

Skagit County Agriculture Advisory Board  
Meeting Summary – July 13, 2022  
Commissioners Hearing Room/MS Teams

[Members in Attendance](#)

Terry Sapp                      Justin Hayton  
Kraig Knutzen                Murray Benjamin              Steve Omdal

[Proxy Designations](#)

Kraig Knutzen for Michael Hughes              Terry Sapp for Tim Van Hofwegen  
Steve Omdal for Michael Trafton                Murray Benjamin for Nels Lagerlund

[Members Absent](#)

John Morrison                Steve Wright                      Rachael Ward Sparwasser

[Others in Attendance](#)

Hal Hart, Director Skagit County Planning & Development Services (PDS)  
Kim Adams, Skagit County Planning & Development Services (PDS)  
Will Honea, Skagit County Prosecuting Attorney  
Jenna Friebel, Executive Director, Skagit Drainage and Irrigation District Consortium  
Sarah Stoner, Skagit County Public Works

[Call to Order, Introductions](#)

Kraig Knutzen called the meeting to order at 7:03.

[Approval of Meeting Summary](#)

Murray Benjamin moved to accept the June 8, 2022, Meeting Minutes, Justin Hayton seconded. Motion carried.

[Guest Speaker](#)

**Jenna Friebel, Executive Director, Skagit Drainage and Irrigation District Consortium**

Jenna gave an update of the Water Task Force as well as the Seattle City Light Flood Storage Proposal

- Water Task Force is funded under contract and based on Skagit Hydro model
  - Average year & Dry years
  - Propose management strategies
  - They mostly work with habitat and not temperature, not looking at the lifecycle
  - Climate models for historic flow in the river without hydro-power
  - Fisheries scientists better know what the life stages at what time were in the river
  - Feel like a lot of progress has been made. The Workgroup has met 2-3 times and will have more meetings this fall. Ideas are on the table with Department of Ag, Attorneys, and other groups to have a bigger discussion.
  - Terry Sapp asked what Jenna's place was on the Board with Alan Roozma, what is hoping to be accomplished for stakeholders?
    - Jenna is representing the AG interest and would like to improve water supply for AG. They is a solution needed for purpose of irrigation.
    - In August/September the numbers drop significantly
    - Hoping to help the "below the gage farms"

- Loosing Reach- upriver Ag water needs good studies from the task force
  - Grandy Creek is zoned forestry
  - Mid Valley- shallow aquifers
- Jenna also presented a PowerPoint Presentation on Seattle City Light Skagit Operations Model Flood Storage Proposal- Flood Control is primary purpose for 75 years
  - Current license needs to be revised
  - Current license states Starting October 1<sup>st</sup> need to start drafting the drawing down of the reservoir for flood storage don't have to reach full flood storage until December- most major flood events happen before December 1st
  - Floods are happening earlier in the season and are unpredictable.
    - November 2021 major flood event shaved 8 feet off Mount Vernon because of having extra storage.
- Need to be proactive about asking them about climate change
- Flood Control is a Primary Project Purpose
  - 1946 Corps recommended 200,000 acre-feet of flood storage at Ross
  - 1956 revised Article 36 set flood storage at 120,000 acre feet
  - Current water Control Manual: Flood Storage Requirements

Date	Flood Storage Acre-feet (AF)	Regulated El. (ft)
1-Oct	0	1,602.50
15-Oct	20,000	1,600.80
1-Nov	43,000	1,598.84
15-Nov	60,000	1,597.37
1-Dec	120,000	1,592.15

- Last Major Flood Event was November 15, 2021
  - Stage at Concrete was 38.93 (ft), Discharge Rate on Concrete (cfs) 134,000
- Completed interim summary report
  - Trying to sort out differences
  - Currently evaluating scenarios, they have to file preliminary license application request December 4th.
  - They are pushing back hard on our requests, they don't want mandatory targets to be lowered, we want the targets in the license to reflect the flood storage we want, we want certainty that the community is protected for the next 50 years
  - The single best thing for floods is having more storage
  - Doing as good as can be expected in this stage

**Will Honea, Skagit County Prosecuting Attorney**

Will gave an update on the Seattle City Light Re-Licensing

- Started with a brief overview of what the Seattle City Light Relicensing was
  - Core was not engaged in the beginning
  - Can't get much information, have to drag it out
  - We need involvement for public safety

