

**Skagit County Agriculture Advisory Board (AAB) Meeting Minutes
September 9, 2015
Skagit County Administration Building**

Members in Attendance

Steve Bertelson	Jim Carstens	Ty Clark
Barbara Cleave	Scott Hanseth	Michael Hughes
Kraig Knutzen	Nels Lagerlund	Terry Sapp

Members Absent

Mike Hulbert

Proxy Designation

Jim Carstens for Murray Benjamin
Scott Hanseth for Greg Lee

Others in Attendance

Don McMoran, WSU

Call to Order

Chair Nels Lagerlund called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm

Agenda Review

Don McMoran added the Ag Summit
Barbara Cleave added the SPF meeting review

Meeting Minutes

Jim moved to approve the July 8, 20-15 meeting minutes. Kraig seconded. Motion carried.

Introductions

New board member for District 2, Steve Bertelson, was introduced.

Voluntary Stewardship Program Update (VSP)

Ty Clark presented a report for the VSP committee. The county staff has a work plan to be submitted to the conservation commission for review and approval. The voluntary measures described in the program are grouped in three areas: technical assistance, outreach, and education.

In part one of the plan, an office where landowners could receive all information for the programs available in the county. The county proposes that a VSP coordinator be hired as a communication coordinator with assistance from existing staff.

Part two of the plan relates to easement purchases. The program will investigate habitat enhancement of property and compensation for it. There is no indication of where the money for this will come from.

Ty submitted a full written report to the committee; including assessments of the plan.

Skagit County Drought Designation

The County Commissioners were approached to declare the county a drought disaster area, but before they could take action the state committed to the declaration. Skagit County was declared a contiguous disaster county (by the State of Washington). The county will be eligible for certain grants/loans based on this. Terry Sapp asked what the impact (harvest) for agriculture was due to the drought. Don McMoran stated this would be available at the end of the year in the Ag statistics, 2015.

Concentrated Feeding Operations – Department of Ecology Proposal

The Department of Ecology has released a preliminary draft for national pollutant discharge elimination systems and state waste discharge general permits. This permit requirement will affect dairies, cattle feed lots, etc. and has declared any manure an industrial waste. Some excerpts from the draft:

- Regulation of Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO) waste has now transferred from the Washington State Department of Agriculture to the Department of Ecology
- 35 foot buffers are required along waterways
- Either a lined lagoon with a leak detentions system or a permit for operation are required for any operation. A Permit is required for when the operations discharges.
- CAFO defined as an operation with animals confined over 45 days, with feed brought in from a location off-facility, and where discharge to surface or groundwater occurs

A full version of the draft is available in the link below.

<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/permits/cafo/docs/preliminaryDraftCAFOPermit2015.pdf>

This will affect many small cattle and dairy operations, and make it very difficult to continue operations. Buffers, permits, etc. are a fairly common practice in east coast states.

Ag Summit

An Ag Summit planning meeting will be held on October 7, 2015 from 1 – 4 p.m. at the WSU Extension. The goal of the meeting will be to determine what we, as a county, want to focus on. This summit will help shape how we want the future of Agriculture to look in the Skagit County.

A survey will come out from Don McMoran's office shortly. The AAB is asked to distribute this to others. It will be key in the planning process. Input will be obtained from Western Washington Ag, SPF, County Commissioners, Dike Districts, etcetera and they will be encouraged to attend.

Skagitionians to Preserve Farmland (SPF) Meeting

Don McMoran and Barbara Cleave presented a summary of the August SPF meeting. SPF is concerned with a permit to put a large warehouse facility for agriculture processing just north of Conway. Their concerns relate to, but not limited to the facility not being accessory to the production, loss of visual open agricultural land to that section of the valley, and addressing storm water runoff. Don emphasized there are limited options for agriculture processing in the valley and supportive of both agriculture of agriculture processing is needed. Discussion ensued; no action taken.

Other Business

The Raspberry Ridge project update is needed. Nels Lagerlund will talk to the Planning and Development Services regarding this.

Next Meeting:

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, October 14, 2015 at 6 p.m.

Today's meeting adjourned at 8:10 p.m.