

# Skagit County Agriculture Advisory Board

## Meeting Summary – May 12, 2021

### VIA MS Teams

#### Members in Attendance

Michael Hughes      Kraig Knutzen      Steve Omdal  
Terry Sapp      Tim Van Hofwegen

#### Proxy Designations

Kraig Knutzen for Nels Lagerlund  
Steve Omdal for John Morrison

#### Members Absent

Murray Benjamin      John Morrison      Rachael Ward Sparwasser  
Nels Lagerlund      Steve Wright      Justin Hayton

#### Others in Attendance

Peter Browning, Skagit County Commissioner  
Jenna Friebel, Skagit County Drainage & Irrigation Districts  
Hal Hart, Director, Skagit County Planning & Development Services (PDS)  
Michael See, Skagit County Public Works  
Kara Symonds, Skagit County Public Works  
Kim Adams, Skagit County Planning & Development Services (PDS)  
Craig Macku, Community Member

#### Call to Order, Introductions

Michael Hughes called the meeting to order at 7:07 pm.

#### Approval of Meeting Summary

Terry Sapp moved to accept the May 12, 2021 Meeting minutes, Steve Omdal seconded. Motion carried.

#### Guest Speaker

##### **Jenna Friebel – Skagit County Drainage and Irrigation Districts**

Jenna Friebel gave a presentation on Stormwater Management and the concerns for long-term agricultural drainage.

- Drainage District Roles & Responsibilities
  - Districts are formed in the late 1800s/early 1900s
    - RCWs for drainage and irrigation improvements
    - Districts led by elected commissioners
    - Collectively represent approximately 53,000 acres
    - Assessed value of \$4.2 Billion
  - Ditches are used to drain farmland and convey minimal runoff from forested uplands to Skagit/Padilla Bay
    - Urban stormwater is a threat to long term agricultural drainage
    - Increased runoff volumes could impair district ability to provide drainage to landowners
  - System relies on tide gates and pump stations

- Capacity is limited
  - O & M costs are high
- Principles of Flow Control
  - Based on pre-developed conditions hydrograph
  - Intended to reduce peak runoff rates to protect streams of erosion
  - Storage requirements and orifice sizes calculated using hydrologic models

## Pacific Northwest Hydrology 101

Hydrologic Process	Pre-Developed	Developed	Result
<b>Processes that affect total volume</b>			
Evapotranspiration	40% - 50%	25%	15% - 25% increase in total volume of water
<b>Processes that affect storm volume</b>			
Interflow (soil storage)	20% - 30%	20% - 30%	--
Groundwater	10% - 40%	15%	Up to 25% less water going in to the ground
Surface Runoff	1%	30%	29% Increase in surface runoff volume

- Other Consequences of development: Seasonal shifts peak flows
  - Major increase in spring and fall peak flows
  - Impacts drainage during early season farming activities
  - Impacts drainage during fall harvest
- Stormwater Management
  - 1992:
    - Higher peak flows
    - Increased runoff volume
    - Runoff duration
  - 2019:
    - Peak flows match
    - Volume match
    - Increased runoff duration
- Key Concerns
  - Increased runoff from upland development could impact drainage districts and the land they were formed to serve
  - Districts/Consortium are not involved in pre-application meetings or review of potential downstream impacts
  - Development can be grandfathered into outdated standards
- Next Steps Discussion
  - Form an advisory group (County/Districts/Consortium/Ag-Advisory Board)
    - Review project approval process to ensure Districts have an opportunity to review project proposals and ensure downstream impacts are analyzed and mitigated
    - Review existing codes and propose code amendments as needed to formalize review role of the Districts
- The Board may want to bring forward a suggestion to the Board of County Commissioners to have some Workgroup sessions regarding the Stormwater/Drainage issues that Jenna presented on.

## Hal Hart – Skagit County Planning & Development Services

Hal gave an update from Skagit County Planning & Development Services

- **Key Updates:**
  - We continue to work through the bulge of 170 permits that came in as part of the energy code changes in January
  - Water was a key blockage – we reorganized that unit with 75% of it going to health since they had resources available to move things quickly
  - We will continue to process the backlog and reassign staff where we have problems/to resolve blockages
  - Docketing – The Commissioners have approved the docket – including the discussion of comprehensive plan policies this year around fully contained communities. They received 400 plus comments
- **New Projects:**
  - Chuck a Nut Bay Distillery - Potential Development
  - Burlington Housing – some 500 housing units either completed, under construction or in final approval stage. Sage Homes is really the big major new player out of Snohomish County....focusing 100 million dollars between Snohomish up to Bellingham and Ferndale and creating more than half of the new apartment homes. Our back log in housing was years in the making. This is putting pressure on rural areas for homes sites
- **Trends:**
  - Second-home purchases are driving the surge in U.S. housing activity.
  - The surge in second-home buying underscores how affluent Americans, whose white-collar jobs have allowed them to work and school their children from home, have chosen to ride out the pandemic outside of dense urban centers and in homes with more space and amenities
  - Home are selling 20% faster this year spring than last year.
  - Demographic increases hold steady
- **Population:**
  - 2020- 130,575
  - 2021- 131,945

## New Business

WWU Update- Don McMoran

- We lost three dairy farms in 2020 due to overtime restrictions and raising labor costs
- We had a Black Leg infection on the Padilla Bay Dike Top Trail. The Black Leg Infection is spreading quickly. Seed producers are concerned. Is it here to stay? Oregon has had this issue with its Cabbage Seed Industry.
- Ken Dahlstedt – Washington Alder Pant and Lignotech Plant near Michael Hughes Grain Facility.
- Conway Pole Yard.
- New Fertilizer Plant on Highway 20 in the old Draper Valley Plant it will be nice to have a new one.
- Westland Distillery/Farm HQ.
- Technology on irrigation systems. Getting tech to talk from the system to the machine

Next Month we will ask Peter Gill to come for an Agritourism Update.

## Committee Reports

**Economic Development-** Don McMoran

Terry Sapp presented on the North Cascades Meat Producers Cooperative-

- It owns a mobile slaughter unit for USDA processing of animals and is planning for an aggregation site where farmers can bring animals. Some processed meat is sold at the co-op's farm stand at the Circle F ranch near Bellingham and some is delivered to customers through the Food Hub. The co-op has about 60 members and expects to add more.

**Critical Areas** – Nels Lagerlund

Nothing at this time.

**Land Use** –Michael Hughes, John Morrison, Steve Wright

Nothing at this time.

**Flood, Drainage & Irrigation** – Kraig Knutzen (Chair), Nels Lagerlund, Steve Wright

Nothing at this time.

**Old Business**

Nothing at this time

**Adjourn**

Steve Omdal moved to adjourn, Terry Sapp seconded. Meeting adjourned at 8:58 pm.

Next meeting is June 9, 2021 at 7 pm.