

Planning Commission Workshop: Ag-Critical Areas Ordinance

Possible Revisions to Skagit County's Critical Areas Ordinance for Ongoing Agriculture
Commissioners Hearing Room · 1800 Continental Place · Mount Vernon · August 23 · 6pm

Background

Washington counties are required to designate and protect critical areas, such as streams. While other counties protect critical areas using mandatory buffers along streams where agriculture is not allowed, Skagit County instead requires farmers to "not harm or degrade" critical areas, and to comply with specific Watercourse Protection Measures.

Although Skagit County has spent years and millions of dollars defending its approach, Skagit County's approach is not yet compliant with state law. In 2007, the state Supreme Court ruled that Skagit County need only "protect" and not "enhance" critical areas. But it also confirmed that the County's monitoring and adaptive management program lacks critical details.

For the last four years, agricultural, environmental, and tribal representatives have worked on a new approach to critical areas protection on agricultural lands that the Legislature recently adopted. Skagit County can now opt into a Voluntary Stewardship Program in place of the prior requirement to protect critical areas on farmland through development regulations.

Workshop

The Board of Commissioners recently decided to consider enrolling in the Voluntary Stewardship Program. Enrollment may include changes to the current critical areas ordinance for agriculture, including modifications to the Watercourse Protection Measures requirements and the County's monitoring program.

The Planning Commission will hold a public workshop to discuss enrollment and related code changes. Although there will be other opportunities to participate, please attend to get your input in early!

for more info, and to track this project's progress, please visit www.skagitcounty.net/agcao
or email Senior Planner Betsy Stevenson at agcao@co.skagit.wa.us



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Upcoming Workshop for Ag Critical Areas Ordinance