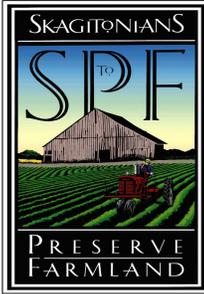


SKAGITONIAN



www.skagitonians.org

414A Snoqualmie Street
P.O. Box 2405
Mount Vernon, WA
98273

(360) 336-3974
FAX 336-9269

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Alan Mesman
President

Bob Hart
Vice President

Peggy Flynn
Treasurer

John Roozen
Secretary

Earl Angevine
Julie Blazek
Bud Egbers
Dave Hedlin
Debbie Inglis
Mac Madenwald
Janet McRae
Darrin Morrison
Steve Sakuma
Sherri Stites
Brian Waltner

STAFF

Allen Rozema
Executive Director

Susan Macek
Development Director

Linda Jones
Office Manager

Wetland Mitigation Banking Issues Need Our Attention

A Message from Executive Director Allen Rozema

Fall 2007

Dear Friends of SPF,

A relatively new land use issue has come of age in Skagit Valley. This is the issue of wetland banking. By way of a very brief background, the State of Washington adopted legislation creating a wetland mitigation-banking program in 1998. In 2004, the legislature directed the Department of Ecology to conduct a test of the wetland banking certification rule.



To date, this "test" has served primarily to highlight inconsistencies between the Growth Management Act (GMA) and the wetland mitigation-banking program, specifically in the area of destroying two GMA protected resources, wetlands and agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance.

Currently, localities planning under GMA are required to identify and retain agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance, AND to identify and retain critical areas, including wetlands. Yet the current pilot projects in Skagit Valley, despite legislative directives to the contrary, have not yet developed a "screening process" to avoid the siting of wetland mitigation bank on agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance. The result in Skagit Valley is that functioning wetlands are being destroyed to pave the way for new development, and agricultural lands are being destroyed to create wetland mitigation banks.

SPF is calling on Skagit County and the State of Washington to slow down and further study the cumulative effects of multiple wetland banks in the Skagit Valley and on working agricultural land. SPF would like to see Skagit County prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for each wetland bank proposed until the State develops permanent rules and criteria for siting these banks. An EIS does not substantially delay an already multi-year permitting process, but allows broader public input and evaluation of all the issues associated with the destruction of two GMA protected resources.

“ . . . in Skagit Valley . . . functioning wetlands are being destroyed to pave the way for new development, and agricultural lands are being destroyed to create wetland mitigation banks.”

If you live in Skagit County please call one or all three of our County Commissioners at 336-9300 and request that an EIS be prepared to evaluate all the impacts to Skagit Valley when wetland banks are proposed to be placed on GMA protected agricultural lands.

If you live outside Skagit County please call Sen. Mary Margaret Haugen's office at 360-786-7618 and let her know there should be a moratorium on wetland bank certifications until the Department of Ecology adopts official rules that include criteria for when and how wetland banks are sited.

With your help we can better address the public policy impacts of this new emerging land use and help guide the placement of wetland banks in areas that are better suited to enhancement while protecting working agricultural lands.

Board Members Receive State Appointments from Gov. Gregoire

Puget Sound Restoration, Farmland Preservation are focus of efforts

We are pleased to congratulate and recognize two SPF Board members for their recent key gubernatorial appointments.

Immediate Past President Steve Sakuma is one of seven members of the Governor's Puget Sound Partnership's Leadership Council, the governing body of a new state agency charged with leading efforts to protect and restore Puget Sound. Current SPF Vice President and Land Protection Committee Chair Bob Hart joins an 18-member Farmland Preservation Task Force appointed by Gov. Chris Gregoire to provide the first statewide policy guidance for the Office of Farmland Preservation that was created as a result of overwhelming support by House and Senate majorities during the last legislative session.

These appointments recognize the valuable expertise and talents of two SPF board members who have a long legacy of public service and engagement, and who have made significant professional, personal and civic contributions to the viability of agriculture in Skagit Valley. Congratulations!

9th Annual Harvest Dinner & Auction Feature Skagit's Best

Save the date for 2008! Saturday, September 27, 2008!

More than \$90,000 was grossed to benefit farmland preservation and the Farm to Institution initiative at this year's Harvest Dinner & Auction at St. Joseph Center on Sept. 22. Some 330 SPF supporters enjoyed fresh local foodstuffs prepared by 15 of the top chefs and restaurants from throughout Skagit Valley and also had a chance to bid on a variety of silent and live auction items during the evening.

Special thanks to our primary sponsors Washington Alder LLC and their employees and Washington Mutual. Thanks to all 43 of our sponsors and the many volunteers whose help and support made the evening so special.



(Left to right) SPF Board Member Brian and Christie Waltner; Chef Thomas Palmer prepares Yukon gold potatoes; SPF members and auction donors Jim and Ann Barborinas; former SPF Board Member and friend Lou Pepper with SPF Executive Director Allen Rozema.

Photos by Sarah Duncan

Joint Agriculture/Tribe Project Studies Irrigation Systems for Potato Growers

In a first-of-its-kind jointly supported research effort, the Swinomish Tribe and SPF participated this summer with the Washington State Seed Potato Commission, Bertrand Irrigation District, Western Washington Agricultural Association, and The Nature Conservancy in a cooperative study to evaluate the efficiency of two irrigation systems for potato growers in Skagit and Whatcom counties.

The goal of the study, undertaken by Don McMoran and Troy Peters of WSU Extension, was to evaluate and compare the current high-pressure irrigation system used by many potato growers with a micro-sprinkler based system that has been touted as more efficient for delivering water to plants. Results will be shared with potato farmers to help them evaluate the best system for crop performance and economic value, with the least environmental impact.

SPF is pleased to have partnered with the Tribe and others in the agricultural community on this mutually beneficial project.

Gifts That Keep on Giving!

Six years ago SPF successfully raised \$90,000 to secure 19.4 acres of prime farmland around Washington State University's Northwestern Washington Research & Extension Center (WSU NWREC) west of Mount Vernon, which was under development pressure. The lands surrounding WSU's research center are essential for performing the research that keeps crops grown in the Skagit Valley and Western Washington both healthy and economically viable.

SPF is in the process of transferring the land to WSU, and we want to recognize the long-term benefits of the original donations to help secure it. In addition to permanently protecting the acreage around the research facility, these gifts supported the vision of an \$8 million capital expansion and remodel of the WSU NWREC, \$2 million of which was donated by local farmers, businesses and organizations. Once the sale of the land to WSU is completed, SPF will reinvest those gifts again to buy more at-risk farmland.

Thank you for supporting SPF in our important work to protect and preserve agricultural lands in the wonderful Skagit Valley.