



Skagit County Board of Commissioners

Ron Wesen, First District

Peter Browning, Second District

Lisa Janicki, Third District

January 12, 2024

The Honorable Steve Tharinger
314 John L. O'Brien Building
P.O. Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

Re: Port of Skagit Local Capital Projects Fund Request

Dear Chair Tharinger and Committee Members,

The Skagit Board of County Commissioners write to support the Port of Skagit's request for funding for their Granary Expansion Project Phase 1, which includes installation of grain drying and conveyance systems to enable more efficient operations and diversify the functionality of the publicly owned granary.

Grain is an ecologically significant, climate resilient crop grown in the Skagit Valley in rotation to break disease cycles and restore organic matter to the soil. These grains are typically sold into the animal feed market at breakeven prices or a loss, causing farmers often to elect to plow under the grain to receive the soil health benefits without incurring the cost to harvest. Farmers in Skagit Valley stand to benefit from connecting to numerous market channels in the spirits and culinary industries, increasing the value of the crop grown in the field by approximately 200% to 300% over commodity pricing.

Although there is strong demand and premium prices offered for the high-quality grain grown here, Skagit Valley farmers face obstacles in accessing this market due to lack of local grain receiving, drying, and storage capacity. Farmers need greater confidence during harvest time there will be the ability to sell grain at profitable prices. The capability of the Granary to accept local grain with higher moisture content, as well as with germ identity and germination preservation, increases the farmers ability to be profitable within this food system. Increasing the processing through-put of the Granary with automated conveyance would help to immediately address current obstacles.

With this project, the Port of Skagit is expanding its investment in local agriculture and creating new opportunities for Skagit Valley farmers to prosper. Legislative funding support will help ensure this project is completed this year, giving Skagit Valley farmers a chance to be profitable in 2024. Completion of Phase 1 of this project will provide immediate benefits to Skagit Valley farmers, giving them market access for their harvest and stability and predictability for planting crops in 2025.


Thank you for your commitment to supporting Skagit Valley agriculture and investing in the prosperity of our community.

Sincerely,

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


Peter Browning, Chair


Lisa Janicki, Commissioner


Ron Wesen, Commissioner