



**SKAGIT COUNTY AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY BOARD**  
**1800 Continental Place**  
**Mount Vernon, WA 98273**  
**Phone (360) 416-1338**

**Skagit County Agriculture Advisory Board Meeting Minutes**  
**June 8, 2016 7 pm**  
**Skagit County Administration Building**

**Members in Attendance**

Murray Benjamin	Jim Carstens	Michael Hughes
Kraig Knutzen	Nels Lagerlund	Steve Omdal
Terry Sapp		

**Proxy Designation**

Jim Carstens for Barbara Cleave  
Michael Hughes for Greg Lee

**Members Absent**

Steve Bertelsen	Scott Hanseth	Sloan Johnson
-----------------	---------------	---------------

**Others in Attendance**

Linda Christensen, Skagit County Planning & Development Services  
Kara Symonds, Skagit County Public Works  
Dale Pernula, Skagit County Planning & Development Services

**Call to Order**

Nels called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm

**Agenda Review**

There were no changes to the agenda.

**Meeting Minutes**

Jim moved to approve the April 12, 2016 meeting minutes and Murray seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

**Comprehensive Plan 2016 Update**

Dale Pernula presented an overview of the update. A public hearing has been scheduled for June 20, 6 p.m. and public comment will be accepted through June 23. He also spoke about three areas of interest for agriculture: 1) NRL Disclosure mailing and title notice upon transfer of real property by sale; 2) Notification of development activities on or adjacent to NRL; and 3) NRL setbacks. The NRL setback brought up a discussion between Dale and the AAB. Below is an excerpt from the June 3, 2016 staff

*Skagit County Agricultural Advisory Board Members:  
Nels Lagerlund (Chair), Kraig Knutzen (Vice Chair), Murray Benjamin, Steve Bertelsen, Jim Carstens,  
Barbara Cleave, Scott Hanseth, Michael Hughes, Sloan Johnson, Greg Lee, Steve Omdal, Terry Sapp*

report regarding the NRL setback. The Planning Commission is in favor of for a Hearing Examiner variance.

*Existing code requires a 200-ft building setback from natural resource land zones. The code allows the setback to be waived if (a) the applicant acknowledges the possibility of NRL uses on the adjoining property, and (b) in Ag-NRL and Industrial Forest-NRL the adjoining NRL property owner agrees. If the NRL property owner does not agree, or cannot be reached, the Department may waive the setback itself. Because staff has identified this requirement as a substantial obstacle to the timely processing of permits, the Department proposed deletion of the requirement to obtain the NRL property owner's consent. The Planning Commission recommended retaining that requirement AND removing the Department's ability to waive the setback, replacing it instead with a Hearing Examiner variance. While the Planning Commission expressed persuasive arguments for such a requirement adjacent to Industrial Forest-NRL, the Department anticipates a large need for such waivers adjacent to Ag-NRL, where there is a substantial number of smaller parcels with residential zoning. It is often difficult to get obtain the adjoining property owner's approval for the waiver, which will result in the need for a variance. Each hearing examiner variance takes 4-6 months to process and costs \$4,440. One alternative could be to follow the PC's recommendation just for Industrial Forest-NRL, and retain the status quo or the original proposal text for Ag-NRL.*

Nels commented about the non-motorized section. Several items were removed and others received a better description of the listed projects. Nine items were approved and four were downgraded from projects to studies. Nels also asked if trails on dikes would be a future project. Jim asked what process the Planning Commission objected to. Dale said staff designed a project process flow diagram. It contains variable plans that occur, i.e., SCOG timeframe, 6-year TIP, and Comprehensive Plan Updates. The diagram tries to coordinate all these plans.

Kraig asked Dale if any stipulations are on NRL for a winery tasting room.

The AAB will write a comment letter regarding the NRL setback. Kraig made a motion that the AAB write a comment letter they support Planning Commission's recommendation. Jim seconded and the motion carried without discussion. Terry volunteered to draft the letter.

There was a brief Shoreline Master Program Update discussion.

### **Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP)**

The next Watershed Group meeting is set for June 16. The group will walk through a complete draft of the Work Plan. In summary, the plan components include:

- Background
  - County Context
  - Growth Management Act and Critical Areas Protection
  - Skagit County's Ag-CAO history
- Goals and Benchmarks, including:
  - VSP Participation Metrics (outreach, enrollments in voluntary stewardship programs, survey responses)

*Skagit County Agricultural Advisory Board Members:  
Nels Lagerlund (Chair), Kraig Knutzen (Vice Chair), Murray Benjamin, Steve Bertelson, Jim Carstens,  
Barbara Cleave, Scott Hanseth, Michael Hughes, Sloan Johnson, Greg Lee, Steve Omdal, Terry Sapp*

- Environmental Metrics
  - Protection Benchmarks
    - A plan to ensure we don't lose protection of existing riparian buffers beginning in our baseline year of 2011
    - Achieved by monitoring riparian areas through aerial photography on a routine timeline, measured in three categories: new plantings, shrub, forest
  - Enhancement Benchmarks
    - Goals on how many acres of buffers to be added in each subwatershed every five years
- Voluntary Measures
  - Coordination, Outreach, Planning
  - Financial Incentives
    - Easements, Acquisitions, Open Space Tax Incentive Program, Farmland Legacy Program
  - Skagit Conservation District serves as Technical Assistance provider
- Regulatory Backstop
  - Skagit County's Ag-CAO Existing Rules
    - Vegetation removal: Agriculture does not have to stop farming adjacent to critical areas, but if they do stop farming and place riparian buffers, those buffers cannot be later removed
    - Watercourse Protection Measures
- Monitoring, Reporting, and Adaptive Management
  - Timelines for reviews are consequences for failure
- Viability of Agriculture
  - How the plan can aid in maintaining and improving the Long-Term Viability of Agriculture

Nels commented about open space and would be horrible if it was removed. The AAB had several comments and questions for Kara. Kara will pass these on to the VSP committee. There was a discussion about different buffer types, especially grass buffers which are effective.

Nels asked about the process. Kara said the draft plan is in process now and will be sent to a technical committee. Before the Plan is sent to the state, the AAB will comment.

Jim asked if we could go back to the 2011 baseline.

Terry spoke is concerned and unsure how the VSP Plan will affect tree planting and its relationship to un-harvestable forest lands and adaptive work plans.

### **Other Business**

Don McMoran is working on the next annual ag summit. The planning meeting is scheduled for June 20. Don also spoke about leaf spot disease on brassica type plants. This disease reduces crop yield. Don is also checking into a grant for irrigation efficiencies, especially using the Anacortes water pipeline for irrigation.

*Skagit County Agricultural Advisory Board Members:  
Nels Lagerlund (Chair), Kraig Knutzen (Vice Chair), Murray Benjamin, Steve Bertelson, Jim Carstens,  
Barbara Cleave, Scott Hanseth, Michael Hughes, Sloan Johnson, Greg Lee, Steve Omdal, Terry Sapp*

The meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

*Skagit County Agricultural Advisory Board Members:  
Nels Lagerlund (Chair), Kraig Knutzen (Vice Chair), Murray Benjamin, Steve Bertelson, Jim Carstens,  
Barbara Cleave, Scott Hanseth, Michael Hughes, Sloan Johnson, Greg Lee, Steve Omdal, Terry Sapp*