

**Skagit County Agricultural Advisory Board (AAB)  
Minutes – January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2006**

Members in attendance:

Oscar Lagerlund (Chair)  
Dave Boon (Vice-Chair)  
Randy Good  
Bill McMoran  
Murray Benjamin  
Lyle Wesen  
Kim Mower  
Kraig Knutzen (for Roger Knutzen)  
Annie Lohman

Members not in attendance:

Mike Hulbert  
Bob Hughes

Others in attendance

John Semrau  
Sara Jo Breslow  
Holly Freishtat  
Bob Rose  
Shirley Solomon  
Mike Shelby  
Jan Flagan  
Ric Boge  
Carly Ruacho  
Allison Deets

1. Call to order & introductions:

Chair Oscar Lagerlund called the meeting to order at 6.05 pm. He welcomed members and guests to the meeting. Sara Jo Breslow, a graduate student with the University of Washington studying salmon and agricultural issues was in attendance. Jan Flagan and Ric Boge attended from Public Works–Surface Water Management. Non-profit representatives included Bob Rose, Executive Director of Skagitonians to Preserve Farmland, and Shirley Solomon, Executive Director of the Skagit Watershed Council. Also present were Holly Freishtat, the coordinator of the new Agricultural Marketing Program, and Mike Shelby from Western Washington Ag Association.

2. Minutes:

Chair Oscar Lagerlund requested additions or corrections to the November minutes for the Agricultural Advisory Board. Dave Boon moved, and Lyle Wesen seconded, to accept the November 2005 minutes as submitted. Motion carried.

3. Update on progress of Rawlins Road Feasibility Study – Shirley Solomon

Shirley Solomon provided an update on the activities of the Skagit Watershed Council; a full-blown presentation on the Rawlins Road Feasibility Study will not be ready until February 28<sup>th</sup>, when a presentation will be made at Skagit Station in Mount Vernon at 11am. By that time, the technical work on the study will be nearly complete.

In the meantime, Shirley Solomon provided some history to-date on the project. A year and a half ago, Skagit Watershed Council launched the Rawlins Road project together with the Western Washington Agricultural Association and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. The hope in developing this project was to improve drainage in the western part of Fir Island as well as provide an opportunity for fish habitat enhancement. Skagit Watershed Council and its partners were successful in securing Salmon Recovery Funding Board funds to work on the feasibility study. The project was kicked off in the field, with all five of the Dike District 22 directors. When all the technical work is completed, Skagit Watershed Council and its partners

will have four alternatives that work well for fish habitat enhancement and either maintain or improve drainage.

AAB member Dave Boon asked about the intent of the project. Shirley Solomon reported that the intent was to provide a good solid technical base for salmon restoration. Lyle Wesen asked how many of the four options would flood farmland. Shirley Solomon said that one of the four will *not* flood farmland because it is the alternative in which the status quo is maintained and the project is entirely outside of the dikes – the other three involve flooding farmland. Lyle Wesen asked further how many acres would agriculture lose as a result of this project; Shirley Solomon responded that she is not in a position to say as the technical work has not been completed. Randy Good wanted to know how much the project cost, and what needs to be done before final approval. Shirley Solomon stated that the cost was \$90,000 and that this is not the type of work that requires final approval because it is a technical feasibility study.

4. Bayview Stormwater Management Update – Jan Flagan & Ric Boge

Ric Boge and Jan Flagan, from Skagit County Public Works-Surface Water Management Division, reviewed the status and progress of the Bayview Stormwater Management Plan with assistance from John Semrau, from Semrau Survey & Engineering. Jan Flagan noted that an idea that came up last summer/fall was that we should do a perimeter ditch; Public Works requested the consultant to develop a cost estimate for a perimeter ditch. This cost estimate is based on same basis as the 95% draft plan. The findings by the consultant indicate that the hill ditch is technically possible, but expensive. Public Works will consider in greater detail the portions that could be feasible for perimeter ditch, but the department will recommend to the County Commissioners at this time that they go forward with the current 95% draft portion.

