



SKAGIT COUNTY AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY BOARD

**1800 Continental Place
Mount Vernon, WA 98273
Phone (360) 336-3303
Fax (360) 336-9478**



November 17, 2011

Skagit County Board of Commissioners
1800 Continental Place
Mount Vernon, WA 98273

Subject: 2011 Comprehensive Plan Amendments

Dear Commissioners,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed Comprehensive Plan Amendments. On November 9, 2011 the Agricultural Advisory Board voted unanimously to recommend that PL11-0239 and PL11-0249 not be docketed.

PL11-0239 is a small 5.5 acre parcel on the edge of the Ag-NRL zone. The property owner states its zoning designation should be changed because "it hasn't been used for agriculture, and is unsuitable for commercial agricultural use because of its small size, irregular shape, inclusion in the Skagit Beach community, poor soils and lack of access for farm equipment and operations." The Agricultural Advisory Board contends that size and shape have little to do with a parcels value as farm land and that these small parcels are at the highest risk of conversion. There are many small operations that successfully farm small and odd shaped parcels. WSU extension currently facilitates a program called Viva Farms which specifically teaches small acreage farming. There is a great need for small parcels of land that these farmers can operate on and produce local food. Planning and Development Services recognizes the significance of this proposal. "If the re-designation is approved, it could open the door to many future proposals to re-designate smaller parcels on the edge of Ag-NRL with a potentially significant cumulative impact." Allowing this parcel to be re-designated from Ag-NRL to residential could set a precedent that will be detrimental to the future of agriculture in Skagit County.

PL11-0249 is a larger 47 acre parcel that has been proposed to change to NRI from Ag-NRL. The applicant claims "the property has been proven to be non-viable for the zoned use of Ag-NRL. This site cannot be farmed due to salt water intrusion." Why is this land not viable farmland now? It was viable farmland in the past. Not maintaining the drainage infrastructure and allowing land to go fallow should not be a reason to rezone farmland to a non-agricultural use. There are more appropriate locations available for the types of activities that are proposed for this property. Allowing this proposal to move forward could set another precedent that will negatively affect Skagit County agriculture.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nels Lagerlund".

Nels Lagerlund
Chairman Agricultural Advisory Board

Skagit County Agricultural Advisory Board Members:

Nels Lagerlund (Chair), Mike Hulbert (Vice Chair), Murray Benjamin, Jim Carstens, Randy Good, Michael Hughes, Kraig Knutzen, , Greg Lee, Bill McMoran, Kim Mower, Nate Youngquist, Lyle Wesen, Carly Ruacho, Ex-Officio, Planning & Development Services, Don McMoran, WSU Extension.