

Public Comments on Agricultural Advisory Board's Proposed Agritourism Code Changes



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October 10, 2023



Next Steps/Process

Meeting Date	Topic Area
April 25, 2023	Work Session Agricultural Advisory Board's Agritourism Recommendations
June 13, 2023	Work Session Agricultural Advisory Board's Agritourism Recommendations
July 25, 2023	Public Hearing on Agricultural Advisory Board's Agritourism Recommendations
October 10, 2023	Discussion of Public Comment on the Agricultural Advisory Board's Agritourism Recommendations
December 12, 2023	Tentative deliberations on proposed Agritourism Code Changes



Supporting Documents for Agritourism can be found at:
www.skagitcounty.net/departments/planningandpermit/agritourismmain.htm

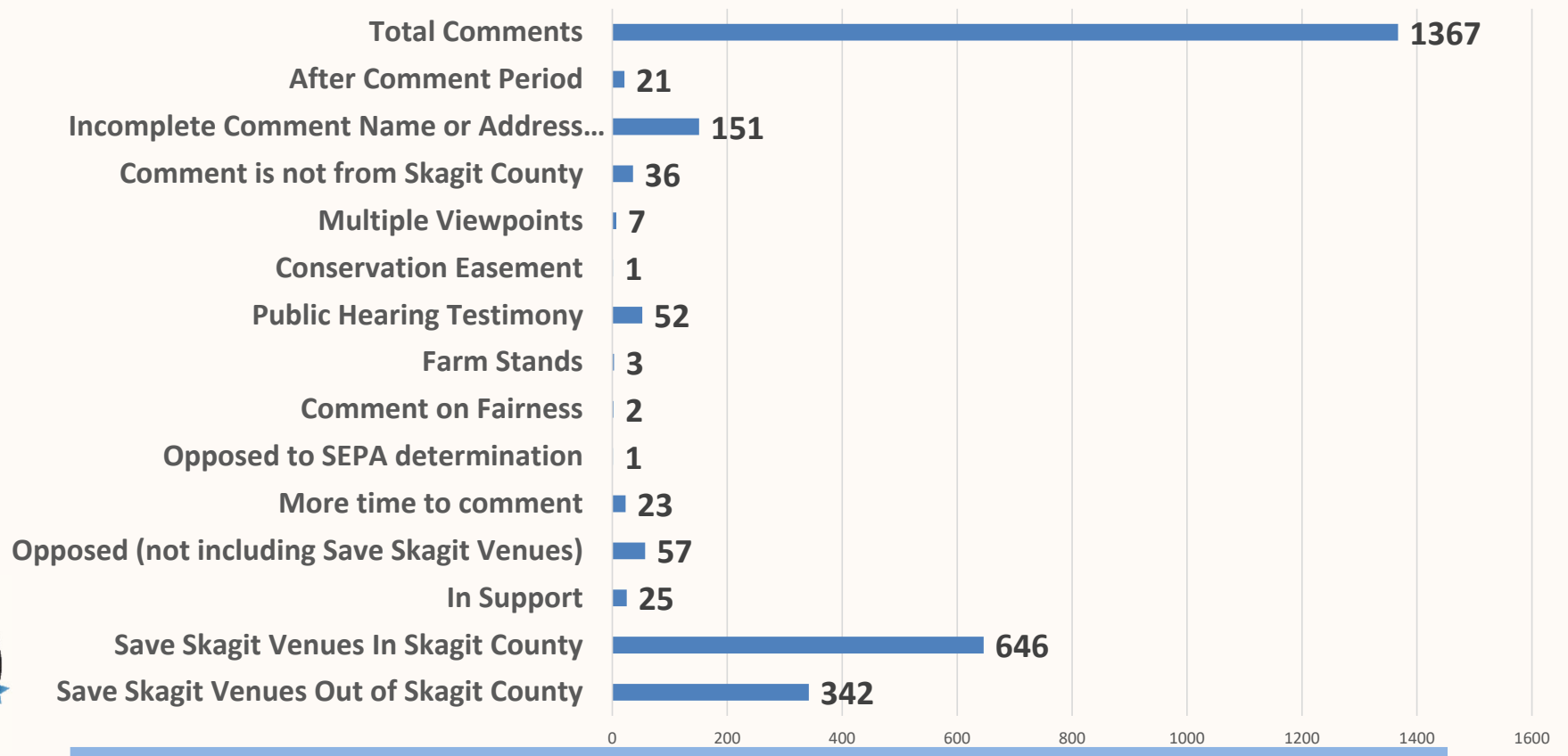
Comment Period: July 19,2023- August 17, 2023

- 7/6/23 Staff Report,
 - DNS published to website, published to SVH, sent to listerv, emailed
- Public Hearing 7/25
- Extension of Comment Period by the PC to 8/17
- Comment Period extension noticed in SVH on 7/27/23, sent to listserv and posted to web



