



Planning & Development Services

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Memorandum: Agritourism Code Amendments

To: Board of County Commissioners
From: Jack Moore, Director
Robby Eckroth, Senior Planner
Date: March 17, 2026
Re: Agritourism Code Amendments and Planning Commission Recommendation

Planning and Development Services Recommendation

Planning and Development Services recommends **approval** of the proposed agritourism amendments dated February 18, 2026.

Summary

Planning and Development Services (PDS) is providing this memorandum in advance of the March 24, 2026 work session regarding the Department's proposed agritourism code amendments. The final draft reflects input from the Planning Commission, Agricultural Advisory Board, and Agritourism Community Advisory Group. This memo outlines the proposed amendments and summarizes the additional revisions PDS has incorporated in the final draft in response to the Planning Commission's recommendations.

The following exhibits supplement this memo:

- **Exhibit A – February 18, 2026 Proposed Agritourism Code Amendments.** The February 18, 2026 draft includes additional revisions to the draft that was reviewed by the Planning Commission. An overview of the amendments are detailed in the next section of this memo. Additional amendments based on Planning Commission recommendations are detailed in the *Planning Commission Recommendation* section of this memo.
- **Exhibit B – Planning Commission Recorded Motion and Recommendation.** Recommendation based on the September 23, 2025 draft; summary and analysis are included in this memo.
- **Exhibit C – Agricultural Advisory Board Recommendation.** Recommendation on an earlier draft of the amendments which helped form the September 23, 2025 draft.
- **Exhibit D – Community Advisory Group Summary and Recommendation.** Overview of the group formed following the Board's June 2024 remand ([Resolution #R20240132](#)), including membership, meeting summaries, and its July 29, 2025 recommendations.
- **Exhibit E – Public Comments Summary and Response Matrix, and Compiled Public Comments.**
- **Exhibit F – Agritourism Policy Timeline.** Summary of key actions leading up to 2025.

Overview of Amendments

The intent of the proposed amendments is to allow agritourism activities in areas zoned Agricultural – Natural Resource Lands and in other zones that allow agricultural production. The amendments are intended to allow farm owners and operators to conduct agritourism activities as a secondary use to agriculture, providing opportunities for supplemental income while preserving agricultural land and minimizing potential impacts on surrounding properties.

The proposed agritourism amendments provide a clear definition of agritourism. The definition has been expanded upon following the Planning Commission’s recommendation to clarify that agritourism activities must be secondary and related to an existing agricultural use.

The amendments set general limits and performance standards to reduce impacts from lighting, noise, traffic, access, and parking. Agritourism must remain secondary to and directly tied to active agriculture, without permanently converting farmland or disrupting nearby farming. The amendments also provide enforcement authority, allowing PDS to monitor compliance and revoke special use permits for violations of approval conditions or Skagit County Code.

Agritourism uses are proposed to be allowed in the following zones:

- Agricultural – Natural Resource Lands (Ag-NRL)
- Rural Resource – Natural Resource Lands (RRC-NRL)
- Rural Reserve (RRv)
- Rural Intermediate (RI)

The code includes **three tiers of agritourism uses**, based on intensity and required level of review:

Agritourism Type	Max Number of Guests Allowed	Max Number of Days Allowed
Agritourism 1 (Permitted Use)	50	10
Agritourism 2 (Administrative Special Use)	100	35 ¹
Agritourism 3 (Hearing Examiner Special Use)	As Conditioned*	As Conditioned*

The maximum number of guests and number of days allowed for an Agritourism 3 use will be based on the limits established in the conditions of approval of the Hearing Examiner Special Use Permit. The limits could be based on the number of agritourism activities by the applicant, the property size and location, and could be used to mitigate impacts to roads and neighboring properties.

¹ Planning and Development Services has revised this number from 24 days of agritourism activities allowed to 35 days. More discussion can be found in the section below under Planning Commission Recommendation #3.

Applicants seeking approval for Agritourism 2 or 3 operations are required to meet the following additional criteria:

- **Verification of Ongoing Agricultural Use.** To ensure that agritourism remains a secondary use, the primary agricultural operation must have generated a gross income of at least \$500 per acre per year over the previous three years. Income must be verified by the Planning and Development Services (PDS) Director.
- **Agritourism 3 uses may not include farm-to-table activities.** This restriction is intended to prevent such uses from operating as de facto restaurants, particularly since Agritourism 3 allows greater flexibility in guest capacity and number of operating days.
- **Self-Certification.** The applicant of an Agritourism 2 and 3 use must comply with the annual self-certification requirements identified in SCC 14.51.080.
- **Agreement Required for Agritourism 2 and 3.** Prior to any application for an Agritourism 2 or 3 being granted, the applicant must sign an agreement, on a form provided by the Director, agreeing that they will comply with all the requirements of SCC 14.18.407.

