

Skagit County Agriculture Advisory Board Meeting Summary – September 8, 2021 VIA MS TEAMS

Members in Attendance

Michael Hughes Nels Lagerlund Michael Trafton
Justin Hayton Steve Omdal Tim Van Hofwegen

Proxy Designations

Nels Lagerlund for Kraig Knutzen

Members Absent

Kraig Knutzen Rachael Ward Sparwasser Terry Sapp
Murray Benjamin Steve Wright John Morrison

Others in Attendance

Hal Hart, Director, Planning & Development Services (PDS)
Kara Symonds, Skagit County Public Works
Brandon Roozen- Western Washington AG
Kim Adams, Skagit County Planning & Development Services (PDS)
Don McMoran, WSU Extension
Craig Macku, Community Member

Call to Order, Introductions

Michael Hughes called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm.

Approval of Meeting Summary

Steve Omdal moved to accept the July 14, 2021 Meeting Minutes; Tim Van Hofwegen seconded. Motion carried.

New Business

Brandon Roozen- Western Washington Ag spoke regarding his team working on Water Quality, Endangered Species, Salmon Recovery, & better supporting the County and the University. A question was asked on Irrigation and if he has seen any water shortages? Brandon said there were some challenges but there is a great concern on getting all our rain at once coming up, conditions are currently very dry. He did not have a super tight/current update.

Michael Hughes also discussed that the heat this year did make it more difficult, they have had pretty good water this year. A little earlier than hoped for as it got very hot earlier this year, 60+ degree weather in January makes it harder.

Tim Van Hofwegen- The heat came at the wrong time, but the river really held up correct? Yes, it did until July/August. Most damage to the crops was from the heat when plants were in a full vegetative state. Usually

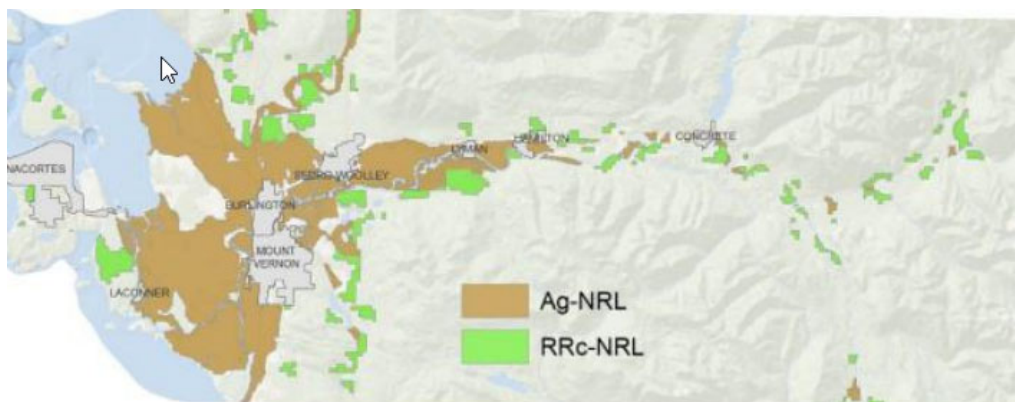
gets that kind of heat in August when things are past that time. Got behind and hard to catch up. Harvest just starting, will wait and see.

Guest Speaker

Kara Symonds- Skagit County Public Works

Kara presented on the Voluntary Stewardship program:

- Growth Management Act
 - Conserve Fish & Wildlife Habitat
 - “shall adopt development regulations that protect critical areas
 - Protect Productive Ag Lands
 - “to assure the conservation of agricultural, forest, and mineral resource lands”
 - There are now 27 Counties enrolled
- AG CAO Background
 - 1996-2004 Ordinances
 - 2007- Legislature Timeout
 - Ruckelshaus Process
 - 2011 VSP Enrollment
 - PW implement Program
 - Established Watershed Group
 - 2016 WSCC Funding
 - 2017 Work Plan
 - All CAs in Ag-NRL and RRc-NRL



- FWHCA Protection Goal
 - No net loss of riparian area below 2011 statutory baseline
 - GIS methods: Define Project area, Aerial Photography
 - Assessed 17,388 acres b/t 2011 & 2019
 - Investigate each loss
 - Net gain of 533 acres in project area
- FWHCA Enhancement Goal
 - Goals by subbasin, 37.5 acres
 - Data: NRSP, CREP, SWC Restoration DB