John Semrau of Semrau Survey & Engineering provided information on costs as well as the project's technical feasibility. On the North Bypass Channel, the overall length is 6.3 miles, 77 acres of right of way, 43 parcels impacted, and the overall project cost estimate is \$13.9M. The benefit of this channel is that it diverts stormwater out of Joe Leary Slough, and while the slough basin only represents 20% of area, it can handle almost 50% of the stormwater runoff. The negatives associated with this element of a hill ditch include environmental impact, water quality issues, the continued need for a south spur pump station, and it may not eliminate need for outlet pump station. Overall project cost is higher than what is proposed in the current 95% draft plan (over \$6M more). Other shortcomings include the potential removal of water resources and reduction of water available for farming, doubles operation & maintenance burden, and the whole project must be constructed in order to see a benefit. John Semrau reported that Semrau Survey & Engineering and Skagit County Public Works cannot recommend the North Bypass Channel as it is currently conceived.

South Bypass Channel – overall length is 6.1 miles, 103 acres of right of way required, 37 different parcels effected. The overall project cost estimate is \$11.5M, but the cost does not include mitigation for wetland loss, EIS, project enhancements. Advantages include diversion of stormwater runoff out of No Name, Little Indian, & Big Indian Slough Channels, handles  $\frac{3}{4}$  of future 100-year event. Its shortcomings include environmental impact, it is unable to achieve free discharge, may not be hydraulically sound, and contains two documented fish-bearing streams, which will require fish enhancement and water quality enhancement. Other shortcomings include its potential to remove water resources and reduce water availability for farming; doubling of the operation & maintenance burden; the whole project must be constructed in order to see a benefit; the project changes the

outfall location to Padilla Bay; Drainage District 19 is already obligated to serve much of the area; the project does not eliminate the need for a Marihugh Road detention pond; and it must cross four fuel pipelines. The South Bypass Channel has a higher overall project cost: southern bypass channel with a Marihugh Road detention pond is over \$8M more than original drainage improvement recommendations. Semrau Survey & Engineering and Skagit County Public Works cannot recommend the South Bypass Channel as it is currently conceived.

Semrau Survey & Engineering recommends optimization of the Marihugh Detention Pond, optimization and enhancement of existing drainage channels and structures, optimization of the balance between a South Spur Bypass Channel and the size of the South Spur pump station. Jan Flagan said she is planning on having one more meeting with all the stakeholders. Prior to that Public Works will release the final report. Public Works will go to the County Commissioners on February 21<sup>st</sup> with the final report and recommendations. The Public Works Department will recommend that the County Commissioners authorize Public Works to negotiate with the Drainage Districts to come to some sort of interlocals to finance the plan.

4. Ag Marketing Program & opportunities – Holly Freishtat

Holly Freishtat, who was introduced at the November Ag Advisory Board meeting, returned to discuss with the AAB opportunities for project collaboration. She provided a report on meeting with Farmland Legacy Program/AAB staff the previous week to brainstorm projects that the AAB and the Ag Marketing Program. Holly Freishtat and Allison Deets discussed a farm business planning conference: a two day conference with a farm business planning and transition professional from New York. The Ag Marketing Program could help with both financial and staff support and would like to partner with the Ag Advisory Board on this project.

The Ag Marketing Program is exploring value-added opportunities, and is working with the Mindgarden Group on a marketing assessment. The assessment will narrowly focus on a situation analysis and then overlap it with an opportunity analysis. Holly Freishtat wants to meet with AAB staff and the AAB-Economic Development Committee, and the County Commissioners. Holly Freishtat provided a handout to the AAB that included a workplan and timeline, a scope of work for Mindgarden Group, and a draft situation analysis.

5. Land Use Committee Update – Mike Hulbert

The Land Use Committee will be meeting on February 1<sup>st</sup> at noon in the Sauk Room to continue a discussion of strategy for code revision recommendations. The Committee will meet again, on February 8<sup>th</sup> with several Skagit Watershed Council members to discuss any concerns they may have regarding this code revision recommendation. Currently, that meeting will be attended by Molly Doran (Skagit Land Trust), Alison Studley (Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group), and Bob Carey (The Nature Conservancy). Committee Chair Mike Hulbert requested AAB members to mark that date on the calendar and plan on attending, if possible.

Chair Oscar Lagerlund adjourned the meeting.

**Adjourn regular session 8.30pm.**