Additional proposed changes include:

- **Renaming “Temporary Use Events” to “Limited Event Venues”.** PDS proposes this change because “Temporary Use Events” allows up to 24 events per year without annual permit expiration or renewal, making “temporary” misleading. The proposed term “Limited Event Venues” better reflects their nature and frequency. The amendments also clarify that events at permitted uses—such as churches, restaurants, grange halls, community centers, and parks—are not regulated as limited event venues.
- **Clarifying Permitted Single Events Across All Zones.** The proposal specifies that Outdoor Public Musical, Entertainment, Amusement, and Assembly Events (Single Events), as defined in SCC 9.08, are permitted in all zones. SCC 9.08 has been part of the Skagit County Code since 1970. This amendment connects Title 14 with SCC 9.08 by explicitly stating that such single events are allowed countywide. PDS plans to update SCC 9.08 later this year.
- **Prohibiting Certain Uses in the Agricultural-NRL Zone.** The proposal would prohibit Limited Event Venues, restaurants, music venues, concerts, and regularly occurring celebratory gatherings (e.g., weddings) in the Agricultural-Natural Resource Lands zone.
- **Removing Existing Tourism Language from Agricultural Accessory Uses.** The amendment removes the phrase “activities associated with tourism that promote local agriculture...” from the definition of Agricultural Accessory Use, as this concept is now replaced with the new agritourism definition and standards.

Planning Commission Recommendation

Following a series of work sessions on the proposed agritourism code amendments, the Planning Commission held a public comment period from September 25, 2025 to October 16, 2025 and held a public hearing on October 14, 2025. Following the closure of the public record, the Planning Commission held deliberations meetings on November 18, 2025 and January 27, 2026.

On January 27, 2026, the Planning Commission recommended approval of PDS's recommended agritourism amendments, with four recommended amendments and a recommendation to do further review of Limited Event Venues in rural areas. Below is a summary of the Planning Commission's recommended changes and PDS's response to each change which is included in the February 18, 2026 draft.

Planning Commission Recommendation #1

The Planning Commission recommends amending SCC 14.18.407(1)(a) to clarify that agritourism activities must be secondary to, and supportive of, agricultural production. PDS supports the intent of the Planning Commission's proposed revisions and recommends the following definition, which is more concise and consistent with the language in the proposed agritourism performance standards contained in SCC 14.18.407(3)(a).

Agritourism provides opportunities for working farms and ranches to preserve and promote Skagit County's agricultural lands. Agritourism allows for educational and experiential activities that are related to, and supportive of, agricultural production. Agritourism helps agricultural producers keep working lands in production by diversifying and enhancing their income. Agritourism activities must be secondary and related to an existing agricultural use.

Planning Commission Recommendation #2

The Planning Commission recommends requiring Agritourism 1 uses to obtain an Administrative Special Use Permit rather than allowing them as outright permitted uses. The Planning Commission's concern was that, if classified as permitted uses, the County would have no formal mechanism to review proposals to ensure compliance with the agritourism code or to inform operators of applicable limitations and standards. At the same time, the Planning Commission acknowledged that requiring an Administrative Special Use Permit for all Agritourism 1 uses could be costly and time-consuming, as it involves public notice and comprehensive County review which could potentially create barriers for operators seeking to host minor activities such as school field trips.

PDS recommends retaining Agritourism 1 uses as permitted uses, subject to the requirement that the operator sign an agreement affirming compliance with all applicable provisions of the agritourism code.

Planning Commission Recommendation #3

The Planning Commission recommends removing SCC 14.18.407(3)(a)(x), which would have allowed activities associated with the Skagit Valley Tulip Festival to operate for up to 30 consecutive days between March 15 and May 15, in addition to the days otherwise permitted for Agritourism 1, 2, and 3 uses.

Several Planning Commissioners and public commentors expressed concern that granting additional operating days exclusively to activities associated with the Skagit Valley Tulip Festival could create inequities and be perceived as unfair to other agricultural festivals within the County.

PDS recommends removing this proposed code section. To provide greater flexibility while maintaining fairness, PDS also recommends increasing the number of allowed days for Agritourism 2 uses from 24 to 35 days. This adjustment would enable operators to participate in a variety of festivals and events, while preserving opportunities to host other agritourism activities throughout the year.

Planning Commission Recommendation #4

The Planning Commission recommends adding music venues and concerts to the list of prohibited uses under SCC 14.13.100(2)(d) for the Agricultural-Natural Resources Zone. PDS also recommends this amendment.

Planning Commission Recommendation #5

The Planning Commission recommends that PDS return the Limited Event Venue use to the Commission for further review and consideration, including the potential removal of the use from rural zones. PDS has not observed significant issues associated with permitted Limited Event Venues that would suggest substantial adverse impacts to rural residences in Skagit County. PDS will be working on amendments to SCC 9.08 – Outdoor Public Music Entertainments, Amusements, and Assemblies and intends to receive the Planning Commission’s input on those amendments.