- Over 321 acres planted in the VSP project area
- Next step: document acquisitions in project area and their functions / values
- Agricultural Yearbook
 - Highlight the coordination and partnerships
 - Questionnaire sent out to partners
 - Overview
 - Economic Development
 - Outreach
 - Challenges
 - Published by Herald
- Ongoing Implementation
 - Cooperative Projects with the SCD
 - Cover Crop Program, AgWeather Stations, Cattle Alleyways, Plantings, Manure Management, Landowner Outreach
 - Monitoring Data Related to CA Goals – Permit data, aerial imagery, wetland inventory
 - Supporting long-term viability of agriculture
 - Ag land reports, Comp Plan goals
 - Outreach & Education

Hal Hart, Director, Planning & Development Services

- Work Program Items
 - Work Program – Fully Contained Community Policy Discussion (Peter) working with the proponent of this concept. This process will be longer than the normal annual docketing process. Working on a contract between the County and the sponsor who would pay the county to look at alternatives.
 - Docketed Items – moving for a one-year process we are alternating that with our Shoreline process update to the Planning Commission. Docketed items include: Slaughterhouse/ADU's/CARD Subdivision changes/Neilson Brothers Conversion of Ag. Property.
 - Shoreline Master Program – update now at the BOCC we have been documenting public comments.
 - Agricultural Tourism Project – Continues – Lisa Grueter is looking at various tourism business models that would work outside of the core agricultural areas.
 - Coordinating with City of MV next year to rezone and address housing needs within cities is still a viable strategy.
- Permitting Update
 - We are having a very big year in permitting as are most jurisdictions on the west side of the state and north of Seattle.
 - Single family home development remains strong.
 - We are working on improving our permit system – Kurt Latimore – reducing our time in review significantly – concept of current review.
 - We will be meeting with stake holders more regularly as we move ahead with this project
 - We have a contract with HDR Engineering and are expediting permit reviews we have moved 19 in the past three weeks another 9 -12 will be going out this week for water review.

- We are trying better reporting function into our new Permit Software System of the future. After being on hold for two years we are moving ahead.
- Agricultural Issues
 - Continue to work the distillery expansion near the airport. This will include an experimental field as well.
 - Continued inspections and work on the Sakata Seed Expansion at the airport.
 - We are still receiving applications for ag things like new investments in Potato shed structures as well.
- Other Projects
 - Norm Nelson 35,000 sq ft Potato Shed proposed on Fielding Road
 - Chuckanut Distillery looking for a new home
 - Chuckanut Brewery Expansion

Committee Reports

Economic Development- Don McMoran

Westland Distillery, Amazon, Trans Loading, Meat Packing Plant

Critical Areas – Nels Lagerlund

Nothing at this time.

Land Use –Vacant (Chair), 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

Don McMoran, WSU Update

- Skagit County Fair was successful this year with only a couple covid incidents
- Grants
 - Water and Irrigation sustainability Grant
 - Agribility
 - Farm Stress and Suicide Prevention
 - Videos on YouTube, please help promote the videos, click and share
 - 2020 Ag Stats, behind hoping to get out next month
 - 2022 Potato Research Study starting
- 2000 Masks K95 and surgical masks are available for farms and farm workers- reach out if needed and Don can meet or deliver
- Lease is up, been at the port for over 10 years. Trying to lobby to find a new location or stay
- Discussion on moving the Skagit County Fairgrounds- is the Swift Center an option? It was, but the Ag Community was not happy. They are still researching for an available location. Hard to find a location because the fair grounds are not used but a few times a year. Need to promote other events through the year to make it worthwhile.

- Next Month Peter Gill will provide an Agritourism Update, reach out to Sarah Stoner, the new Farmland Legacy Coordinator.
- Solar Farms potential, where does the board stand on that? (Michael will send email to Land Use Committee to start discussing where the AAB stands on that issue), San Juan County doing a big push for Solar Farms. Find out how the Board feels, then be able to make an educated recommendation to the BOCC.

Adjourn

Tim Van Hofwegen moved to adjourn; Steve Omdal seconded. Meeting adjourned at 8:43 pm

Next meeting is October 13, 2021 at 7 pm