

Skagit County Conservation Futures Advisory Board
Meeting Summary
March 11, 2025

Members Present | Advisory Rep. Affiliation

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| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Scott DeGraw (chair) District 3 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Margery Hite Skagit Conservation District |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Andrea Xaver (vice chair) District 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> Keith Morrison At Large |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jim Glackin Skagit Land Trust | <input type="checkbox"/> Owen Peth District 1 |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audrey Gravley Skagitonians to Preserve Farmland | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sarah Stoner <i>ex officio</i> Skagit County |

Others Present—Affiliation

Alan Chapman, Whatcom County Ag Advisory
Alexander Harris, Whatcom County
Dakota Stranik, Whatcom County
Galen Priest, Swinomish Tribal Community
Kai Ottesen, Belle Bean Services, LLC
Lauren Templeton, Whatcom County

Scott called the meeting to order at 7:30AM.

Review Agenda, Introductions

Agenda approved. Quorum present with minimum of four voting members.

Review February 11 Meeting Summary

The group postponed review and approval of February minutes to the April meeting. All in favor.

Guest Speakers: Whatcom County Farmland Preservation Staff

Introductions of the meeting's guest presentation speakers from Whatcom County Planning Department:

- Dakota Stranik, Planner II--(CPAL) Conservation Program on Agricultural Lands
- Lauren Templeton, Conservation Easement Program Administrator
- Alexander Harris, Conservation Easement Program Outreach Coordinator

Lauren presented an overview of the Whatcom County Conservation Easement Program. Alexander and Dakota contributed information during the presentation and the group discussion that followed.

Challenges specific to farmland preservation in Whatcom were discussed. Differences between the two counties and respective programs included: zoning, topography, levy lid (\$0.0325 per \$1000 property value for Whatcom), grant partners requiring stewardship plans with funding agreements, and Whatcom having to compete for tax levy funding with other projects. Whatcom staff also pointed out, "they do not have an SPF (Skagitonians to Preserve Farmland)/non-profit advocacy organization."

Whatcom's Ag Protection Overlay (APO) mechanism is their version of Skagit's Ag Land Preservation code. When a property has a certain percentage of prime soils, the APO requires owners to cluster homes; remaining land is deed restricted by way of notice on title (not protected via easement).

The APO sometimes creates protected prime soil lots that isolated from other farmland, and not farmable due to tractor access. Whatcom staff also shared that a recent update to their 2007 Rural Land Study report found that R5 and R10 zones all have prime soil. R5 and R10 zoning allows for high density development of 5 acre lots.

Property Updates

The group discussed updates on the properties currently in queue for agricultural conservation easements. The queued applicants encompass 357 acres and 10 development rights.

Application Property Scoring/Review

FLP 260

The group postponed to next meeting FLP property #260 review and score, due to time constraints.

Marketing & Application Process

Small Heritage Farms' Ag Land Protection (CFAB Committee)

The survey published, with a close date of April 30, 2025. Recipients include the Skagit Ag list serve, (WSU Extension managed), Skagit Conservation District staff, and inquiries on Sarah's list from folks interested in farmland protection but who don't qualify for FLP protection due to lack of development right, or don't qualify or aren't interested in the ALP code mechanism. Survey e-text and link:

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Small farms count.

Would you like to see a program for protecting & supporting small farms in Skagit County? Small farms count and their futures need to be protected. Skagit County would like your input on the discussion of farmland protection for small heritage farms in the county.

Please click the survey link [here](#) or go to <https://publicinput.com/protectingsmallfarms>

Skagit Succession Support (Land Transfer Navigator Grant)

February 26, 2025—Wednesday

Sarah reported on the stakeholder roundtable last month, February 26, 3-5 PM at the new Mount Vernon Library Commons. Approximately 20 people each representing an ag viability, food security or land access group in Skagit County discussed Skagit-specific land access issues and farmland succession needs. Consensus in the discussion included that all farms count, large, small and everything in between.

Groups represented at the meeting included WWAA, Skagit Farm Bureau, Viva, Ag Advisory Board, SPF, NWABC (Ag Business Center), SCD, WSU Extension, Puget Sound Food Hub, EDASC-Economic Development Alliance of Skagit County; Skagit County Food Policy Council.

Next steps include individual follow up conversations and forming groups/coalitions specific to needs and demographics: large farms, small farms, no-operating landowners (NOLOs),

Monitoring Updates

Kai reported that monitoring work is in process for existing easements, with no issues to report.

Member Updates

Audrey shared that Skagitonians to Preserve Farmland held their annual board retreat.

Scott shared about the Farmland Legacy Program presentation at the La Conner Rotary Club annual dinner in honor of farmers and merchants. Around 80 people were present.

The group discussed lack of knowledge of current membership of the Ag Advisory Board (AAB). Sarah will send an updated member contact list. An updated [contact list is always available on the Skagit County Ag Advisory Board web page](#), along with AAB meeting agendas and minutes.

Administrative

The group discussed 2025 meeting dates. Specifically,

- July meeting, when Sarah will be out of town. The group decided to cancel, as noted below.
- August meeting, attendance is low. The group decided to cancel, as noted below.
- November meeting, the second Tuesday coincides with Veterans Day, November 11, a federal holiday. The group decided to move the meeting to third Tuesday, as noted below. Thanksgiving is the week following, November 27, 2025.

CFAB 2025 Meeting Dates

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|---------|----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| April 8 | July 8 (cnx) | October 14 (tbd) |
| May 13 | August 12 (cnx) | November 18 (3 rd Tues) |
| June 10 | September 9 | December 9 |

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 AM