

Skagit County Agricultural Advisory Board (AAB)
Minutes –April 16th, 2008

Members in attendance:

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

Members not in attendance:

John Vendeland

Others in attendance

Carly Ruacho
Kendra Smith
Don McMoran
Numerous community farmers

1. Call to order. 6:05 p.m. Kim Mower called meeting to order and welcomed the committee and guests. This meeting has been specifically opened to all ag groups, land owners and the FAB to discuss improvements/expansion of I-5 corridor.
2. March 2008 Minutes. Roger moved and Nels seconded to accept the March minutes.
Approved.
3. Update on the Ag-Buffer Case. Will Honea, Deputy Civil Prosecutor, updated the AAB on the recent Supreme Court decision. Last fall the County won, but the Tribe filed a Request for Reconsideration and Clarification. The Supreme Court reaffirmed their original decision and added "...or allowing natural recovery.", which was more emphatic and in favor of ag. This then ended the challenge before the GMA Hearings Board, but is not necessarily the end of the debate. It is now go before the Ruckelshaus Center moving through their process and the County still needs to make its argument before that committee. The Tribes could go before the Federal Court protesting that Washington State is not upholding the Federal Treaty. This is now 14 years later. Commissioners stuck with this and it cost the County millions of dollars.
 - a. Questions: Carolyn Kelly asked if the State was still liable under ESA...answer- perhaps. Lyle Wesson asked if this was the end of the tribes suing the County. Answer- hopefully, trying to talk together and listen. Randy Good asked what's happening at the Ruckelshaus Center and will the case be influential...answer- not really anything and not sure.
4. DOT presentation. Tom Stacy, DOT. The Plan guides the decision making process. Federal> State> Local. This is a Master Plan from Conway to Cook Rd. A 27 year plan up to 2035. He commented that this is a stewardship argument with the Feds for hwy improvements. DOT is looking for long term investments and Partnerships so that they are ready when the

funding becomes available. There are 71,000 vehicles /day and the ramps don't meet the design standards. There are 463 accidents/yr in this stretch. The most important places for improvement to keep the flows moving and safe are ramps, interchange configuration and replacement of Skagit River Bridge. The biggest challenge is between College and George Hopper. WADOT will be hosting another open house in mid-late June. HOV lanes don't make sense with less than 5 mile commutes. Master Planning by mid-summer and it must go through an approval process with public input. No funding is available currently and the SCOG Board will have the final say if this is to go forward. The AAB wants to work a meeting around the next open house if possible so that may mean a June 26th meeting.

5. Thank you to BoCC. Lyle moved and Nels seconded to have Kendra write a letter to the BoCC thanking them for their continued support of Ag during the buffer appeals. Approved.
6. Next meeting. Open Space presentation from PDS. Discussion on regional Ag. 7-9 at Ag Services.
7. Adjourned.