

# PROPOSED Community Advisory Board Position on Supporting the Creation of a Permanent Agritourism Advisory Board

## Addressing the Needs of a Growing Industry and Building Harmonious Relationships

As members of the Community Advisory Board for Agritourism, we commend the efforts to address the remand questions from the Skagit County Commissioners regarding the intersection of farming and agritourism. These discussions reflect the vital importance of agritourism in Skagit County, an industry that not only bolsters the local economy but also celebrates the heritage, culture, and agricultural legacy of our community. However, it has become increasingly evident that the complexities surrounding agritourism require ongoing representation, dialogue, and resolution. In light of this, we strongly support the creation of a permanent advisory board to address agritourism issues in Skagit County.

## The Growth of Agritourism in Skagit County

Agritourism in Skagit County has experienced significant growth in recent years, drawing visitors who seek to engage with the region's vibrant agricultural landscape. From farm-to-table experiences and U-pick farms to seasonal festivals and educational tours, agritourism has become a cornerstone of the county's tourism offerings. This growth not only benefits individual farmers and agritourism operators but also provides a ripple effect, supporting local businesses, enhancing community branding, and fostering economic sustainability.

However, as the agritourism industry expands, so too do the challenges associated with balancing the interests of farmers, agritourism operators, and the community at large. Issues such as land use conflicts, zoning regulations, traffic management, and noise concerns highlight the need for a structured, ongoing platform to address these matters collaboratively.

## Why a Permanent Advisory Board is Essential

The formation of a permanent agritourism advisory board would provide several critical benefits:

## 1. Facilitating Constructive Dialogue

A permanent advisory board would serve as a neutral platform where farmers, agritourism operators, community members, and local officials can come together to discuss challenges and opportunities. By fostering open and respectful communication, the board can help mitigate tensions and build lasting relationships.

## 2. Providing Consistent Representation

Agritourism-related issues are multifaceted and evolving. A temporary committee, while valuable, cannot fully address the long-term and dynamic nature of these challenges. A permanent advisory board would ensure that agritourism has a dedicated voice within the county's decision-making processes, reflecting the industry's ongoing needs and priorities.

## 3. Promoting Sustainable Practices

With a focus on sustainability, the advisory board could develop guidelines and best practices that benefit both farmers and agritourism operators. This would help ensure that growth in the agritourism sector does not compromise agricultural productivity or environmental integrity, preserving Skagit County's character for future generations.

## 4. Enhancing Policy Recommendations

The advisory board could provide informed, balanced, and research-based policy recommendations to the Skagit County Commissioners. By integrating diverse perspectives, the board would support decision-making that aligns with the county's vision for economic development, cultural preservation, and land stewardship.

## Conclusion

As the agritourism industry in Skagit County continues to grow, so too will the challenges and opportunities it presents. The creation of a permanent agritourism advisory board is not merely a response to current issues but a proactive step toward fostering a collaborative, sustainable, and prosperous future for all stakeholders. This board would serve as a cornerstone for dialogue, representation, and policy guidance, ensuring that agritourism remains a harmonious and thriving part of Skagit County's identity.

We urge the Skagit County Commissioners to recognize the enduring importance of this initiative and to take action in establishing a permanent advisory board. Together, we can build a framework that balances growth with preservation and brings lasting benefits to our farmers, agritourism operators, and the community as a whole.