

**Skagit County Agricultural Advisory Board (AAB)
Minutes –December 19, 2007**

Members in attendance:

Kim Mower
Murray Benjamin
Randy Good
Lyle Wesen
Bill McMoran
Mike Hulbert
Bob Hughes
Nels Lagerlund

Members not in attendance:

Roger Knutzen
John Vendeland
Annie Lohman

Others in attendance

Commissioner Sharon Dillon
Mary Heinrich
Carly Ruacho
Kendra Smith

1. Call to order. 6:05 p.m. Kim Mower called meeting to order and welcomed Commission Dillon and the committee. Asked for any donations for the farmers in Lewis Co.
2. Minutes: Moved to approve. Passed unanimous.
3. Proxy: Mike for John.
4. Skagit County Flood Committee: Public Works is looking for a member from the AAB to sit on a citizen's committee to advise the technical committee being formed. Bill moved and Mike seconded to have Bob Hughes represent the AAB.
5. Clean Water Fund: Public Works sent a letter denying the request from the diaries to be exempt.
6. Legislative Update: Mary H. shared what she learned at the WACD annual meeting regarding the Working Lands – Office of Farmland Preservation. It will be a functioning land trust, this is a good thing. Allison Aurand will possibly be hired as a consultant. The program is transitioning. Update on the Wash. Farm Link Program in King and Snohomish Counties. Look for the business and estate planning on their web page. Whatcom Co. is modeling their ag zoning after Skagit County...Skagit is seen as a leader.
7. Wetland Bank: Mary H. reported that the Young Farmers were asked to give a presentation to the legislatures which turned out to be a very informative session and appreciated by all who attended. At that time she visited Senator Haugen's office. The Senator was asked by Jay Manning (DOE) to call off the dogs. He would look at ways to work with the situation. The Governor wanted a long term ability to sign off. Mary drafted a proposal that should appear the first of the year, to redraft the mitigation proposal with help from the various ag groups. They want to work with bankers and DOT as well. Gov's office should be included. They want to find a way to help the County get out of its dilemma. Looking at ways to reimburse and to buy out project owners. It is estimated to be \$6 million. Not sure where the Farm Bureau is on this topic. Mitigation Stakeholder's Forum new, Ron Schultz is on it. Senator Haugen asked for two AG rulings on the wetland banks: Are they legal with respect to the GMA and do they need to go through SEPA? John Mankowski was asked if he wanted the WDFW letter to be pulled.

8. AAB Mission and Goals: New committee: John, Mike, Lyle and Kim. Working on getting together. Discussion focused on 4 major topics. Each will be further defined:
 - a. Bayview Drainage onto Ag lands and Irrigation – ability to farm in Skagit County and that requires drainage and irrigation. (tide gate discussion)
 - b. Skagit and Samish Rivers Flooding
 - c. The CAO, with special attention to East County and the regulations transitioning from one to another crop or dairy
 - d. Critical Mass – Land conversions from ag to development

****Side discussions :

1. Pulver/I-5 project...Mary H believes this may be a good example of where the wetland discussions should go.
 2. I-5 expansion as growth occurs and the need to expand the Interstate increases the Ag community should watch very closely and get involved early... there will be lands converted.
9. Water Right: Will Honea updated the AAB on the exempt well issue. He discussed the DOE agenda – how much water can be taken out of the rivers for the fish to still be ok. This is not an eastern Washington issue. He explained the lawsuit with Anacortes and their desire to have veto power for County actions when it came to withdrawals. They did not want to remove restrictions even with having a tributary water budget (There is a limit to the number of homes that can be built in many of the county tribs due to low flow and the impacts it may have on fisheries.). They feel there will be more than 300 gal/day consumption. If PUD can not supply water (or another purveyor) in a timely manner (120 days) or at reasonable costs (no more than 150% of the cost of a well) than it is allowable to drill. Discussion on the number of wells per household and Ag water rights.
 10. Planning Dept. Update: Carly informed the AAB that there is not much new news...they are working on the appeals to the Comp Plan.
 11. Comments from the Commissioner: Commissioner Dillon said it was good to hear the AAB work on the set of priorities and to see what they were. She reminded the AAB that her door was always open. Tuesday will now be their work session days so that they can doing planning on Mondays and be better prepared for their sessions. Murry sent a good message on flooding...flood information needs to be updated more frequently. The farmers and community have depended upon this. Commissioner Dillon said she would look into this.
 12. Adjourn: 7:56 p.m.