All Comments

Proposed AAB Agritourism Code Changes



Comments in Support (Attachment 1) Proposed AAB Agritourism Code Changes

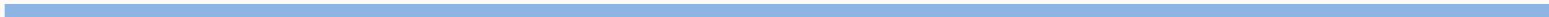
Comments in Support of Proposed Agritourism Code Changes

25– Written Comments

7– Hearing Testimony

Organizations Commenting:

- Friends of Skagit County
- Agricultural Advisory Board
- Western Washington Agricultural Association



Comments in Support (Attachment 1) Proposed AAB Agritourism Code Changes

Written Comments- Issues:

- No faux farms, some grandfathering is okay
 - Would like to maintain strong agricultural zoning
 - It is not fair unpermitted events that don't follow the law
 - Requests enforcement
 - Events don't belong in Ag-NRL
 - Existing event centers are not permitted
 - Farmers receive a tax discount because it is important to society. (Open Space, Natural Resource Land Discount)
 - Unfair for event centers to get a discounted tax rate.
 - Without restrictions, tourism will takeover farming
-



Comments in Support (Attachment 1)

Proposed AAB Agritourism Code Changes

Written Comments- Issues:

- Safety issues for un-permitted venues/events
 - Liability issues for the farmers
 - Concerned proposal is so wide reaching it would limit the tulip festival/farm events (Department Response: *The proposed code will not eliminate tulip or farm festivals*)
 - Understands that farms may need to supplement income, but event centers are not the way to do it.
 - Food security is an issues for society and we need to help farmers survive and thrive, therefore in support.
 - These code proposals contribute to food security.
-



Comments in Support (Attachment 1) Proposed AAB Agritourism Code Changes

Written Comments- Issues:

- Lawsuits, negative public perception, and reporting requirements threaten farmers livelihoods.
 - In support of finding a way to bring illegal businesses into compliance with regular review and permitting
 - Permit holders would then be liable for damage, harassment, distress or loss of production caused by their events.
 - Permitting Fees should contribute to Farmland Legacy account
 - Thinks wedding venues are a trend, worries that we may have a loss of farmland for a passing trend.
 - Commercial activity should go in Commercial zones
-



Comments in Support (Attachment 1)

Proposed AAB Agritourism Code Changes

Written Comments- Issues:

- It is a quality-of-life issue, they don't want extra traffic and noise.
 - Thinks it makes housing problems worse by having people turn their homes in to temporary rentals for event patrons.
 - Worried about a loss of farmland from salt water, buffers, and other threats, therefore these regulations are needed to protect farmers.
 - Infrastructure in Ag-NRL does not support event centers- septic, parking, road capacity
 - Local businesses are not hired for events- photographers etc. from Seattle
-



Comments in Support (Attachment 1)

Proposed AAB Agritourism Code Changes

Written Comments- Issues:

- Doesn't want "agritourism" to support just any enterprise therefore in support.
 - As a founding member of Farmland Legacy program, former member of AAB, believes that non-agricultural activities interfere with the right to farm.
 - Commenter lives next to an event venue and the heavy bass disturbs her calves who huddle in a corner when loud music is played. Sheriff has been contacted on numerous occasions.
 - The proposed definition of agritourism is supported by existing code.
-



Comments in Support (Attachment 1) Proposed AAB Agritourism Code Changes

Written Comments- Issues:

- The notion of good and bad actors is moot because you can't guarantee behavior and that is why there is a regulatory framework, to keep everyone honest and fair.
- Venues that were never legal cannot be grandfathered in their opinion.
- Non-agricultural activities will be harder to rein in if there are endless possibilities and it is driven by economic rationale for income. Agriculture may not be as profitable, but you can't eat agritourism or get the land back if developed.



Comments in Support (Attachment 1) Proposed AAB Agritourism Code Changes

Written Comments- Issues:

- Without protection the agricultural economy will weaken in Skagit County.
- Owners of Ag-NRL buildings have gone around the system to make a fortune without paying equal permit fees, taxes, and most importantly not having safety considered for the event – septic, public health, fire.



Comments in Support (Attachment 1)

Proposed AAB Agritourism Code Changes

Organizations Commenting in Support: Friends of Skagit County, Agricultural Advisory Board, Western Washington Agricultural Association.

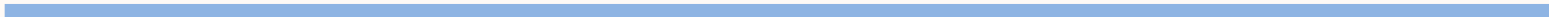
- Friends of Skagit County – Would like the public to have more information about GMA laws that support the preservation of Ag-NRL. Would like the County to enforce existing regulations, this needs to happen whether or not these proposed code changes are adopted. Would like the public to know the history of Skagit County’s protection of Ag-NRL. Would like the public to understand the cumulative effects of non-ag. uses and how that endangers farm preservation and productivity.



Comments in Support (Attachment 1) Proposed AAB Agritourism Code Changes

Organizations Commenting in Support: Friends of Skagit County, Agricultural Advisory Board, Western Washington Agricultural Association.

