

Skagit County Agricultural Advisory Board (AAB)
Minutes – March 21st, 2007

Members in attendance:

Kim Mower (Chair)
Nels Lagerlund
Roger Knutzen
Bill McMoran
Murray Benjamin
Annie Lohman
Randy Good
Mike Hulbert (also proxy for John
Vendeland)
Bob Hughes
Lyle Wesen

Members not in attendance:

Dave Boon

Others in attendance

Mike Shelby
Jim McRae
Janet McRae
Ron Wesen
Tarn Mower
Jay Derr
Don Stuart
Carolyn Kelly
Mike Rundlett
Dan Berentson
Will Honea
Oscar Graham
Marge Swint
Carly Ruacho
Allison Aurand

1. Call to order & introductions:

Chair Kim Mower called the meeting to order at 5.05pm. She welcomed members and guests to the March meeting.

2. Presentation: Salmon Heritage Program

Will Honea, Skagit County Civil Deputy Prosecuting Attorney, made a presentation on the Salmon Heritage Program, a new initiative being put forth by the County Commissioners to address the agricultural/buffer issue. The County hopes to employ the Salmon Heritage Program to resolve the takings issue related to mandatory buffers by purchasing easements for riparian buffers. The Salmon Heritage Program has not yet been publicly released, but is scheduled for release on the 22nd of March.

3. Minutes:

Chair Kim Mower called for review and correction of the February minutes. Murray Benjamin moved, and Lyle Wesen seconded, acceptance of the minutes as submitted. Motion carried.

4. Landowner Incentives Program & 2007 Farm Bill:

Don Stuart, Pacific NW States Director from American Farmland Trust, provided information on the 2007 Farm Bill, as well as American Farmland Trust's work on improving voluntary incentive programs. American Farmland Trust is conducting a survey of landowners regarding land conservation and stewardship incentives. Don Stuart distributed a copy of the survey, which asks landowners about their use of conservation programs, barriers to the use or implementation of conservation incentives, and improvements that might be made to increase their use.

Don Stuart also discussed American Farmland Trust's efforts on Farm Bill reform. AFT is working to transition the farm bill from one based on commodity price support and subsidy programs to one that provides a national safety net of revenue insurance, offers green payments to farmers for providing environmental benefits, strengthens and simplifies conservation programs, empowers farmers to better compete in the marketplace, and better supports agriculture with increased funding for land protection, extension services, research, and technical assistance.

5. Request for Clarification – Planning & Development Services

Oscar Graham and Marge Swint, of Skagit County Planning & Development Services, brought a request for assistance to the AAB. They are attempting to determine thresholds and conditioning criteria for special use permits related to farmstands. Planning would like guidance from the AAB as to the allowable limits for farmstand operations, particularly those that have a value-added food component. The AAB was able to provide some preliminary guidance; however, Land Use Committee Chair Mike Hulbert will call a meeting of the committee prior to the next full Board meeting to develop more specific guidance recommendations.

6. Report on Overseas Experiences – Tarn Mower

AAB Chair Kim Mower's son Tarn Mower provided a report on his experiences as a Peace Corps volunteer in Africa. He spent the majority of his time in Mauritania, an Islamic Republic of 3 million people. Its population is comprised of several distinct ethnic groups: Moors (black and white Moors), Pulaar, Wolof, and Soninke. 100% of the Mauritanian population is Muslim, though in some ways it differs from a traditional Islam culture in that polygamy is acceptable within some ethnic groups. Mauritania has three distinct climactic and ecological zones that have helped shape its culture as well – the Sahara, the Senegal River Valley, and the "Country of Stone" (Trab el-Hajra). While Tarn Mower primarily discussed the culture, history, peoples, ecology and geography of Mauritania, he noted also his involvement in improving the small-scale subsistence farming systems within his village, and discussed the stark difference between the productivity of an agricultural valley like the Skagit and the Senegal River Valley of Mauritania (the area of the country's agricultural production).

7. Miscellaneous

Roger Knutzen provided a brief update on the Bayview Ridge Subarea Plan and Stormwater Management Plan processes. The Planning Commission meets on Tuesday, March 27, to discuss the Subarea Plan. Roger will provide a fuller update at the April meeting.

Mike Hulbert announced that the next meeting of the Young Farmers Group will be at Bob's Burgers & Brew on Thursday, April 12th at 7am.

Chair Kim Mower called for adjournment of the meeting.

Adjourn regular session 8.35pm.