

Skagit County 2025 Agritourism - Public Comment Summary Matrix

Disclaimer: Skagit County has reviewed all public comments submitted regarding the proposed Agritourism code amendments. The table below provides a high-level summary of the comments received and includes additional context and explanations to help inform the Planning Commission as they evaluate comments and make a recommendation to the Skagit County Board of County Commissioners. This summary is provided for informational purposes only and does not represent final decisions or policy actions.

Comment #	Comment Summary	Response
1	Recommends definitions for the words “recreation” and “enjoyment” so that agritourism activities won’t evolve into an event or music venue.	SCC 14.13.100(2)(d) proposes prohibiting regularly occurring celebratory gatherings, weddings, parties, or similar uses that cause the property to act as an a limited event venue or event venue.
1	Concerns that people may park their cars in the right-of-way.	SCC 14.18.407(3)(a)(vi) prohibits parking in the right-of-way and requires that proposed parking plans meet all the parking requirements in Skagit County Code.
1	Question asking what steps can be taken to ensure that the \$500 revenue per acre is presented in accordance with generally accepted financial practices.	Farmers interested in hosting agritourism activities will be required to demonstrate that the farm has generated an average gross income of at least \$500 per year over the previous three years. Farm income can be evidenced by IRS federal form Schedule F line 2 or line 37, a sworn affidavit or declaration, or some other means that can be verified by the director.
1, 18	Concerns that some farmers may advertise an Agritourism event and attendance may exceed the limits established in code or in permit conditions.	PDS is proposing a three-tier system for Agritourism activities. Agritourism operators that anticipate holding agritourism events without a guest limit should apply for a Hearing Examiner Special Use permit for an Agritourism 3 use. Agritourism 3 uses do not have guest limits and is not limited by days of operation, but may be conditioned based on potential impacts.
1	Question asking how traffic impacts from Agritourism activities will be addressed.	Agritourism uses must demonstrate concurrency with the County road segment and road intersection level of service standards in SCC 14.62.060. State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) mitigating conditions can also address traffic impacts when needed.

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2	Concerns that the proposed amendments fail to address non-commercial activities on farmlands.	The proposed agritourism code addresses both commercial and non-commercial agritourism activities. The proposed Agritourism amendments and SCC 9.08 are not intended to capture private events.
2, 8	Comments suggesting that SCC 9.08 – Outdoor Public Musical Entertainments, Amusements, should be updated with more clarity that specifies what kind of events are allowed.	Skagit County PDS is planning to update SCC 9.08 in a future update.
2	Concern that proposed Agritourism code creates ambiguity about the number of days allowed for Tulip Festival activities.	The proposed amendments do not require farms to officially register with the Skagit Valley Tulip Festival to qualify for extended operating periods. Between March 15 and May 15, activities that are associated with the Skagit Valley Tulip Festival may run for 30 consecutive-days in addition to the allowed days specified below for Agritourism 1, 2, and 3. Farms that would like extended operating periods that are not associated with the Skagit County Tulip Festival may apply for a Hearing Examiner Special Use permit for an Agritourism 3 use, which does limits the number of days, as conditioned by the permit. The intent of the language is to allow flexibility for those operators that would like to participate in the Skagit Valley Tulip Festival. The draft code does not provide endorsement, limitations, or guidance on the operation of the Skagit Valley Tulip Festival.
3, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 19	Comments raising concerns that proposed amendments are too restrictive and should allow more tourism uses, such as wedding venues, in order to bring more profit to farms.	Natural Resource Lands are protected under the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) and Skagit County's Comprehensive Plan. Limiting Agritourism activities to those directly related to farming, preventing the conversion of farmland, and establishing regulations to minimize impacts on adjacent farms are intended to maintain consistency with the GMA and the County's Comprehensive Plan. The County is proposing to allow limited event venues in zones outside of those designated as Natural Resource Lands.

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4, 16	Comments regarding how the County will enforce Agritourism code requirements and permit conditions.	Skagit County retains the authority to perform ongoing monitoring and evaluation of compliance with established conditions of approval per SCC 14.18.407. Agritourism special use permits are subject to SCC 14.51.070 and can be revoked if applicant fails to meet conditions of the special use permit, including compliance with any requirement set forth in SCC 14.18.407. Skagit County also has a code enforcement team which investigates code compliance complaints including any Agritourism Special Use Permit violations.
4	Question asking how Agritourism uses affect neighboring farmers?	The proposed limitations on Agritourism uses and performance standards (SCC 14.18.407(3)(a)) are intended to mitigate impacts from lighting, noise, traffic, and explicitly states that Agritourism activities cannot unduly interfere with surrounding farming operations and practices.
7, 13	Comments concerned that the proposed three-tier system (Agritourism 1-3) appear to be arbitrary numerical thresholds.	The guest limits and maximum days allowed for each Agritourism type were chosen with the following reasoning: Agritourism 1 • The 50-person limit is consistent with the occupant load for small assembly spaces in the International Building Code (IBC) 303.1.2. • The 10-day limit allows for some small Agritourism activities without going through the Special Use Permitting process. Agritourism 2 • A 100-person limit is double that of Agritourism 1 and is the occupant limit for several Assembly groups in the IBC. • 24 days is the current limit for Temporary Events (Limited Event Venues).

