

Community Advisory Group on Proposed Agritourism Code Changes to the Skagit County Planning Commission

Purpose Statement:

To provide policy recommendations to PDS staff in drafting an Agritourism Code that addresses the Board of County Commissioners' remand criteria, supporting the Skagit County Planning Commission's continued work with both the public and the Agricultural Advisory Board to develop a revised recommendation on Agritourism for the Board of County Commissioners.

Resolution [#R20240132](#)

The remand criteria was presented as the following topics for the group to work through:

1. Define Agritourism and clarify the scope by specifying what activities fall outside the current definition of Agricultural Accessory Uses.
2. Define the criteria for full and lawful participation in the annual Skagit Valley Tulip Festival, ensuring that it is accessible, open, and offers adequate and equitable opportunities for all interested parties.
3. Determine whether Agritourism should be treated the same east of Sedro-Woolley as in the Skagit and Samish Delta areas and define the approach for each scenario.
4. Determine whether temporary use/events are sufficiently detailed in Skagit County Code for agritourism activities within Ag-NRL zoned lands.
5. Assess the consistency of the Proposed Agritourism Code Amendments and existing code with the King County v. Friends of Sammamish Valley State Supreme Court Decision, along with other relevant state-level actions related to agritourism.

Additionally, members were given the opportunity to identify other topics to be determined by the advisory group.

Organization:

The advisory group aimed to include diverse representation of Skagit County farmers with backgrounds in agriculture, including those with interest or experience in agritourism.

The initial recommended membership structure was comprised of 12-person group from the following:

- Nine (9) producer representatives, three (3) representatives from each of the following: large-scale farms/farmers, small/mid-scale farms/farmers, agritourism operators, including at least one wedding venue operator.
- Three (3) organization representatives; one representative from each of the following: Skagit Valley Tulip Festival; Skagit Festival of Family Farms; and Skagit Tourism Bureau.

After much outreach the Department recruited 9 members as listed representing the following:

Amy Frye, Boldly Grown Farm	Audrey Matheson, Bow Hill Blueberries
Darrin Morrison, Morrison Farms	Robert Ashby/Nicole Roozen, Skagit Valley Tulip Festival
Jessie Anderson, Maplehurst Farms	Kai Ottesen, Hedlin's Family Farms
Kristen Keltz, Skagit Tourism Bureau	
Jennifer Schuh, Schuh Farms and Skagit Festival of Family Farms Board Member	
Matt Steinman, Foothill Farms and Agricultural Advisory Board Member	

Desired Outcome of 8-meeting series

The group was asked to provide specific, actionable, realistic, and enforceable recommendations to County staff on the areas needing refinement identified by the Board (listed above). These recommendations were intended to assist the Department in drafting code amendments, in addition to the previous community input, [Skagit County Agritourism Situation Assessment Report](#) and input from the Agricultural Advisory Board. The request was that the recommendations represent group consensus (as much as possible) by the conclusion of the 8-meeting series; dissenting opinions on the recommendations were included for County staff's consideration. PDS advised the group not to provide specific code language but recommendations that could be used for staff to develop code language. The goal was by the conclusion of the meeting series, the group members would provide specific, actionable, realistic, and enforceable recommendations on each of the areas identified in the remand resolution, which will be used by PDS staff to draft policy recommendations for the Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners' consideration.

Decision making process

The advisory group used a modified consensus approach to decision-making. Alternate views or dissention were encouraged as it would allow PDS staff to understand nuance and communicate this nuance to the commission.

Meeting Logistics:

The group was asked to commit to an eight-meeting series occurring every few weeks on Thursday, for three hours, and facilitated by a neutral third-party (Meg Harris, Triangle Associates). Skagit County staff present included Tara Satushek, Senior Planner (Primary Project staff lead) and Jack Moore, PDS Director. Meetings were intentionally held in a non-county owned building to create a neutral environment. Meetings were primarily held at Skagit Publishing's Community Room and two were held at the Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Although the advisory group was not subject to the Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA), as it was purely advisory, temporary working group and not established by an ordinance or resolution, it complied with the intent of OPMA. To ensure project transparency a project webpage was created to post all final documents and reference materials were posted to the webpage. The public were welcome to observe the meetings and copies of materials were available for them. All meetings were video recorded, transcribed and available to the public.

In-person attendance was strongly encouraged. Virtual/hybrid options were available upon request for members to ensure consistent participation. Participants were also provided with the option of sending in-person alternates or delegates when attendance was not possible. It was requested that delegates be briefed in order to participate fully in the conversation, which builds on previous meetings. Members missing a meeting were encouraged to contact another advisory group member ahead of the following meeting.

Meeting Summary Matrix

Meeting Date/Location	Topics Covered	Outcomes/ Deliverables
March 27, 2025 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. Skagit Publishing Community Room: 1215 Anderson Road	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group introductions and agreement Introduction to CAG and OPMA Group Charter Skagit County Timeline Overview of Remand Topics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreement on using a modified consensus decision-making process. PDS will create a webpage for CAG.
April 10, 2025 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. Skagit Publishing Community Room: 1215 Anderson Road	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Topic Schedule Remand Topic #1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decision on how to approach remand topics.
April 24, 2025 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve 10441 Bayview-Edison Road	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revisited Remand Topic #1; began # 5 Summary of King County v. FOSV Discussion of Agritourism definitions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preliminary recommendations of threshold metrics for intensity of activities.
May 8, 2025 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. Skagit Publishing Community Room: 1215 Anderson Road	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revisit Remand Topics 1, 4 and 5 Process for coming to consensus recommendation discussion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General support for a definition of agritourism that included three elements (Land stays in production; soil dependent activity; and financial benefits to farmer).
May 22, 2025 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. Skagit Publishing Community Room: 1215 Anderson Road	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revisit Remand Topics 2 and #4 Skagit Co. Prosecuting Attorney presentation and discussion of King Co. v. FOSV 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Advisory Group Recommended Definitions Draft.
May 29, 2025 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. Skagit Publishing Community Room: 1215 Anderson Road	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jenn Tate, Dept of Commerce consultant presentation on draft WA Agritourism Study and Report. Approach to drafting responses and coming to consensus. Define categories or thresholds that can be incorporated into the response for Topic 1. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final research and prepare for modified consensus voting at next meeting.

June 17, 2025 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve 10441 Bayview- Edison Road	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preliminary consensus recommendation on Remand Topics 3 and 5. Items needing more information are 1, 2, and 4. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft synthesis on recommendations. • The group voted and reached consensus on topic 3 and 5, with 2 pending discussion with Nicole, SVTF Executive Director.
June 26, 2025 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. Skagit Publishing Community Room: 1215 Anderson Road	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final recommendations package. • Presentation/discussion of AAB Remand Response Letter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The group voted and reached consensus on topic 1, 2 & 4. • Full recommendations package.