

**CP AMENDMENT PROPOSAL:**

- Adopt a no loss of farmland policy in Skagit County for the Ag-NRL zone.
- Consider additional administrative changes to strengthen farmland protection and the FLP.
- Re-visit the Ag-Reserve zoning and evaluate the benefits and costs of reinstating the zone.

**REASON/JUSTIFICATION:** The BOCC has not considered or adopted additional measures that would ensure the future availability of farmland in Skagit County. If we do not strengthen existing protections, stop conversions to other uses and adopt additional policies and programs, Skagit County farmland could disappear, much like farmland in King County.

**DISCUSSION:**

The Ag Advisory Committee recommended some years ago a no loss of farmland policy to the BOCC. BOCC has not yet adopted such policy, nor has the CP, policies or codes changed to reflect such policy.

Skagit County's economy is largely driven by agricultural activities, including crop production, value-added food processing, food packaging, processing and distribution as well as services supporting these activities. With approximately 90,000 acres zoned Agriculture – Natural Resource Lands (Ag-NRL) and another 56,000 acres in various rural zones used for agriculture, the conversion of farmland to other uses impacts more than just the loss of the acreage from food production.

We urge Skagit County to adopt additional policies, code and administrative rules to stop all loss of farmland, for any reason, in Skagit County.

**STRENGTHEN FARMLAND PRESERVATION BY CREATING DISINCENTIVES FOR CONVERSION**

- Create standards for conversion of farmland that must be met before permits are granted, similar to building standards for development.
- Consider a moratorium on conversions until a report on total acres converted can be created.
- Identify and designate a Food Production Security Zone or a Food Production District overlay that does not allow conversion of farm soils to other uses.

**TRACK CONVERSIONS OF FARMLAND AND ESTIMATE VALUE LOSS**

- Create a historical and ongoing database of farmland conversions and loss per acre on an annual basis.

**USE THE COLLECTED DATA TO IMPLEMENT POLICIES FOR ADDITIONAL PROTECTION**

- Add additional question(s) about conversion to SEPA and development applications.
- Place a moratorium on conversion of any land being used for food, fiber and/or seed production
- Create additional policy, code and permit requirement so that conversion projects do not permanently impair the land for agricultural uses.
- Revise the county policies and codes to limit the percentage of coverage of farmland by agricultural structures.
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**INCREASE PUBLIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE FLP**

- Distribute annual information on FLP progress and requests for contributions to the FLP to the public.



- Add a link to a contribution site like Network for Good to the County website.
- Distribute FLP information and contribution forms to the public from every county department, schools, etc.