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		Agritourism 3 Limits for Agritourism 3 uses may be established as permit conditions based on the anticipated impacts of the proposed activity. Depending on the specific project proposal, a Hearing Examiner Special Use Permit may authorize a greater number of event days and guests than would allowed under an Agritourism 1 and 2 use.
7	Concerns that the proposed amendments eliminate economically viable use of agricultural property without serving compelling public interests.	The purpose of the Agricultural—Natural Resource Lands district is to provide land for continued farming activities, conserve agricultural land, and reaffirm agricultural use, activities and operations as the primary use of the district. Nonagricultural uses are allowed only as accessory uses to the primary use of the land for agricultural purposes. The intent of the proposed code is to allow Agritourism activities on ongoing farms as long as they do not result in the permanent conversion of farmland, result in the interference of surrounding farm operations, and do not result in other impacts listed in SCC 14.18.407(3)(a). The proposed amendments do prohibit regularly occurring celebratory gatherings, weddings, parties, or similar uses that cause the property to act as an a limited event venue or event venue and restaurants as those uses do not related directly to agriculture.
7	Concern that the amendments require farms to officially register with the Skagit Valley Tulip Festival to qualify for extended operating periods during March 15-May 15.	The proposed amendments do not require farms to officially register with the Skagit Valley Tulip Festival to qualify for extended operating periods. Between March 15 and May 15, activities that are associated with the Skagit Valley Tulip Festival may run for 30 consecutive-days in addition to the allowed days specified below for Agritourism 1, 2, and 3. Farms that would like extended operating periods that are not associated with the Skagit County Tulip Festival may apply for a Hearing Examiner Special Use permit for an Agritourism 3 use, which does limits the number of days, as conditioned by the permit. The draft code does

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		not provide endorsement, limitations, or guidance on the operation of the Skagit Valley Tulip Festival.
7	Miscellaneous suggested amendments by commenter.	Staff developed the proposed amendments by reviewing recommendations from the Agritourism Community Advisory Group and the Agricultural Advisory Board and reviewed the amendments for consistency with the Skagit County Comprehensive Plan, Washington State Growth Management Act, and applicable Growth Management Hearings Board cases.
13, 17	Comments suggesting broadening the Agritourism definition to cover operators and activities on leased agricultural land.	The proposed code amendments do not prohibit Agritourism activities on leased agricultural land, provided the agricultural operator is conducting the Agritourism operation.
13	Comment advocating for allowance of seasonal use of barns or farm structures for Agritourism activities.	Barns and farm structures would be allowed for hosting Agritourism activities. Depending on the use and occupancy levels, upgrades may be required to meet building and fire code requirements.
14, 16	Comments concerned about allowing Agritourism activities in rural and natural resource lands and whether the proposed amendments are consistent with the Growth Management Act and the King Co, et. AL. v. Friends of Sammamish Valley State Supreme Court case.	Staff developed the proposed amendments by reviewing recommendations from the Agritourism Community Advisory Group and the Agricultural Advisory Board and reviewed the amendments for consistency with the Skagit County Comprehensive Plan, Washington State Growth Management Act, and applicable Growth Management Hearings Board cases.
15	Concerns that the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) environmental review was inadequate, specifically regarding water resources, critical areas, designated fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas, and the protection of ESA-listed species.	SCC 14.24 – Critical Areas Ordinance and SCC Title 12 – Health, Welfare, and Sanitation address and mitigate potential impacts to water resources, critical areas, designated fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas, and the protection of ESA-listed species, which was addressed in the SEPA Environmental Checklist.

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17	Concerns that the proposed three-tier system (Agritourism 1-3) may be overly restrictive.	The three-tier system requires different levels of permitting depending on the number of guests or days needed to accommodate the agritourism activities. Limits for Agritourism 3 uses may be established as permit conditions based on the anticipated impacts of the proposed activity. Depending on the specific project proposal, a Hearing Examiner Special Use Permit may authorize a greater number of event days and guests than would be allowed under an Agritourism 1 and 2 use.
18	Concerns that granting Agritourism operators an additional 30 days to host activities associated with the Tulip Festival could lead to inequities.	Between March 15 and May 15, activities that are associated with the Skagit Valley Tulip Festival may run for 30 consecutive-days in addition to the allowed days specified below for Agritourism 1, 2, and 3. Farms that would like extended operating periods that are not associated with the Skagit County Tulip Festival may apply for a Hearing Examiner Special Use permit for an Agritourism 3 use, which does limit the number of days, as conditioned by the permit.
Comments in Support of Existing Agritourism Business	Multiple comments were received in support of one ongoing Agritourism business.	This business is pursuing compliance through a Voluntary Compliance Agreement with Skagit County.