- Agricultural Advisory Board – The County needs to define agritourism and clarify the code. This code proposal does that and they are in support of these changes. Also are concerned that without protection from tourism uses, these uses will overtake agricultural uses and weaken Skagit County's agricultural economy.



Comments in Support (Attachment 1) Proposed AAB Agritourism Code Changes

Western Washington Agricultural Association: Are in support of AAB proposed code changes with a few recommended changes:

- Amend SCC 14.16.900(2)(h) to add criterion for special use permits:
 - (A)All events must be accessory to agricultural use on a working farms
 - (B)Events must support sale of products and food grown on working farm. (At least 50% of products sold must be from farm)
 - (C) Events may occur on no more than 12 calendar days per year.
-



Comments in Support (Attachment 1)

Proposed AAB Agritourism Code Changes

Western Washington Agricultural Association: Are in support of AAB proposed code changes with a few recommended changes:

(d) All permit subject to annual review

(e) Permit holders must be onsite during all events to monitor activities and uphold standards.

(f) Any structures, spaces, or septic infrastructure created for temporary events must be removed once the permit is no longer active and the land returned to original state with no farmable land loss.

(g) A proper traffic maintenance plan for the event must be approved by the County 30 days prior to the permit activation and must have minimal impact on the surrounding neighborhoods.



Comments in Support (Attachment 1) Proposed AAB Agritourism Code Changes

Western Washington Agricultural Association: Are in support of AAB proposed code changes with a few recommended changes:

(h) Events must include a plan to keep visitors restricted to their property and guarantee zero impact physical or other on neighboring properties. This plan must be approved by the County 30 days prior to permit activation.

(i) Permit holders will be held financially liable for any damages, harassment, distress, or loss of production on neighboring properties during the event caused by any intrusion of event attendees, hosts or vendors.



Comments in Support (Attachment 1) Proposed AAB Agritourism Code Changes

Western Washington Agricultural Association: Are in support of AAB proposed code changes with a few recommended changes:

It is also recommended that the Skagit Right to Farm Ordinance be included in the Special Use contract with the permit holder held accountable to reading and understanding the ordinance.

It is also recommended that fees for permits and fines for violators be used to fund enforcement of the program.

Department Response: *Submit this proposal for annual docket.*



Comments in Opposition (Attachment 2) Proposed AAB Agritourism Code Changes

Comments in Support of Proposed Agritourism Code Changes

57– Written Comments

19– Hearing Testimony

Organizations Commenting:

- Skagit's Best Salsa Company
- Christianson's Nursery
- Boldly Grown Farm
- Double Barrel BBQ
- Samish Bay Cheese
- Garden Path Fermentation
- Skagit Tulip Festival
- Mt Vernon Chamber of Commerce
- Skagit Agritourism Stakeholder Group



Comments in Opposition (Attachment 2) Proposed AAB Agritourism Code Changes

Written Comments- Issues:

- These event businesses are important to the Community
 - This can be a win-win
 - Provides economic resilience, preservation of agricultural heritage and local business support, community pride.
 - The face of agriculture in Skagit County is changing and a different path is needed, a compromise is needed to give some of these uses a legal path.
 - Need a process for farms that have agritourism operations to come into compliance
 - Would like to see complementary agritourism for small/med. size farms.
-



Comments in Opposition (Attachment 2) Proposed AAB Agritourism Code Changes

Written Comments- Issues:

- Concerned with economic fall out and wonders if an economic impact analysis has been done. Would like survey results considered. Wonders if this is small farms vs. large farms. Would like agritourism regulations to encourage growth of small businesses.
- Would like the growing role of agritourism considered in our economy. Concerned about negative economic impacts.
- *Department Response: Survey was not statistically significant, was used as a tool for public outreach*



Comments in Opposition (Attachment 2) Proposed AAB Agritourism Code Changes

Written Comments- Issues:

- Oppose the code because it is too extreme. Would like Wedding Planners to enforce contracts. (Department Response: *the County does not have the authority over wedding contracts.*)
- Concerned that proposed code will drive out small business owners. Would like more public engagement and involvement to find a collaborative solution.
- Preservation of farmland should not be at the cost to small farm owners, nor should it favor larger farming operations. Preserve small farms with more economic diversity.



Comments in Opposition (Attachment 2) Proposed AAB Agritourism Code Changes

Written Comments- Issues:

- Concerned that the proposed regulations will not make it possible to maintain their property and diminish the value of their property because of a loss of economic opportunities
 - Concerned that changing the number of events from 24 to 12 is based on subjective whims rather than studies.
 - Concerned about a corporate takeover if small farms cannot survive without agritourism.
 - Resents the restrictive language and objects to restrictions on land beyond what is already restricted by zoning.
-



Comments in Opposition (Attachment 2)

Proposed AAB Agritourism Code Changes

Written Comments- Issues:

- Concerned about loss of income, would like to see fines or other enforcement for bad actors. There should be solutions for bad behavior rather than not having agritourism.
- Should be permitted as part of liberty and freedom
- Farming has changed in the last 50 years and this new income (from agritourism) is needed for preservation and small farms need this for more diverse income. Use noise regulations and enforce them for problems. Does not like arbitrary rules and arbitrary number of events permitted.
- Visitors from events on farmland stay in local hotels and support other businesses. They are good for the economy.



