has developed a vision to create an Environmental Field Station for teaching, outreach and research in the South Puget Sound. Development of the WSU Meyer’s Point Environmental Field Station (“MPEFS”) will allow the University to: enhance place-based environmental and cultural education through field studies; provide a facility for environmental research undertaken by WSU faculty, staff and students and others that address critical Puget Sound issues; provide programmatic outreach activities to the local communities; partner with K-12 schools and regional colleges and universities for better learning and stewardship of the environment; and elevate the University’s profile and level of engagement with prospective students, alumni, donors and State legislators in the South Puget Sound area.
In order to realize the potential of the MPEFS, additional infrastructure needs to be developed beyond the existing caretaker’s house, garage, barn and office (storage) building. Some of these existing buildings can be upgraded to meet some of the infrastructure needs, although a new building is also necessary to provide laboratory space, classrooms and conference rooms, a lounge area, 2-4 small bedrooms and a communal kitchen. CAS has set aside approximately $200,000 from its modest endowment for the maintenance of the property, which can be contributed to the cost of the new building, but the majority of the funding for the new building will have to come from other, external sources. CAS has recently established an External Advisory Board to advise and assist with fund-raising opportunities with private individuals, philanthropic foundations and state and federal agencies. Granting the Conservation Easement to CLT could also generate funding in excess of $500,000, which would be paid by CLT to the University in exchange for the Conservation Easement, and could be used toward the construction and/or maintenance of the new building.

Discussions with CLT have been ongoing since early 2018, and the terms of the Deed of Conservation Easement are currently being discussed and negotiated. Such terms include the amount of consideration to be paid by CLT, the University’s rights to access the property, its future development of the property and ongoing maintenance of the property. Of particular importance is the need for the University to retain the right to continue using the property for the following purposes:

1. Allow faculty, staff, students and partners to have access to the property to undertake research activities, teach classes and engage in outreach activities with the public.
2. Maintain and modernize the existing buildings on the property to support the research, teaching and outreach mission of MPEFS.
3. Retain the option to construct a new building on the property, mostly likely in the upland areas of the property, to serve the purposes identified above.
4. Construct a modest trail network to link the new building in the upland area to the lowland/wetlands to provide access to researchers and educators.
5. Use and steward the natural resources (trees, plants, animals, etc.) on the property in a manner consistent with WSU’s mission.
6. Continue annual harvesting of the hayfield area.
As illustrated above, the proposed Conservation Easement will allow the University to elevate its promotion of environmental education, research and the arts on the Meyer’s Point property. The Conservation Easement will also ensure that the property, and the substantial natural resources that it boasts, will be preserved in perpetuity and in keeping with Dr. Meyer’ bequest.

ATTACHMENT: Attachment A – Illustration of 95-Acre Meyer’s Point Property