

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

**Members in Attendance**

Scott DeGraw                  Andrea Xaver                  Audrey Gravley                  Jim Glackin                  Margery Hite  
Owen Peth                  Sarah Stoner (*ex officio*)

**Members Absent**

Keith Morrison

**Staff and Others in Attendance**

Kai Ottesen, Belle Bean Services

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

**Review Agenda, Introductions**

Agenda approved.

**Review June 11 Meeting Summary**

Jim made a motion to approve minutes, with minor grammatical corrections provided in hardcopy to Sarah; Andrea seconded. All in favor.

**Property Updates**

The group discussed updates on the properties currently in queue for agricultural conservation easements. The queued applicants encompass 585 acres and 13 development rights.

**Marketing & Application Process**

**'Small Heritage Farms' Ag Land Protection (CFAB Committee)**

Margery presented to the group for discussion the concept of a farmland protection program for small heritage farms in Skagit County. Margery shared the purpose is that 'small farms count' and their futures also need to be protected. "Large farms feed the world, small farms feed us locally," she explained. From her work on the Skagit Conservation District board, she's learned that small farms can make as much as \$20K/acre annually.

The dilemma for the board to solve is: how to protect a small farm that has no development right to extinguish, and considering the appraisal cost. Appraisals are required, per WA RCW, if and when there is payment for an easement.

Margery proposed that perhaps addressing a regulatory issue for small farms is the route to take for protection mechanism. She explained that non-conforming lots, that is lots under 40 acres in the Ag-NRL zone, could be phased out. Currently, an ordinance on non-conforming lots allows a landowner to rebuild their home, but this could change. Scott shared details of a recent Sedro-Woolley ordinance prohibiting the rebuilding of a home in its business district if it's more than 70% burned by a fire. It was unclear in the group discussion if banks would finance home loans on non-confirming lots.

### **Farmland Information Center (FIC) Ag Census Data**

Farmland Information Center (FIC) and National Agricultural Land Network hosted a webinar on Highlights from the 2022 Census of Agriculture—with shared selected results from the new census. Their presentation provided data about farms and ranches and the land they cover, their economic position, and producer demographics.

Resources from the webinar are available on the [Farmland Information Center website](#). For a closer look at land in farms data from the Census of Agriculture, see the FIC's [data dashboard](#).

### **Monitoring Updates**

Kai reported that monitoring work is in process for existing easements, with no issues to report. USDA easement monitoring ‘priority’ deadline will be met again this year, of September 1 annually.

### **Member Updates**

Andrea shared with the group a July 4, 2024 clipping from Skagit Valley Herald, “[Skagit Tourism Bureau offering free training.](#)” The free customer service training is offered to businesses, focused on how to promote Skagit offerings locally, among other trainings.

### **Financial Summary**

The financial summary is updated for May 2024 and reflects easement properties closed and recorded.

### **Administrative**

#### **CFAC 2024 Meeting Dates**

August 13 (tbd)  
September 10

October 8 (tbd)  
November 12

December 10

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 AM