



**SKAGIT COUNTY
AGRICULTURAL
ADVISORY BOARD**
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***"Honoring our past,
sustaining our
future, where Skagit
farms are the pride
of the community."***

March 20, 2009

SKAGIT COUNTY
PERMIT CNTR.

MAR 20 2009

RECEIVED

County Commissioners
1400 Continental Place, Suite 200
Mt. Vernon, WA 98273

RE: Proposed Skagit UGA Open Space Plan/Strategy

Dear Commissioners:

This project was in response to a directive from the Growth Management Hearings Board to Skagit County to develop an approach to preventing the physical merger of UGAs -- between Mt. Vernon, Burlington and Sedro-Woolley presumably -- and to include greenbelt and open space areas within UGAs.

This proposal neglects to address either issue. And, at a time when we are facing a world economic depression, it proposes tax increases for recreational and habitat projects well outside the scope of the directive.

Skagit County ranks in the upper percentile of open space in the United States, with close to 60% of the land permanently set aside in reserves. Skagit does not lack open space here but does lack a formal strategy to prevent urban areas from merging into an I5 mini-megalopolis -- maybe called Mount Sedroton or Mount Burliwoolley. Skagit also lacks open space planning standards for new development within UGAs to assure that greenbelts and open space areas are retained for commercial and residential areas, as required by the Growth Management Act.

Should this recreational funding proposal fail to pass muster with the Planning Commission and/or Board of County Commissioners, and a tax increase is not approved by the public, Skagit will still be out of compliance.

The solution to compliance is straightforward:

- Develop a standard that says, "Urban Growth Areas shall not be closer than x feet/miles from another UGA."
- Develop a standard that says, "New development within a UGA shall include a greenbelt or open space buffer toward the rural side of the UGA, but contained within the UGA."

Skagit County Agricultural Advisory Board Members: Kim Mower (Chair), Mike Hulbert (Vice Chair), Murray Benjamin, Randy Good, Bob Hughes, Kraig Knutzen, Nels Lagerlund, Greg Lee, Ann Marie Lohman, Bill McMoran, John Vendeland, Lyle Wesen, Carly Ruacho, Ex-Officio, Planning & Development Services, Don McMoran, WSU Extension.

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- In addition, the County could develop a standard for open space and recreational facilities based upon residential density that is required to be provided with new development within the UGA that will be consistent with the city it is attached to.

The Agricultural Advisory Board submitted comments to the Planning Department in August of 2008 suggesting these same solutions. They were not included in the changes made to the plan. We hope that the Planning Commission will take our simple suggestions more seriously.

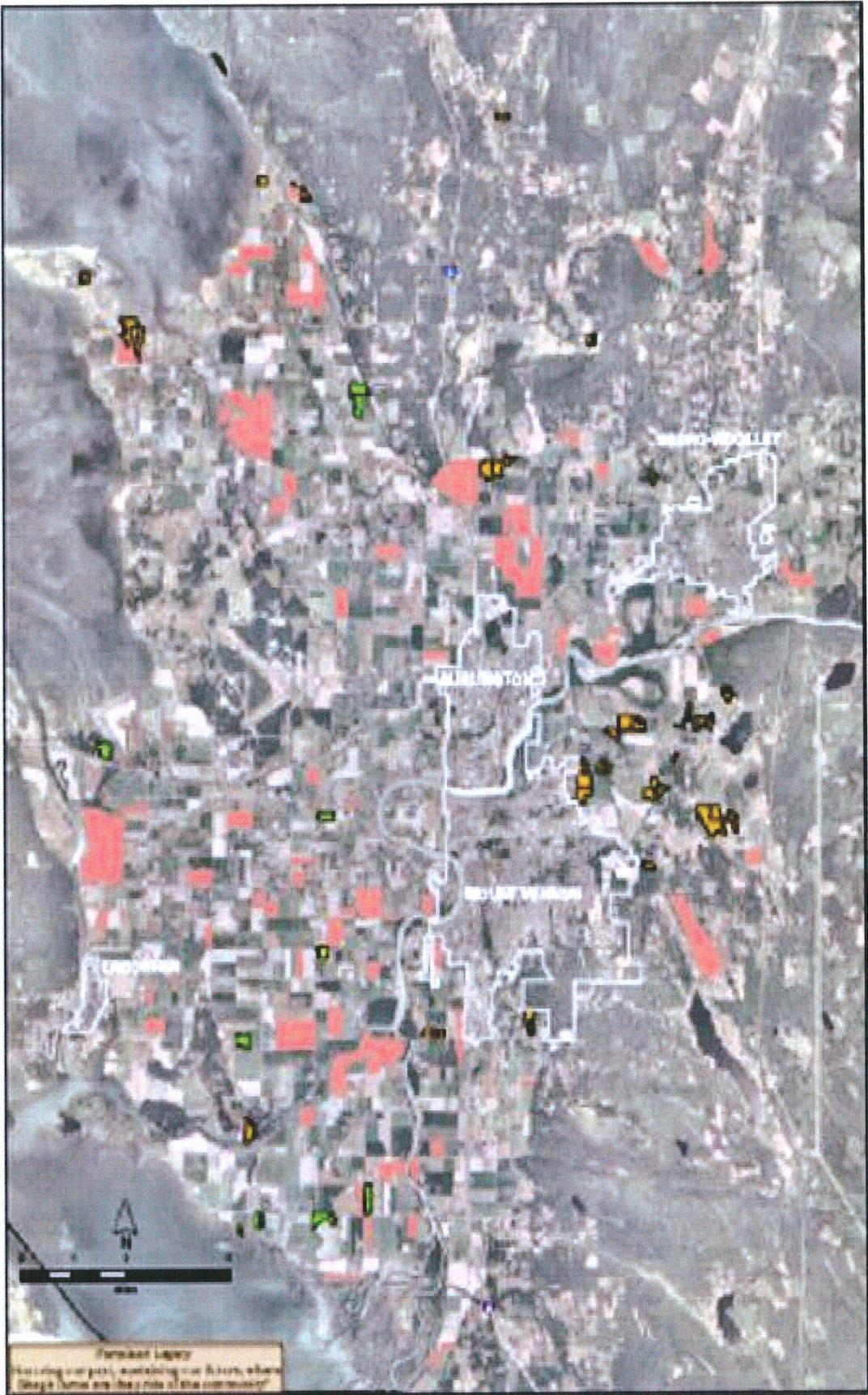
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Hulbert", written in a cursive style.

Mike Hulbert
Vice Chair, Agricultural Advisory Board

ATTACHMENTS:

Map: Protected Farmland in Western Skagit County
"Mapping riparian land use within agricultural zones: A case study in Skagit County"



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 things have and are the life of the community.

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