

**Skagit County Agricultural Advisory Board (AAB)  
Minutes –February 2008**

Members in attendance:

Kim Mower  
Murray Benjamin  
John VanDellen  
Nels Lagerlund  
Randy Good  
Mike Hulbert  
Bill McMoran  
Lyle Wesen

Members not in attendance:

Annie Lohman  
Bob Hughes

Others in attendance

Kendra Smith (via conference call)  
Curtis Johnson  
Carly Ruacho  
Ryan Walters  
Don Stuart  
Don McMoran  
Carolyn Kelly

1. The meeting was called to order at 6:04 p.m. by Chair Kim Mower.
2. Chair Kim and Carly Ruacho reviewed the notes from the previous meeting. Kendra will forward the written minutes to Board members.
3. Don Stuart, American Farmland Trust, was introduced. He gave a presentation on the Pioneers in Conservation Grants Program, and encouraged applications from Skagit County landowners. The program is aimed at salmon recovery projects on agricultural lands, or that impact agricultural lands. Highest priority projects will not only benefit salmon, but will help the farming economy. He provided a flier, and added that applications are available on the Pioneers website. He provided examples of previously funded projects.
4. Curtis Johnson, Western Washington Agricultural Association, provided information on the tide gate agreement. He reviewed the background. The tide gate agreement contains provisions that allow for “banking” of proactive restoration actions in exchange for future tide gate repairs, maintenance, and/or replacement. The agreement covers a 25 year period. The plan stipulates that conversions of land to habitat uses will occur on public lands first. On privately owned lands, it must be a willing buyer – willing seller agreement. The agreement was ready for signature, but at the last minute they discovered that SEPA was required. There is still some concern that this does not take a basin-wide look at the tide gate issues – i.e. – restoration projects upriver will not count towards “credits.” Because of this agreement, drainage districts will be issued a nation-wide 3 permit, renewable every five years. The agreement will ultimately encompass 2700 acres of restored habitat. There are currently 105 tide/flood gates mapped. Once a tide gate is covered by the agreement for work, it is covered in perpetuity. Curtis also discussed the potential for enhanced irrigation capacity under the Comprehensive Irrigation District Management Plan (CIDMP.) Other work in progress from WWAG – the Drainage Fish Initiative is now complete.

There was discussion regarding Thomas Creek, and the future potential of cleaning that waterway under the tide gate agreement.

The Board thanked Curtis for all of his hard volunteer work on these issues.

4. The Chuckanut Metropolitan Park District formation comment letter was passed around. Carolyn will make copies and send to all.

5. Progress on the buffer issue being addressed by the committee at the Ruckelshaus Center was discussed. There was a meeting in January, none in February. The first meeting addressed core values of participants, ground rules for the committee, and was basically a time for participants to get to know each other. There is not future meeting scheduled yet. They had/have three deadlines to meet: fact finding 12/1/07; fact finding 12/1/08 and policy development 12/1/09. It is hopeful that a field tour for committee members can be held this spring in our area.

6. Ryan Walters gave an update on the Skagit County Riparian Mapping Project. The area included in the project will be all of the Skagit Watershed that is not in a drainage district, but none of the Samish. A GIS person was hired for this project, and the County has a deadline of 6/01/08 to complete the project. Ryan also provided a brief update on the Salmon Program, and a copy of the report was shared. Extra copies will be located for Board members who wish them.

By the first of March, the County should have a draft report/analysis by the WSU Water Quality consultant on the Skagit County Water Quality Monitoring Program data.

7. Proposed Comprehensive Plan amendments were discussed. Follow-up information will be provided.

8. Kim would like to see a video developed interviewing farmers on the different issues discussed.

9. Lyle reminded all of the Boundary Review Board hearing on the Chuckanut proposal. It will be March 6, 1:30 p.m. at the Skagit County Commissioners' Hearing Room. The process must be conducted in a timely manner. No SEPA been completed. All were encouraged to attend. Whatcom County has put out an RFP for a SEPA.

10. There was discussion regarding the writing of a letter regarding the Shorelines permit for the Clear Valley Wetlands Mitigation Bank. Kim and Mike volunteered to draft a letter.

11. The Skagit County Flood Hazard Mitigation project was discussed. Bob Hughes will represent the AAB. He was unable to attend the first meeting, so he will need to be brought up to speed. Carolyn will ask Lorna Ellestad, Skagit County Public Works, to contact him.

12. There was discussion regarding filling the vacant position on the Board created when Dave Boon moved. The position was advertised, and Jeff Boon had been contacted regarding the vacancy, but he did not submit an application. The deadline was early February. Bill will follow up on this.

13. Don McMoran, gave an update on WSU Extension activities. The Young Farmers Group will meet on March 13<sup>th</sup>. Don Gordon, Skagit County Commissioner candidate will attend their meeting. July 16<sup>th</sup>, the WA Agricultural Institute will host a candidate's forum for all County Commissioner candidates. The issues will regard agriculture in Skagit County. The Office of Farmland Preservation will hold a Task Force Meeting at the WSU Research Station on April 2<sup>nd</sup>. The meeting will be preceded by a tour for the Task Force and interested citizens on the afternoon of the 1<sup>st</sup>. The tour is free, but interested people need to sign up in advance.

The next AAB meeting is March 19<sup>th</sup>, 6-8 p.m., Ag Service Center.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:09 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Carolyn Kelly  
Secretary Pro-Tem