

Skagit County Agriculture Advisory Board

Meeting Summary – November 8, 2023

Commissioners Hearing Room/MS Teams

Members in Attendance

Michael Hughes	Terry Sapp	Michael Trafton	Nels Lagerlund
Murray Benjamin	Steve Omdal	Steve Skrinde	John Morrison
Kraig Knutzen			

Proxy Designations

Members Absent

Steve Wright Justin Hayton

Others in Attendance

Peter Browning, Skagit County Commissioner
Kim Adams, Skagit County Planning & Development Services (PDS)
Don McMoran, WSU Extension
Rebecca Rising, Skagit County Public Works, VSP Coordinator

Call to Order, Introductions

Michael Hughes called the meeting to order at 6:00.

Approval of Meeting Summary

Murray Benjamin moved to accept the February Meeting Minutes, Terry Sapp seconded, Motion carried.

Guest Speaker

Rebecca Rising, VSP Coordinator, Skagit County Public Works

Rebecca gave an update on the VSP Program.

- Voluntary Stewardship Program started in 2011 through Ruckelshaus
- Protect Critical Areas on the Ag Land (mostly salmon streams)
- The Modified Plan is due in 2024
- 2011 was considered the baseline- currently being monitored by ariel imagery.
- Every two years a report is due, the last report was submitted in 2023 before Rebecca started with Skagit County
- Next five-year report is due in 2025
- The work plan was written before there was funding
- Million dollars was given to implement projects, currently 50% of that funding is allocated.
- There are nine projects with 12 landowners: Cover Crip, fencing, weed control, buffer planting
- Working with Skagit County, Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group, &
- Currently plantings are between 35-50 ft.
- Funding cannot be used for maintenance
- Now just spending on implementation, goal is to show success in Skagit County to get the funding to continue
- Skagit received one of the four million dollars in the state
- Meeting next week, meeting to approve building a concrete calf manure lagoon
- Anything to protect the critical areas will be considered. Rebecca is looking for ideas

- Projects are mostly located East in Skagit County, one in Fir Island, Coal Creek Walker Creek
- Would like a layout map to see where to focus attention to. That could help show progress- currently don't have focus areas yet.
- Most projects will be upriver. Nookachamps and upriver.
- Rebecca will be presenting at the Ag Summit this year
- Open Meeting, keep posted of meeting schedule for VSP meetings. Next meeting: Monday, November 13th at 8 am.

Committee Reports

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

- Ag Tourism still going. If you have any questions on what Terry has been keeping up with, he is happy to have a discussion and answer any questions. Code Enforcement still backed up- Skagit Valley Herald reported 250+ cases currently open. Only two staff members, have to work on what is most important at the time. 21 current venues out of compliance, how many can come into compliance? A few are in the permitting process now.
- Board be observant of the process for the Comp Plan Update. Could be re-written to affect the Ag Tourism topic.
- State Supreme Court- Could change game with Ag Tourism completely- overlapping issues with the appeal from the Superior Court. No telling where that may go.

Economic Development- *Don McMoran*

- Island Grown Cooperative currently building kill floor to have killed/processed in the same day.
- Peterson Rd. drainage (sewer line) going in for new Ag Park
- Nothing at Amazon yet
- Skagit Malting applied for Chapter 11 Bankruptcy; Port is looking to apply for a grant to keep facility open.

Critical Areas – *Nels Lagerlund*

Nothing at this time.

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

- Kraig gave out a handout 2023 Drought: Skagit River Flow and ISR Thresholds. If you don't have grandfathered rights, you were cut off from surface water. Droughts happen very fast and can't get through the declaration stage quick enough.
- Kraig will send the paperwork to Kim to send out to the board.

Old Business

- District 3 open position. No applicants received, send any recommendations.
- Commissioner Browning gave an update on Seattle City Light- close to an agreement to move forward. Prepared to dump early enough to get enough storage on a regular basis.

New Business

- Danny Hagen, Skagit County Assessor is looking for members to his Ag Advisory Board- meets once a year and it helps set rates for the year.
- AAB Terms set to expire: Kraig Knutzen, Michael Hughes, Terry Sapp, & John Morrison.
 - Serve another three-year term?
 - Michael Huges-YES
 - Kraig Knutzen- YES
 - Terry Sapp- YES
 - John Morrison- YES

Don McMoran WSU Update

- Received word that there is a 10% Budget Cut coming.
 - Will start with cutting under performing programs
 - Potential Covid-19 money to help with cuts
- Upcoming Workshops
 - Seed Workshop January 12th
 - Ag Summit February 9th
 - Potato Workshop February 23rd
 - Berry Workshop March 8th

Next Meeting: December 13th at 6 pm. Chair & Vice Chair Elections.

Adjourn

Murray Benjamin moved to adjourn; Meeting adjourned at 7:48 pm.