

**Skagit County Agricultural Advisory Board (AAB)**  
**Minutes – October 20<sup>th</sup>, 2004**

Members in attendance:

Dave Boon  
Oscar Lagerlund  
Larry Jensen  
Lyle Wesen  
Randy Good  
Rose Merritt  
Murray Benjamin  
Kim Mower  
Annie Lohman  
Mike Hulbert  
Roger Knutzen

Members not in attendance:

Bob Hughes

Others in attendance

Ken Dahlstedt  
Kendra Smith  
Dan Craig  
Mike Shelby  
Bob Rose  
Allison Deets

1. Call to order & introductions:

Dave Boon called the meeting to order at 7.00pm, and welcomed board members and guests Commissioner Ken Dahlstedt, Bob Rose (Skagitonians to Preserve Farmland), Mike Shelby (Western Washington Agricultural Association), and Dan Craig (USDA).

2. Minutes:

Dave Boon requested corrections or additions to the minutes. Hearing none, Dave Boon called for a motion to accept the minutes from September 15<sup>th</sup> as presented. Lyle Wesen moved, and Randy Good seconded, to accept the minutes as presented. Motion carried.

3. Discussion Items:

a. BCC Report – Lyle Wesen

Board member Lyle Wesen and staff Allison Deets met with Commissioner Ted Anderson to discuss the Agricultural Advisory Board's role in Skagit County and whether the County Commissioners would prefer to request advice on specific issues or would rather the AAB provide input and recommendations whenever it chose. Lyle Wesen reported that Commissioner Anderson thought it would be improper for the County Commissioners to direct the Agricultural Advisory Board to look at certain issues. Commissioner Anderson also stated that he does not want to direct the Ag Advisory Board, and that as an appointed citizen advisory board to the County Commissioners, it has the right and responsibility to speak on any issues it feels are of interest to agriculture.

Guest Commissioner Ken Dahlstedt noted that a lot of the things that the Board of County Commissioners deals with are deep, long-term issues and they need input from the Agricultural Advisory Board on how to proceed. Lyle Wesen asked Commissioner Dahlstedt to keep the Ag Advisory Board in the loop when the Commissioners want input on specific issues that aren't necessarily general knowledge. Commissioner Dahlstedt said that any of the three Commissioners would also be happy to come to Ag Advisory Board meetings on a regular basis to keep the Board up to date on issues and to request specific input.

b. Commissioner Update – Commissioner Ken Dahlstedt

Commissioner Ken Dahlstedt provided the Ag Advisory Board with an update on Commissioner activities and positions regarding issues of interest to the agricultural community. Regarding the expansion of the Mount Vernon Urban Growth Area into Riverbend, Commissioner Dahlstedt reported that the Commissioners continue to be on the side of discouraging additional development into Skagit County farmlands, and would only consider such an expansion at the request of landowners directly affected.

Commissioner Dahlstedt also reported that the Commissioners continue to monitor the situation with the Army Corps of Engineers. The Commissioners feel it's not acceptable for the Army Corps to be active every time Skagit County drainage districts perform routine maintenance; however, the Army Corps, like the County, is required to respond if there's a potential code violation. Commissioner Dahlstedt will continue to work with Colonel Deb Lewis here in Washington, and will work also with Major General Griffin in Washington, DC, the second in command at the Army Corps.

Gary Rowe, County Administrator, is meeting October 21 with the Director of the Department of Ecology to discuss water rights, community needs for water, and the potential for guaranteeing access to water for all users. The Swinomish Tribe has filed suit calling for a moratorium on new construction that would require a new well to be dug.

With regard to the question of Cockreham Island, Commissioner Dahlstedt noted that it is one of the tools to put on the table in an effort to find a solution to flood issues. Cockreham Island would help to protect other lands and would also provide spawning ground for salmon. The County is working with the residents of Cockreham to discuss options, and Commissioner Dahlstedt recommended someone from Public Works provide the Ag Advisory Board with an update at its next meeting.

c. Army Corps & CIDMP – Mike Shelby

Mike Shelby, Executive Director of the Western Washington Agricultural Association, reported that the WWAA is in communication with the Washington State Department of Agriculture regarding the Comprehensive Irrigation District Management Plan (CIDMP) Program. The WWAA has made a funding request to WSDA to fund a CIDMP Program for the Skagit Delta, which would determine how many certifiable water rights exist and develop a "water bank" to insure water is available to every agricultural producer who needs it. No one who has perfected water rights would give up those rights; however a CIDMP would be a new tool for managing the water resource. Buy-in is necessary from the Department of Ecology, NOAA, and US Fish & Wildlife Service in order to implement the plan. Mike Shelby will keep the AAB apprised as discussions continue and will bring forward any new information to the AAB as it becomes available.

Mike Shelby reported that the attorneys for the drainage districts will be meeting with the state Attorney General's office regarding the current situation with the Army Corps of Engineers. The drainage districts will likely be pursuing an exemption for agriculture or a general regional permit. The WWAA continues to meet with WDFW and the Swinomish Tribe to attempt to craft an agreement that would allow for the drainage districts to fulfill their mandates without a complicated approval process.

Mike Shelby will make a presentation at the November meeting regarding a new state program that does surface water monitoring. The program started on the east side of the mountains as a pesticide check, focused on agriculture. However, the preliminary findings of a report due out at the end of October indicate that the heaviest concentration of pesticides in surface water is in urban areas. Mike Shelby will return to the AAB in November to discuss the Surface Water Monitoring Program further, after he has met again with the administrators of the program.

d. Miscellaneous

Dan Craig from USDA's Starling Program came to offer the program's services to the agricultural community. Typically, the Starling Program is conducted based on observations by USDA agents, and specific requests from farmers, but USDA wants to make sure it's fulfilling the needs in the community. Commissioner Munks recommended that Dan Craig come speak to the Ag Advisory Board and request AAB members' assistance in identifying the best places for implementation of the program.

Dave Boon reported that he attended a meeting about the proposed WSU project, a "Northwest Washington Agricultural Innovation Center." Drawing from state, federal, and local regional sources, the Ag Innovation Center would serve as a central resource for the five northwest counties agricultural communities, and would provide business planning and development assistance, marketing assistance, and product development assistance. A bill that would support such an initiative has been passed by the state legislature but not yet funded. Local extension director Ned Zaugg will be asked to make a presentation regarding the AIC at an upcoming AAB meeting, and will also be seeking the support of the AAB as WSU moves forward with the project.

**Adjourn regular session.**