

Skagit County Conservation Futures Advisory Board
Meeting Summary
January 14, 2025

Members Present | Advisory Rep. Affiliation

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| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Scott DeGraw (chair) District 3 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Margery Hite Skagit Conservation District |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Andrea Xaver (vice chair) District 2 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Keith Morrison At Large |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jim Glackin Skagit Land Trust | <input type="checkbox"/> Owen Peth District 1 |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audrey Gravley Skagitonians to Preserve Farmland | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sarah Stoner <i>ex officio</i> Skagit County |

Others Present—Affiliation

Jenn Johnson, Skagit County Public Works
Kai Ottesen, Belle Bean Services, LLC

Quorum present with minimum of four voting members.
Scott called the meeting to order at 7:30AM.

Review Agenda, Introductions

Agenda approved.

Review December 10 Meeting Summary

Andrea made a motion to approve minutes; Audrey seconded. All in favor.

Property Updates

The group discussed updates on the properties currently in queue for agricultural conservation easements. The queued applicants encompass 311 acres and 7 development rights.

The group discussed water rights easement terms. The group determined that ‘historic use’ of water rights on Skagit agricultural land often involves a seasonal rotation use of those water rights onto different parcels. The purpose of Section 8.12 of the ag conservation easement terms is to prohibit, say, developers from purchasing protected ag land and selling off the water rights.

Marketing & Application Process

Small Heritage Farms’ Ag Land Protection (CFAB Committee: Enrollment Acceptance Criteria—Review & Recommendations)

Margery is working with Sarah to explore a possible third mechanism to protect farmland in the County: Small Heritage Farms. This is the working title for a possible additional regulatory-compensation option for farmland owners who have an existing residence on a non-conforming lot in the Ag-NRL zone; and who prefer to keep their home part of their farmland.

Most "heritage" small farms in Skagit were built well before Comp plan regulations. Therefore, many of these lots have home sites that are also somewhat irregular & non-conforming (ie sewer quite a distance from the house).

Survey was shared via digital link prior to today’s meeting for board member review by Friday.

Succession on the Skagit Landscape

Sarah is convening a roundtable of no more than 20 stakeholders representing Skagit organizations who work towards food security, land access and economic viability in agriculture. This is more of a GAP analysis. What’s missing/ What’s possible. What’s effective? What’s lasting?

Stakeholder discussion on state of succession in Skagit.

Wednesday, February 26, 2025

3 – 5 PM at the new Mt Vernon Library Commons.

With the goal of 1) convening in person, 2) identifying what barriers / services / solutions / opportunities exist to support our entering and exiting farmers in Skagit County. 3) discussing the Skagit County Farmland Legacy four-year grant awarded to support succession work on our local landscape... and what a lasting land transfer program might look like—well beyond the four-year succession grant funding.

Monitoring Updates

Kai reported that it’s a wrap for 2024 monitoring work for FLP’s 200+ easements.

Member Updates

Sarah shared two upcoming meetings:

- 1) Skagit Ag Summit 2025, scheduled February 7, 2025. Sarah is sitting on a panel of four to discuss farm succession.
- 2) Land Transfer Navigator training facilitated by American Farmland Trust and NRCS-USDA grant. January 27-30, 2025, in San Antonio, TX. Sarah will attend the required farmland transfer training, as awarded by the grant.

Sarah shared that Whatcom County’s presentation on their farmland protection is rescheduled for March 11 CFAB meeting. For a preview of their work, see their [storymap](#).

Financial Summary

The financial summary is updated for December 2024 and reflects easement properties closed and recorded. Final numbers for year 2024 are not yet closed and will be reported to the advisory board when available.

Administrative

CFAB 2025 Meeting Dates

January 14	May 13	September 9
February 11	June 10	October 14 (tbd)
March 11	July 8	November 11
April 8	August 12 (tbd)	December 9

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 AM