

Skagit County Conservation Futures Advisory Board
Meeting Summary
November 18, 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

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

Review Agenda

Agenda approved. Quorum present with minimum of four voting members.

Review October 14 Meeting Summaries

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

Property Updates

The group discussed updates on the properties currently in queue for agricultural conservation easements. The queued applicants encompass 230 acres and 5 development rights.

Sarah reported that in late October the FLP appraiser let her know he is backed up on assignments. The two pending applications won't be appraised until the first of the year 2026.

Monitoring Updates

Sarah reported in lieu of Kai that monitoring work is wrapping up for existing easements, for 2025.

The group discussed the vetting process and the reasons for the conservation easement management software pending use starting in 2026. Sarah and Kai have been preparing easement files and data for transfer to the new system. Sarah, Kai and additional county staff demo'd three management systems. Starting January 2026, the 220 existing FLP easements will be managed via [Landscape](#) software.

Committee Reports

Program Acceptance Criteria Review & Recommendation Committee

- **Small Heritage Farms' Ag Land Protection**
No report/update.

Easement Review & Recommendation Committee

No report/update.

Valuation Review & Recommendation Committee

Sarah shared that the most recent Farmland Preservation Roundtable (for counties and NGOs across Washington state) included the agenda item topic ‘Ag Appraisal Issues across Washington state.’ Consensus from the roundtable was that across the state, and across the country, appraisal values often don’t match what landowners think they should, nor do they always capture intangible values.

In this same roundtable meeting it was pointed out that, as of April 2025, the New Jersey State Agriculture Development Committee for farmland preservation now includes the option to use a formula system for easement valuation. The valuation formula option is described in their 43-page [Guide and Resource Booklet for the NJ Farmland Preservation Program](#).

Skagit County FLP remains appraisal-valuation only—but Sarah wanted to point out that the NJ guide has interesting options for consideration in protecting our county’s smaller farm parcels.

Member Updates

Jim shared about a water rights meeting that he attended run by attorney Bill Clark. This prompted a CFAB membership discussion of the water adjudication process in the region. Jim shared the estimated adjudication timeline of 30+ years.

The water adjudication process determines whether each water right on a source is legal, how much water can be used, and its priority during water shortages. Currently about 98% of the water users affected by a regional water adjudication process live in Whatcom County. However, 536 residents in north Skagit County, including those in the Chuckanut Mountain range and the area north of Hamilton—these residents are included in the Nooksack basin and have received adjudication claimant forms.

Audrey shared outcomes of a successful November board retreat for Skagitonians to Preserve Farmland.

Andrea mentioned two articles: [Our Farming Community, Under Pressure](#) (Skagit Food Co-op, October 2025), and an October 5, 2025 article (Cascadia Daily, [WA’s stream buffer rule](#)) that covers proposed changes with forest practices and logging buffers around streams. Andrea noted that the article includes an overview of issues that Skagit farmers, tribes, fishers and county officials worked on at least two decades ago.

Sarah highlighted agricultural data from two articles.

- The article [Many once-common jobs have mostly disappeared in the U.S.](#) noted, “In 1860, 32% of free Americans worked on farms or owned them, but now only 0.3% are farmers.”
- The article [Skagit County debates value of farm preservation vs. agritourism](#) (Seattle Times, October 19, 2025) noted the following: “Those seeking [agritourism] permits for more than 10 days and 50 guests have to verify that they have received at least \$500 per acre per year over the past three years in agricultural income. This means if a farm is the 2022 Skagit County average of 113 acres, property owners would have to have made at least \$169,500 in agricultural revenue in the past three years. According to the 2022 USDA census on the county, about 25% of farms would be able to reach that goal in sales.”

The meeting adjourned at 8:25 AM