Comments in Opposition (Attachment 2) Proposed AAB Agritourism Code Changes

Written Comments- Issues:

- Would like Skagit County to look at Italy as an example. Thinks there is no vision in limiting a farm to agriculture.
 - Would like a compromise because they think small farms are important to our future.
 - Restriction of events will have a negative effect on our economy would like to see events, except for large concert that is too big.
 - Concerned about release of these proposed changes during harvest time, it makes it more difficult to participate.
 - Extra money from agritourism allows for historical preservation of farm buildings.
-



Comments in Opposition (Attachment 2) Proposed AAB Agritourism Code Changes

Written Comments- Issues:

- Business owner has catered hundreds of weddings in Skagit County – they are worried this will negatively impact their business.
- Would like to see agritourism – if needed set limits on non-agricultural improvements to farmland.
- Concerned about wording of the proposal and do not like that it has to be an active farm.
- Thinks Skagit County has allowed farming excessive influence in political processes and that we need income from more than farming and to recognize the prime location of Skagit between Seattle and Vancouver, BC.



Comments in Opposition (Attachment 2) Proposed AAB Agritourism Code Changes

Written Comments- Issues:

- Samish Bay cheese has seen the benefits of agritourism to small and medium farms and thinks there needs to be consensus on a better policy.
 - Thinks the proposed code changes would take away from those things that are special in Skagit County.
 - Thinks PC and AAB should pay more attention to the survey done and thinks there is nothing beautiful about an active farm.
 - Think the conflicts between events and working farms are overblown. Thinks large farms don't get permits either so it is not fair to blame event venues.
-



Comments in Opposition (Attachment 2) Proposed AAB Agritourism Code Changes

Written Comments- Issues:

- Thinks proposed code changes are government overreach and it short sighted to restrict farmers. Sited freedom and declaration of independence.
 - Doesn't want events limited because of the economy. Wonders if these proposed code changes have been studied for their effect on the economy or ecology. *Department Response: SEPA analysis was done for environmental impacts.*
 - Agritourism is important to the economy, especially communities east of highway 9.
 - Urge the Planning Commissioners to take more time and get this right even if it takes longer.
-



Comments in Opposition (Attachment 2) Proposed AAB Agritourism Code Changes

Written Comments- Issues:

- Believes these event venues foster a sense of community. They would like to propose their own suggestions for code changes.
- Thinks farmers deal with unfounded complaints and that there need to be better forms to take complaints.
- Concerned that proposed code changes would have a chilling effect on the Tulip Festival.
- Need to allow people to be entrepreneurs; farmers and venues need to learn how to co-exist.
- Need more time to find a middle ground; many weddings now are small (micro weddings) and this should be considered.



Comments in Opposition (Attachment 2) Proposed AAB Agritourism Code Changes

Written Comments- Issues:

- Skagit County is lacking in large event spaces and as an artist these spaces are needed to support the makers community.
- Thinks we don't have food security issues and thinks opposition to agritourism is hypocritical because people attend these events. Does not think this proposal contributes to the greater good.
- It is already tough to have a small business, this will make it harder.
- Times change and rules and regulations should change with the times to include new industries like the Wedding industry.



Comments in Opposition (Attachment 2) Proposed AAB Agritourism Code Changes

Department Response:

- *Survey was not statistically significant therefore the results cannot be extrapolated to public support. The survey was a tool for public outreach.*
- *The Department would encourage any group or individual that has specific code proposals to submit these as part of the annual docket. The deadline for submittal is the last business day of July.*
- *The proposed code changes would not change any allowances for farm stands.*
- *The intent of the proposed code was not to eliminate the Tulip Festival or other farm festivals.*
- *Zoning is restrictive, its purpose is to separate conflicting uses, and work toward a common vision for the future.*



Comments in Opposition (Attachment 2)

Proposed AAB Agritourism Code Changes

Department Response:

- *A SEPA analysis was done on the proposed regulations and a determination of non-significance was made. This means no significant environmental impacts have been determined.*
 - *The AAB wanted the requirement of an active farm because they are concerned that if it is more profitable to do events, this would cause farming operations to cease or lessen, and would therefore, be a loss of productive agricultural land and soils.*
 - *The arbitrary number of events was chosen with the rationale of assuring that any event business income would be smaller than that of the working farm.*
-



Comments in Opposition (Attachment 2) Proposed AAB Agritourism Code Changes

Department Response:

- *The proposed regulations would not impact wedding venues that are not in Ag-NRL and those wedding venues could continue to thrive.*
- *No agritourism examples from other countries was considered as part of this proposal.*
- *Skagit County cannot regulate how private businesses ensure good behavior from their patrons.*