- Flood Control is the number one purpose
  - The re-licensing happens only every 30-50 years so we need to get it right this time
  - Packed the record that they don't need to have fish passage
    - Seattle City Light has bought 12,000 acres almost all east of the pipeline
    - Tide Gates-Loomis Bill SRC/Skagit City Light working together, Amy Trainor is on the Skagit Commission
    - Fish Passage Study being done- they didn't want a study done saying it was too far away and wouldn't have an affect
  - Big Problem
    - Needs to get done, permit draining is driving up price of land and not as much land is available. Working with Seattle City Light is not easy
    - Wetland Mitigation
    - Covert to other uses other than Agriculture
- We as a community wants to see fish passage, don't want to have decades of conflict continue
- Driving up price of land and making less land available
- 2009 Ordinance as a County banned the ability to do a big project on Ag Land- needs to get a Special Use Permit- Land Use Permit. The core purpose was to be sure to coordinate with drainage and not having people digging up land with excavators. Cannot get that permit with the 2009 Code Change Wetland Mitigation
- Wire Tags put into fish from the hatcheries- track where they are being caught 50% Catch & Release
- Meeting with Commissioners on Monday to consider signing an Emergency Interim Ordinance Adopting a Moratorium on the Acceptance of Permit Applications for Offsite Compensatory Mitigation Projects on Skagit County Agricultural-Natural Resource Lands
- Dr. David Welch ties back the dams and the issues with pushing back
  - All the way up to Alaska in the rivers- is it a habitat issue? Why are you seeing the same numbers from Alaska, Canada, Washington, Oregon?
    - Different species- how they are being caught, catch and release half don't make it, may be injured and die later, they are prey for other animals, fisherman
    - The 2009 Ordinance, was it broad enough?
- Seattle has themselves certified as the Nation's largest Green Certified Hydro Power
  - Nations greatest utility- not true
  - Green Washing Lawsuit
  - Serious Concerns with the integrity of what has already been done
  - 2020 Low impact Hydro to lower the rules about fish passage
- Very few people in the Valley that will not support the Ordinance, just need to get more information out
- What comes after?
  - Support now not necessary
  - September 6<sup>th</sup>- Hearing, need strong support- AAB to send recommendations

### **Hal Hart, Director, Skagit County Planning Department**

Hal Hart gave his Director Update

- Skagit County Growth Pattern- lots of housing going up
  - Broke sod on 156 three story housing project in Burlington Urban Growth Area
  - 78-80% of growth has been put to the city to build housing

- **Agritourism Update**
  - We took your concerns to the Board of County Commissioners
  - They are supportive of additional outreach efforts including three components
  - Survey (less complex) trying to reach a larger audience.
  - Additional outreach post covid (in person sessions).
  - Larger effort involving a town hall effort with key panelists from the community itself.
- **Other Updates**
  - Peter Gill has moved on to the City of Bellingham – Jenn Rodgers is our assistant planner and filling in. Sarah Ruether will join our planning team as we gear up for the County Comprehensive Plan Update in 2023. She will start on July 25<sup>th</sup>, 2022.
  - On target to hit approximately 200 homes this year countywide consistent with the past four-year average.
  - Shoreline Master Program Update. Tribal consultation was completed. We will send the final ordinance up to the Board of County Commissioners in August for their review and approval. From there it will be transmitted to the State of Washington Department of Ecology. They will hold their own hearing on the plan in the year ahead.

#### New Business

None at this time.

#### Committee Reports

##### **Economic Development-** Don McMoran

Terry Sapp keeping the dialog going per Michael Hughes on Agritourism.

- Issues regarding the wine, food, and beer
- Last week King County passed another ordinance to extend for 1 year the period the County has to review and rewrite the ordinance for remote tasting rooms, wine tasting, beer gardens- Adult Beverage Ordinance for 54 winery, tasting rooms

##### **Critical Areas** – Nels Lagerlund

Nothing at this time.

##### **Land Use** – Terry Sapp (Chair), Kraig Knutzen, Murray Benjamin, Michael Trafton, Steve Omdal

Nothing at this time.

##### **Flood, Drainage & Irrigation** – Kraig Knutzen (Chair), Nels Lagerlund, Steve Wright

Nothing at this time.

#### Old Business

None at this time

#### Adjourn

Meeting adjourned by Kraig Knutzen at 8:47 pm.

Next meeting is August 10, 2022, at 7 pm.

