

Resolution No. \_\_\_\_\_

**A Resolution Establishing the  
Skagit County Agricultural Advisory Board**

**Whereas**, agriculture has been a way of life in Skagit County for generations. Skagit County farmland is important for its economic, environmental, recreational, and cultural values. Protecting the agricultural land base and preserving its farmers is of community wide interest; and

**Whereas**, agriculture contributes to the local economy directly through agricultural operations and products and indirectly through secondary industries and tourism. Skagit County farmers produced more than \$230 million worth of crops in 1998. The potato industry alone generated more than \$50 million in annual farmgate income. Sixty-six farms produced \$58 million worth of milk, annually; and livestock, eggs and fryers earn farmers about \$16 million each year (Washington State University, Cooperative Extension Service). Major crops produced in Skagit County include berries, vegetables and seed crops, in addition to flowers and bulbs. The bulb industry alone generates around \$20 million in annual gross income (Washington Bulb Company). Famous for its bulbs and flowers, Skagit Valley's Tulip Festival draws nearly one-half million visitors each spring to view the tulips in bloom. The festival is a catalyst for tourism in the region, by annually bringing in more than \$14 million out-of-County dollars to the local economy (Skagit Valley Tulip Festival); and

**Whereas**, retaining farmland helps maintain environmental, recreational and cultural values and provides public benefits. Skagit County's agricultural land is home to a variety of wildlife species and fisheries, and offers recreational opportunities (i.e., fishing, hunting and bird watching) and open space amenities. Furthermore, Skagit County's culture, character and lifestyle is influenced by its agricultural heritage; and

**Whereas**, Skagit County's efforts to protect and conserve farmland traces back to the 1960s when land use plans, policies, regulations and programs were first adopted and implemented by the Board of County Commissioners. Today, Skagit County's Comprehensive Plan protects and conserves agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance and seeks to continue their viability now and into the future; and

**Whereas**, Skagit County established a Conservation Futures Property Tax Fund in 1997 for the purpose of purchasing conservation interests for the preservation of farm, agricultural land, and critical areas. Since the creation of this fund over 2,300 acres of farm, agricultural land, and critical areas have been permanently protected; and

**Whereas**, the American Farmland Trust published a *Cost of Community Services, Skagit County, Washington, 1999* study that demonstrated that "the protection of agriculture is crucial to the economic well being of Skagit County." While the study noted that a wide variety of crops are grown in the valley and that agriculture contributes a significant

amount of monies to the local economy on an annual basis it also provided findings that indicated that farm, forest and open land had a positive fiscal impact on Skagit County in 1997. The study concluded that "because of its modest requirement for services, open land created a surplus of revenue for the county. For every dollar of revenue they generated, farm, forest and open land only costs 51 cents. Residential development overall did not pay for itself, requiring \$1.25 in services for every dollar of revenue generated." Farming in Skagit County provides more than just scenic landscapes; it also provides a rural lifestyle that depends on healthy natural resources while creating positive economic investments in the community; and

**Whereas**, Skagit County must continue to meet the challenges of maintaining and further enhancing commercial agriculture, including steps to limit land uses which adversely affect commercial agriculture; prevent or minimize land use conflicts between farming operations and adjacent land uses; ensure necessary infrastructure (i.e., markets, transportation networks, farm worker housing, farm supply industries/stores, and tax incentives) to support agriculture; and, encourage farming practices that balance the needs of the agricultural industry with soil conservation, best management practices and the protection of water quality, fisheries and wildlife; and

**Whereas**, the Comprehensive Plan recommends establishing an *Agricultural Advisory Board* which "should reflect diversity of agriculture and advocate sound agricultural policies and programs for Skagit County" (CP Policy 5A-1.1). The *Agricultural Advisory Board* is to be charged with developing an integrated approach to encourage economic opportunities in the agricultural sector with a focus on production, marketing, processing, and labor opportunities; and

**Whereas**, farmers need to have an active role in land use decisions and in the development and evaluation of policies, regulations and incentives that may significantly affect commercial agriculture. Farmers need the opportunity to communicate and work with their neighbors, community, Skagit County government and others to address the complex and difficult issues associated with maintaining working and viable farms in a constantly changing and challenging economic, cultural, environmental and regulatory climate.

**Now, Therefore be it Resolved**, that the Board of County Commissioners hereby creates an *Agricultural Advisory Board*, hereafter referred to as the AAB, whose membership (affiliations), terms and staff members; powers and duties, and organization are described as follows:

Section 1. Membership, Terms and Ex Officio Members.

A. The AAB shall consist of nine (9) members; each Board of County Commissioner shall have three (3) appointments; and, the members shall serve staggered terms of three (3) years.

B. The voting members of the AAB shall represent the diversity of the agricultural economy, various agricultural operations, and districts of Skagit County. Membership should be representative of farm groups (i.e., Farm Bureau, Cattleman's Association, Dairy Federation, Farm Crops Association, and Skagitonians to Preserve Farmland) and persons with demonstrated knowledge, experience, and interest in one or more of the following agricultural areas: soil and water conservation, farming practices, food and feed processing, wholesale and retail marketing, produce buying, direct marketing, supply, agricultural real estate/land appraisals, and finance.

C. The Skagit County Director of Planning and Permit Center, and the Conservation Futures Program Director; and a Washington State University Cooperative Extension representative shall serve in a staff advisory capacity.

Section 2. Powers and Duties. The AAB shall report and make recommendations to the Skagit County Board of Commissioners and Planning Agency on agricultural plans, policies, and programs, including, but not limited to:

A. Existing and proposed legislation and regulations affecting commercial agriculture;

B. Land uses as they impact agriculture; and

C. Ways to maintain, enhance, and promote agriculture and agricultural products in the region.

The AAB may hold public hearings and sponsor public forums regarding its business and may participate with other governmental agencies, educational institutions, and private/public organizations in the coordination or conduct of its activities.

Section 3. Organization. The AAB shall elect officers and adopt rules of administrative procedures and by-laws to regulate its affairs and conduct business. All AAB business shall be open to the public, is a matter of public records and is subject to the Washington's Public Records Act.

WITNESS OUR HANDS AND THE OFFICIAL SEAL OF OUR OFFICE this  
24<sup>th</sup> day of April, 2002.

**BOARD OF COUNTY  
COMMISSIONERS  
SKAGIT COUNTY, WASHINGTON**



Don Munks  
Don Munks, Chairman

Ted W. Anderson  
Ted W. Anderson, Commissioner

Kenneth A. Dahlstedt  
Kenneth A. Dahlstedt, Commissioner

**ATTEST:**

Joanne Giesbrecht  
Joanne Giesbrecht, Clerk of the Board

**APPROVED AS TO FORM:**

John R. Moffat  
John R. Moffat, Chief Civil Deputy  
Skagit County Prosecutor's Office

**APPROVED AS TO CONTENT:**

Gary R. Christensen  
Gary R. Christensen, Assistant Director  
Planning and Permit Center