Comments in Opposition (Attachment 2) Proposed AAB Agritourism Code Changes

Department Response:

- *Noise is regulated under the performance standards per SCC 14.16.840(5).3*
- *Zoning restricts uses to prevent conflicts between different land uses and preserve natural resource lands from being developed into non-resource uses. Skagit County has a long history of using zoning and GMA to protect farmland. (40- acre lot minimums) The vision of Skagit County has been to protect/limit farmland from non-agricultural uses.*
- *If there was no zoning laws, likely much of our farmland that we have today would not have been preserved. Zoning and development regulations, as part of comprehensive planning, contribute to big-picture community vision.*



More time (Attachment 3) Proposed AAB Agritourism Code Changes

Comments in Support of Proposed Agritourism Code Changes

22– Written Comments

18– Hearing Testimony

Organizations Commenting:

- Boldly Grown Farms
- Willowbrook Manor
- Bow Hill Blueberries
- Samish Bay Cheese
- Skagit Tourism Bureau
- La Conner Gardens
- Blanchard Mountain Farms



More Time (Attachment 3)

Proposed AAB Agritourism Code Changes

Written Comments- Issues:

- Request more time and more stakeholder engagement
- More time to find a way that these business can co-exist
- More time this is an issues that will affect generations to come.
- The volume of comments indicates that this proposal misses the mark, more time to work on this.
- Skagit Tourism Bureau: more time to ensure that policy decisions do not provide an unfair advantage to any individual or group, policy should allow entrepreneurs to have businesses that align with Skagit's identity and compliment farming.
- More time to find a middle ground



Opposed to SEPA (Attachment 4) Proposed AAB Agritourism Code Changes

Comments in Support of Proposed Agritourism Code Changes

1- Written Comments

Organizations Commenting:

- Maplehurst Farm

Issue:

- Believes Staff did not sufficiently analyze impacts per the requirements of SEPA. Would like economic impacts studied and comprehensive analysis and mitigation measures.
 - Department Response: SEPA does not evaluate economic impacts. A DNS was determined which does not require comprehensive analysis or mitigation measures.
-



Fairness (Attachment 5)

Proposed AAB Agritourism Code Changes

Comments in Support of Proposed Agritourism Code Changes

2- Written Comments

Organizations Commenting:

- Lisser & Associates



More Time (Attachment 3)

Proposed AAB Agritourism Code Changes

Written Comments- Issues:

- Concerns about code being addressed equally and equitably. Also concerned about how to draw the line fairly between incidental and subordinate. Concerned about unintended consequences if these proposed code changes are adopted. Would like code applied fairly to all businesses because if they are not then they are not meaningful.
- Concerns about the methodology used for both BERK surveys. Believe questions in BERK survey were biased in their design. Also believes that the sample size was inadequate.
- Department Response: *Survey was used a tool for public outreach and was not statistically significant.*



Farm Stands (Attachment 6)

Proposed AAB Agritourism Code Changes

Comments in Support of Proposed Agritourism Code Changes

3– Written Comments

Organizations Commenting:

- Lisser & Associates

Issue:

- Concerned that proposed code changes would limit farm stands.
- *Department Response: The proposed code changes would not change any allowances for farm stands.*



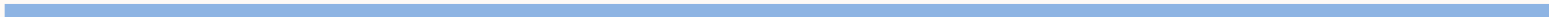
Economics (Attachment 7)

Proposed AAB Agritourism Code Changes

Comments in Support of Proposed Agritourism Code Changes 29– Written Comments

Organizations Commenting:

- Skagit's Best Salsa
- Garden Path Fermentation
- Rose and Sparrow Floral Design
- Maplehurst Farm



Economics (Attachment 7)

Proposed AAB Agritourism Code Changes

Written Comments- Issues:

- Non-agriculture activities will be harder to rein in if we open the window to allow more uses and the possibilities are endless if drive by economic rationale, needing income. Agriculture might not be the most profitable use but that is even more reason to protect, because you can't eat agritourism or get land back that has been developed.
 - Without protection the agricultural economy will weaken in Skagit County.
 - Land speculation of value will be even higher if commercial uses are allowed, which would make buying land and farming harder to enter.
-



Economics (Attachment 7)

Proposed AAB Agritourism Code Changes

Written Comments- Issues:

- Agritourism allows for economic resilience
- Agritourism helps small businesses
- Family farms are not sustainable if they cannot have events.
- Need income for preservation of barns
- Concerned about hospitality industry for weddings in Skagit County
- The agriculture industry does not have the economic ability to generate an economy capable to meet the needs of the County as a whole. Skagit County should take advantage of its location between Seattle and Vancouver BC.



