

Skagit County Conservation Futures Advisory Board
Meeting Summary
June 10, 2025

Members Present | Advisory Rep. Affiliation

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

Others Present—Affiliation

Jenn Johnson, Skagit County Public Works
Kai Ottesen, Belle Bean Services, LLC
Kellie Gillingham, WA Dept of Ecology (partial)
Taylor Scott, Skagit County Public Works (partial)

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

Review Agenda

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

Review February 11 & March 11 Meeting Summaries

Jim made a motion to approve minutes; Audrey seconded. All in favor.

Property Updates

The group discussed updates on the properties currently in queue for agricultural conservation easements. The queued applicants encompass 310 acres and 7 development rights.

Marketing & Application Process

FLP ‘Protected Farmland’ Signs in Key Visible Locations

Sarah discussed the two locations identified for ‘Protected Farmland’ signs. The 48” x 96” Protected Farmland signs match the design of the same-size Protected Farmland sign at the Conway roundabout (Wylie property, FLP-140). Sarah is working with Skagit County roads crew to install the two signs on Cedardale Road (FLP-158, 163) and the Chuckanut freeway exchange (FLP-252).

The one 48x96 Protected Farmland sign already in place was installed in 2010, showing the jointly funded Wylie farmland protection project between Skagit County Farmland Legacy-SPF-The Nature Conservancy in 2010 (FLP-140).

Five 30x30 Protected Farmland signs are installed around the county:

- Three on Gardner Road (63110): Mile Post 0.105, Mile Post 0.934, Mile Post 1.05
- Two signs on Cook Road (63000): Mile Post 2.368, Mile Post 2.84

Radius Postcards—Sedro-Woolley Protected Property

Sarah discussed the postcard created to announce the recently protected 267 acres of farmland in Sedro-Woolley (FLP-254). She shared the postcard content with the group for feedback. The cards will be mailed to selected neighboring properties in a radius around the protected farmland. The landowner has viewed and okayed the postcard, as will be done for any of these “newly protected farmland” postcards.

Monitoring Updates

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

Member Updates

Margery shared an article talking about young people moving to rural areas, “[In tiny rural towns, young entrepreneurs are using food to revitalize communities](#)” (FastCompany, May 26, 2025). The article lede reads: *Rural food startups may be leveraging the social capital aligned with the legacy of agriculture in rural America—and renewing interest in craft and local foods.*

Sarah made mention of more ag in the news:

1. [Skagit County protected 460 acres of farmland in 2024](#) (Skagit Valley Herald, May 16, 2025)
2. [Dairy farmers brace for ‘tough’ year as Darigold cuts milk payments. Many Whatcom, Skagit farmers affected; new processing facility behind the reduction](#) (Cascadia Daily News, May 13, 2025)
3. [Family farms get added protections with new agritourism bill](#) (CDN, April 22, 2025)

The group discussed House Bill 1261, which allows for some agritourism activities to take place in open space agricultural land without risk of being removed from open space classification. According to the [April 22 CDN article](#) (“Family farms get added protections with new agritourism bill”), HB 1261 is slated to take effect in late July 2025.

“The bill will provide tax relief for farmers who engage in agritourism when it uses less than 20% of the farmland. With Gov. Bob Ferguson’s signing of House Bill 1261 into law Tuesday, April 22, farmers who engage in agritourism will now be protected from losing their eligibility for a special property tax relief program called Open Space.” [Link to HB 1261](#).

Committee Reports

Small Heritage Farms’ Ag Land Protection: (FLP Enrollment Criteria Review & Recommendations)

The group discussed the [survey results](#) on the Small Heritage Farms Protection Survey, which closed on April 30 with 101 participants. Seventy percent of the respondents consider themselves farmers. Seventy-five percent of respondents expressed interest in a program that protects their small farm.

Guest Speaker

Kellie Gillingham, Department of Ecology

The Washington State Department of Ecology Kellie Gillingham, Water Master, Northwest Region, presented on how water use relates to agricultural purposes in Skagit County. The discussion and interest regarding water rights specific to agriculture lands in Skagit County:

- Transfer of water rights on ag land, how does it work

- How and why rights are transferred and extinguished
- Historic/Current status of farmers on ag land rotating water rights seasonally

The water adjudication process determines whether each water right on a source is legal, how much water can be used, and its priority during water shortages. Currently a water adjudication process is occurring in the region, where about 98% of the water users involved in the process live in Whatcom County. However, 536 residents in north Skagit County, including those in the Chuckanuts and the area north of Hamilton, are in the Nooksack basin and will receive adjudication claimant forms.

Financial Summary

The financial summary is updated for June 2025 and reflects easement properties closed and recorded.

Administrative

CFAB 2025 Meeting Dates

~~July 8 (enx)~~

September 9

November 18 (3rd Tues)

~~August 12 (enx)~~

October 14

December 9

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 AM