

**Skagit County Conservation Futures Advisory Board**  
**Meeting Summary**  
April 9, 2024

**Members in Attendance**

|              |                        |              |                                    |
|--------------|------------------------|--------------|------------------------------------|
| Scott DeGraw | Keith Morrison         | Andrea Xaver | Sarah Stoner ( <i>ex-officio</i> ) |
| Jim Glackin  | Margery Hite (partial) |              |                                    |

**Members Absent**

Audrey Gravley

**Staff and Others in Attendance**

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

Scott called the meeting to order at 7:30AM.

**Review Agenda, Introductions**

Agenda approved, with one modification: remove the scoring agenda item, due to time constraints.

**Review March 12 Meeting Summary**

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

**Property Updates**

The group discussed updates on the properties currently in queue for agricultural conservation easements. The queued applicants encompass 575 acres and 13 development rights.

Sarah shared the news the easement amendment for the Breckenridge property is complete. The original easement was amended to remove the residential dwelling, residential yard area, driveway, outbuilding and septic system. The removed area represents 1.6 acres of the 78-acre easement put into place in 2016. The remaining 76+ acres remain farmland and will continue to be part of a large local commercial farming operation.

It was a nearly three-year process working with the landowner and the third-party funder on the original easement, the Washington State Recreation & Conservation Office. RCO helped fund more than 50% of the original conservation easement. It was a complex lengthy process, that involved many people, agencies to navigate this unfamiliar process, and between multiple agencies.

The easement amendment was approved by all parties because the removal of the residential dwelling area did not impact the primary intent and purpose of the conservation easement— (b) to ensure no net loss of agricultural lands; (c) to protect prime and important agricultural soils.

The 2016 easement value did not include any market value payment of the existing homesite, only the acreage under the homesite. The landowner paid all costs associated with this conversion, and the county and RCO followed all due process to make this happen.

## **Marketing & Application Process**

### **Operating Procedures for Advisory Board: Draft**

Scott shared that operating procedures are being drafted for the Conservation Futures Advisory Board. These include clarifying quorum and the election cycle process for board chair, among other procedural items. The procedures are based on established operating procedures of the Ag Advisory Board.

### **Recent Press Coverage**

Sarah shared links to recent press covering Farmland Legacy. These include [Whatcom Talks article](#), April 3, 2024, “Farmland Legacy Makes a Difference” and a prominent feature of Farmland Legacy’s 2023 farmland protections in the [Skagit Valley Food Co-Op April 2024 newsletter](#), “Skagit County Protects 425 Acres of Farmland from Development in 2023.”

### **Annual Report: 2023 Farmland Legacy**

Discussion of Farmland Legacy annual report production schedule and distribution. Distribution begins with May 18, 2024, insert into Skagit Valley Herald’s weekend edition. Inserts into Anacortes American, La Conner Weekly News, Concrete Herald follow in the next weeks after May 18, depending on the papers’ editions. Number of insertions totals just over 13,000 copies, with 1,000 overage.

The group discussed and agreed to include distribution via Concrete Herald totaling 5,000 copies of the report. The report will include a feature on Jerry Nelson, due to his role encouraging a La Conner family to protect their 300 acres of farmland in 2023.

Social media and email pushes will also be part of the 2024 distribution of the annual report.

### **Assessor’s Office—Excess Land Tables**

The Assessor’s excess land tables provided by Danny Hagan, Assessor, were reviewed by the group.

### **“Now Protected” Postcards—Radius Mailings**

Sarah demoed a draft of “Now Protected” Postcards: ‘*Farms. Farmland. Forever.*’ The idea behind this postcard is to send it out to neighbors surrounding a newly protected Farmland Legacy property. The mailing list would be specific to the radius area surrounding the property. The postcard would be customized each time we have a protected property.

## **Monitoring Updates**

Kai reported that monitoring work is in process for existing easements, with no issues to report.

## **Member Updates**

Scott shared that he spoke with Washington Farmland Trust staff Robin Faye. Margery shared thoughts on Skagit County Comprehensive Plan, being revised with December 2025 due date for revision. It’s the guiding document for Skagit County land use for the next 20 years. Jenn shared that documents were recently shared regarding how to participate in the Comp Plan Revision; she will forward to group.

## **Financial Summary**

The financial summary is updated for April 2024 and reflects easement properties closed and recorded. The meeting adjourned at 9:30 AM