Conservation Easements (Attachment 8)

Proposed AAB Agritourism Code Changes

Comments in Support of Proposed Agritourism Code Changes

1- Written Comments

Issue:

- Conservation easement agreements should be created to allow for unlimited agritourism as long as farming is primary use. Thinks the conservation futures advisory board should create and amend easements which allow agritourism and monitor it.
- *Department Response: The conservation futures board has not been involved in any agritourism code or policy proposals.*



Multiple Viewpoints (Attachment 9)

Proposed AAB Agritourism Code Changes

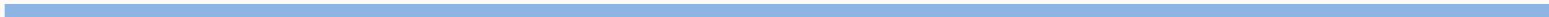
Comments in Support of Proposed Agritourism Code Changes

4- Written Comments

8- Hearing Testimony

Organizations Commenting:

- S&B Farms

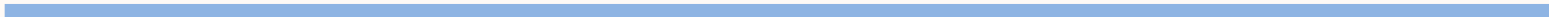


Multiple Viewpoints (Attachment 9)

Proposed AAB Agritourism Code Changes

Written Comments- Issues:

- Need to keep agriculture as a food producer viable. Important for food security. Need Skagit County to protect farmers and farming.
- Would like to see a compromise



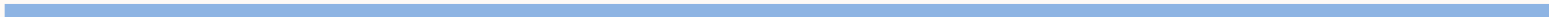
Comments Outside SC (Attachment 10) Proposed AAB Agritourism Code Changes

Comments in Support of Proposed Agritourism Code Changes

36– Written Comments

2- Hearing Testimony

(This number does not include Save Skagit Venues)



Incomplete Comments (Attachment 11) Proposed AAB Agritourism Code Changes

Comments in Support of Proposed Agritourism Code Changes

151- Written Comments

(This number does not include Save Skagit Venues)



After deadline (Attachment 12) Proposed AAB Agritourism Code Changes

Comments in Support of Proposed Agritourism Code Changes 23– Written Comments

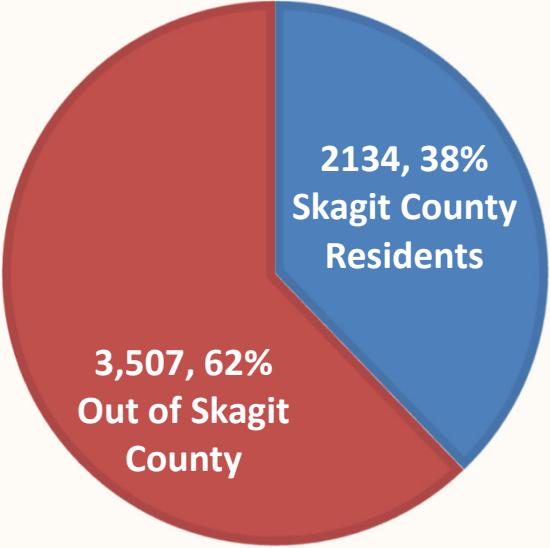
(This number does not include Save Skagit Venues)



