



**SKAGIT COUNTY AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY BOARD**  
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**Skagit County Agriculture Advisory Board (AAB) Meeting Minutes**  
**March 11, 2015, 6 p.m.**  
**Skagit County Administration Building**

**Members in Attendance**

Murray Benjamin	Jim Carstens	Barbara Cleave
Ty Clark	Greg Lee	Scott Hanseth
Michael Hughes	Kraig Knutzen	Nels Lagerlund
Terry Sapp		

**Members Absent**

Mike Hulbert            Brian Duquaine

**Others in Attendance**

Linda Christensen, Skagit County Planning	Lisa Janicki, Skagit County Commissioner
Dale Pernula, Skagit County Planning	Don McMoran, WSU Extension
Steve Omdal, Skagit County Port Commissioner	Brandon Roozen, Western Washington Ag
Carolyn Kelly, Skagit Conservation District	Bob Linn, Public
Ivan Bacus, Public	

**Call to Order**

Chair Nels Lagerlund called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm

**Agenda Review**

There were no changes or additions to the agenda.

**Meeting Minutes**

Michael Hughes moved to approve the January 14, 2014 meeting minutes as amended correcting one typo, and Kraig Knutzen seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

**Commissioner Lisa Janicki**

Commissioner Janicki appreciates the Ag Advisory Board's work and is available this evening to answer questions. The Commissioner is concerned on how information is conveyed to the Board of County Commissioners. She requested that all correspondence be copied to each commissioner. In addition, she requested that an e-mail be sent to inform all three commissioners that a letter from the AAB has been submitted.

**Western Washington Ag Association (WWAA) Update**

Brandon Roozen, Executive Director for the WWAA, updated the AAB on several subjects.

*Skagit County Agricultural Advisory Board Members:  
Nels Lagerlund (Chair), Kraig Knutzen (Vice Chair), Murray Benjamin, Jim Carstens, Ty Clark,  
Barbara Cleave, Brian Duquaine, Scott Hanseth, Mike Hulbert, Michael Hughes, Greg Lee, Terry Sapp*

1. Drainage Districts:  
THE WWAA is currently working with the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife regarding drainage maintenance plans. Ecology and the Corp are slowly learning what the Districts do to maintain their infrastructure, and as a result permits are taking longer to approve. Currently WWAA is in their second cycle of permit issuing with Ecology and the Corp. WWAA continues to work with these two agencies to extend permitting so the Districts can continue their work. Kraig said that Ecology and Corp rules on the valley's waterways can be fatal to a farm business. The language in the rules is troublesome.
2. Tide Gates:  
Brandon spoke about the Tide Gate Initiative where Districts work with regulatory agencies to preform tide gate repairs with an expedited permit. He reported that this initiative is showing an increase in fish numbers. He also spoke about habitat credits established when the Districts participate in restoration. Districts can use these credits to pay for tide gate repairs.
3. Puget Sound Near Shore Program:  
The Puget Sound Nearshore Ecosystem Restoration Project is a habitat restoration and preservation program. This program is for willing buyers and willing sellers where projects can be modified to meet the needs of land managers or owners.

The AAB requested Brandon present a monthly update on pressing agriculture issues.

### **Farmworker Housing Update**

Dale Pernula, Director of Skagit County Planning and Development Services (PDS), gave a brief overview on how PDS is involved with farmworker housing. He also mentioned the Planning Commission public workshop held on the Housing Element of the 2016 Comprehensive Plan Update on February 17. The Housing Element is one of many elements that will be updated as a result of GMA requirements. Dale said that farmworker housing is a complex and broad issue. It's important that the cities and county collaborate together on regional issues.

There was a discussion on how much farmworker housing is needed once the harvest season begins in February and extends through October. Nels said he would contact the Housing Advisory Committee to gather additional information. Nels will also like the mayors from Burlington and Mount Vernon to attend a future AAB meeting.

### **Samish Blitz 90-Day Plan**

Carolyn spoke about the recent Samish Blitz event, a 90-day work plan to reduce fecal coliform. All attendees worked towards a multi-phase plan to address fecal loading in three locations.

In other news, Carolyn spoke about the Regional Conservation Partnership Program grant coming soon.

Kraig said he would like the new Ecology field inspection employee to attend a future AAB meeting. Nels will contact him.

### Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) Update

Ty reported that the VSP meeting held on February 26 was a continuation by Skagit County staff who presented background information on existing monitoring programs. Specifically: water quality monitoring and salmon habitat monitoring. Additional information was presented on the Geographic Information Systems Riparian Assessments. This program uses aerial photos to measure the types of land use, such as vegetation, open field, etc., and along the waterways that flow through Agricultural and Rural Resource Zones. More information is contained on the County website, [www.skagitcounty/VSP](http://www.skagitcounty/VSP).

### Public Comment

Bob Linn spoke about the Clean Water Assessment based on research he performed. He was concerned that his tax statement had increased three times the amount from the previous assessment. Mr. Linn submitted several public disclosure requests to the County Assessor. Nels asked Mr. Linn how the AAB can help. Mr. Linn seeks to bring this costly assessment to the attention of the AAB as several landowners are affected. He wants the AAB to be the voice for this issue.

Nels gave an overview of the Clean Water Assessment and said that he spoke in front of the Board of County Commissioners a few years ago. This assessment is renewed every five years.

### Other Business

Don McMoran gave an update on WSU Extension activities. Recently the extension office held a potato workshop and other programs will be starting this Spring and Summer. He is also working on new grants and announced that a new seed company, Universal Seeds, is now in Skagit County.

### Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 8, 2015 6 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 pm.