Save Skagit Venues (Attachment 13) Proposed AAB Agritourism Code Changes

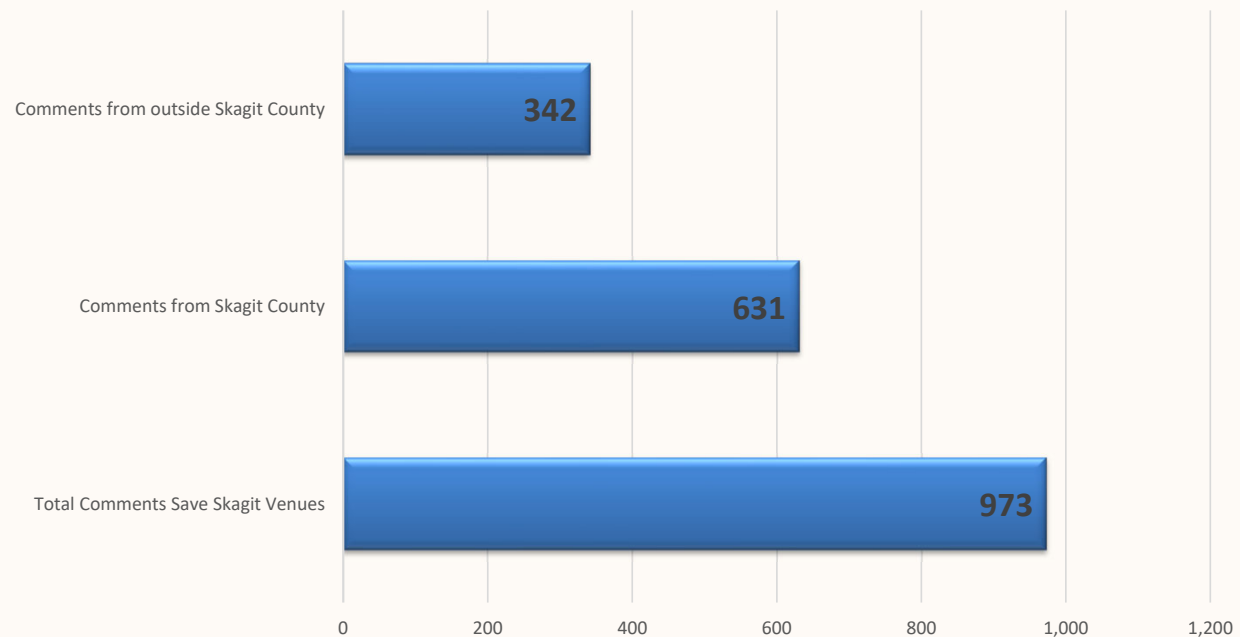
FIGURE 2 SIGNATUES FOR SAVE SKAGIT VENUES (SSV) CHANGE.ORG
PETITION

■ Signatures from SC ■ Signatures from outside SC ■



Save Skagit Venues (Attachment 13) Proposed AAB Agritourism Code Changes

Figure 3 Comments on Save Skagit Venues Change.org Petition



Save Skagit Venues (Attachment 13)

Proposed AAB Agritourism Code Changes

Written request from Friends of Skagit County 7/21/23 to Change.org to remove the petition because it violated Change.org community policies by having misinformation on the website. The community policies on Change.org said they would remove the petition if it was found that the policies were violated.

Friends of Skagit County requested the petition be removed because the website contained misinformation, disinformation and was misleading. Change.org did not remove the petition at the request of Friends of Skagit County.



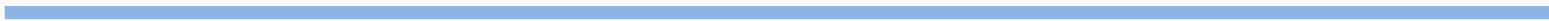
The Department had no communication with Change.org and can confirm that the website did have misinformation on the website.

Multi-Stakeholder Group (Attachment 14) Proposed AAB Agritourism Code Changes

Agritourism Multi-Stakeholder Group made up of businesses was formed to develop a counter proposal collaboratively.

Stakeholders in this group:

- Big Lake Trees & Events
- Boldly Grown Farm
- Christianson's Nursery
- County Cousins, Inc.
- Eagle Haven Winery
- Gordon Skagit Farms
- Maplehurst Farm
- Salt Box Barn
- Skagit Tourism Bureau
- Skagitonians to Preserve Farmland
- Skagit Tulip Festival
- Skagit Valley Wedding Rentals
- Washington Bulb/Roosengarden
- Willowbrook Manner



Multi-Stakeholder Group (Attachment 14) Proposed AAB Agritourism Code Changes

Recommends adding the following definitions to SCC 14.04.020

Agritourism- Agritourism is a commercial enterprise at a working farm, ranch or other agricultural business for the enjoyment of visitors that generates supplemental income for the owners. Activities may involve education, entertainment, outdoor activities, hospitality, life events, farm events, food service, farm stays, or similar purpose. These activities link to and support the primary agriculture activity of the land and its economic viability. Agritourism activities are separate and distinct from Farm-based businesses and agricultural support services.



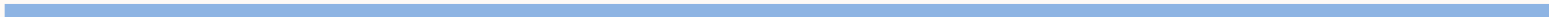
Multi-Stakeholder Group (Attachment 14) Proposed AAB Agritourism Code Changes

Recommends adding the following definitions to SCC 14.04.020

Farm Event Venue: means an ongoing business operation at a privately-owned facility or site within Ag-NRL zone for the purpose of hosting agritourism events or activities.

Agricultural support services: any nonagricultural use which is directly related to agriculture and directly dependent upon agriculture for its existence. These support services generally exist off-site and within districts that are intended to facilitate the production, marketing, and distribution of agricultural products.

Agricultural support services are separate and distinct from farm-based businesses.



Multi-Stakeholder Group (Attachment 14) Proposed AAB Agritourism Code Changes

Recommends adding the following definitions to SCC 14.04.020

Farm-based business – an on-farm commercial enterprise developed to the direct marketing of unprocessed and/or value added and soil dependent agricultural products that are produced, processed, and sold on-site. Farm-based businesses are intended to supplement farm income, improve the efficiency of farming, and provide employment to farm family members. **Farm based businesses are separate and distinct from agriculture support services and Agritourism.**



Multi-Stakeholder Group (Attachment 14) Proposed AAB Agritourism Code Changes

Recommends including Agritourism as an agricultural accessory use subject to the following:

- Demonstration of farm income (by IRS federal form E, F, or equivalent) agricultural lease income may be included per SC implementation of Ch. 84.34 RCW, Open Space Taxation Act
- Will not result in permanent conversion of farmland
- Will not interfere with surrounding farm operations and practices
- Agritourism activities are subject to Skagit County's right to farm ordinance No. 12815
- Will provide experiences to visitors that promote and enhance Skagit agriculture overall.



Multi-Stakeholder Group (Attachment 14) Proposed AAB Agritourism Code Changes

Recommends creating a limited entry permit system for Farm Event Venues with a primary purpose of Agritourism.

- Establish a cap on total number of permits available with preference for existing Farm Event Venues
- Limited Entry Farm Event Venue Permits should be subject to renew every (3) to (5) years.
- Adding to permitted uses within SCC 14.16.400(2) Farm Event Venues serving no more than 25 persons for the primary purpose of providing educational classes, direct instruction, workshops, trainings or similar which are directly related to on-site agricultural production.



Multi-Stakeholder Group (Attachment 14) Proposed AAB Agritourism Code Changes

Adding Administrative Special Uses within SCC 14.16.400(3)

- **Farm Event Venues serving up to 100 persons for the purpose of agritourism subject to the following:**
 - **Events may occur no more than 24 days per year.**
 - **No new buildings can be built except when using the footprint of an existing building or from an existing foundation that is still intact.**
 - **A conservation easement with a binding site plan is placed on the subject parcel where the Farm Event Venue is located.**



Multi-Stakeholder Group (Attachment 14) Proposed AAB Agritourism Code Changes

Adding Hearing Examiners Special Uses within SCC 14.16.400(4)

- Farm Event Venues: serving more than 100 persons and/or occurring more than 24 days per year, for the purpose of agritourism subject to the following:
 - Events may occur more than 24 days per year as determined by the Hearing Examiner based on site-specific evaluation and if events do not create a detrimental level of electrical interference, line voltage fluctuation, noise, vibration, smoke, dust, odors, heat, glare, traffic or other impacts on the surrounding area.
 - No new buildings can be built except when using the footprint of an existing building or form a existing foundation that is intact.
 - A conservation easement with a binding site plan is place on the subject parcel where the Farm Event Venue is located.
-

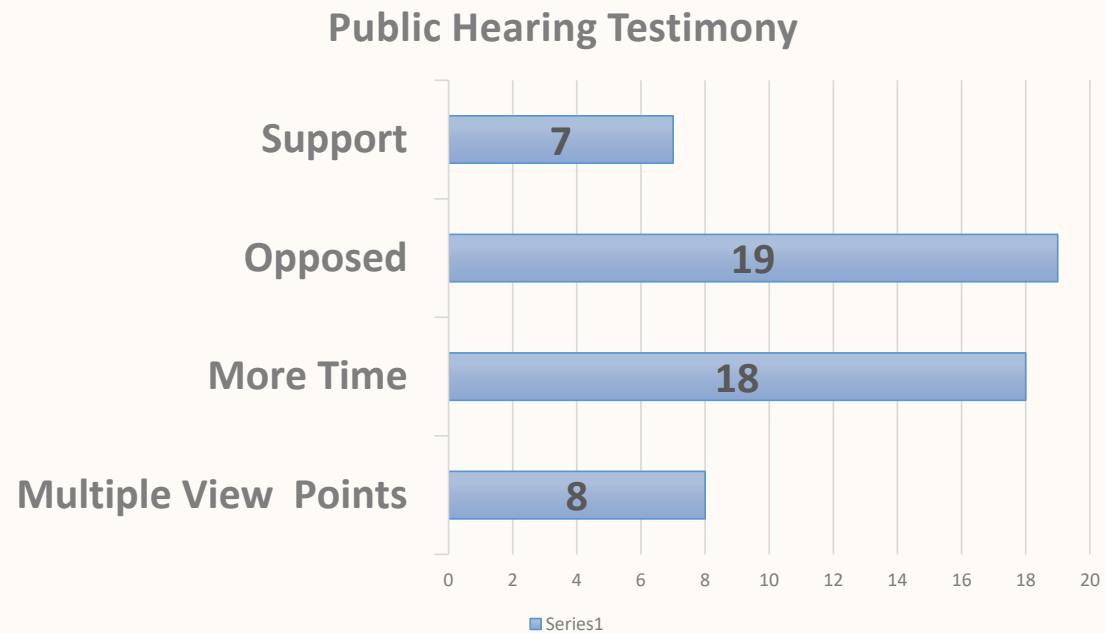


Multi-Stakeholder Group (Attachment 14) Proposed AAB Agritourism Code Changes

Department Response: We would encourage this group or any other organization or individuals to submit these proposed code changes to the annual docket. The deadline for submission for the docket is the last business day of July.



Public Hearing Comments (Attachment 15) Proposed AAB Agritourism Code Changes



52 public comments, with 2 commenters not residing in Skagit County



Next Steps

Meeting Date	Topic Area
April 25, 2023	Work Session Agricultural Advisory Board's Agritourism Recommendations
June 13, 2023	Work Session Agricultural Advisory Board's Agritourism Recommendations
July 25, 2023	Public Hearing on Agricultural Advisory Board's Agritourism Recommendations
October 10, 2023	Discussion of Public Comment on the Agricultural Advisory Board's Agritourism Recommendations
December 12, 2023	Tentative deliberations on proposed Agritourism Code Changes

Supporting Documents for Agritourism can be found at:

www.skagitcounty.net/departments/planningandpermit/agritourismmain.htm

