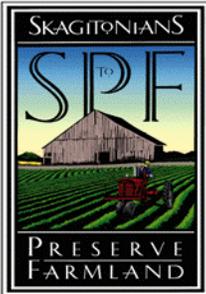


# SKAGITONIAN

Winter 2009



[www.skagitians.org](http://www.skagitians.org)

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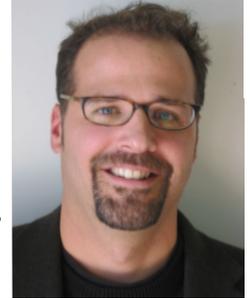
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*A Message from Executive Director Allen Rozema*

## SPF Appeals Decision to Create Wetland Mitigation Bank on Farmland

On Friday, January 23, 2009, after 9 days of hearings, 201 exhibits and 27 witnesses, spread over 10 months, the Skagit County Hearing Examiner ruled in favor of converting 396 acres of farmland in the Nookachamps basin into a private commercial wetland mitigation bank.



This is a truly disappointing decision as it perpetuates the fallacy that converting agricultural land is the solution to solving our community problems related to growth and urbanization. Farmland continues to be looked at by county and city planners, elected officials and developers as first choice to increase their tax base and to replace critical habitat lost to subdivisions, parking lots and urban runoff. Skagit farmers have been stewarding their land for generations, providing food that feeds our families and our nation, providing wildlife habitat for thousands of shorebirds, waterfowl and raptors, and helping keep the watershed so healthy that the Skagit Watershed is the only one in the state with a steady and secure population of all six salmon species.

SPF acknowledges that mitigation is a well-accepted practice employed to assist in maintaining critical natural resources and that wetland mitigation banking holds promise in easing the administrative burden placed on regulators and developers to mitigate for the destruction of wetlands. However, SPF disagrees that wetland mitigation banking is providing an ecological lift that many advocates so boldly claim. Wetland mitigation banks merely “relocate” wetlands from one part of the county to another and transfer the ecological services of those wetlands from one area to another. Wetland banks are only “holding the line” ecologically—they are not adding to the ecological base. In addition, wetland mitigation banks placed on agricultural lands act as “de facto” expansions of cities. Development impacts are not mitigated where the impact is occurring, but transferred to farmland where the pressure increases to grow more food on less land.

As this news bulletin goes to press Skagitians to Preserve Farmland is filing an appeal of the Hearing Examiner Decision to the Skagit Board of County Commissioners. (*Check the SPF website [www.skagitians.org](http://www.skagitians.org) for updates.*) The Board of SPF understands that in order to have an agricultural industry in Skagit Valley 100 years from now tough decisions need to be made today that stop the conversion of farmland to other uses. The slow erosion of our agricultural land base in Skagit County, the state and the country must end if we are going to have local, safe and secure food supplies for future generations.

The SPF Board is committed to protecting every precious acre of farmland left in Skagit County. That includes holding our elected officials accountable for supporting land use decisions that favor the long term survival of agriculture. Our appeal gives the County Commissioners the opportunity to review the project against the agricultural protection policies and rules currently in place, which to date have failed to be reviewed and considered.

Who ultimately suffers when farmland is converted to other uses? You and I-- and those who follow in our footsteps.

The mission of Skagitians to Preserve Farmland is to ensure the economic viability of Skagit County's farmers, farming and farmland through land protection, advocacy and outreach and education.

## Meet Our Members

*This new feature in the Skagitonian is an opportunity to learn about our members and our connections to the amazing Skagit Valley. SPF supporters come from many walks of life and many places. We appreciate every one of you! Thank you for the difference you make!*



**My name:** Wendy Pare

**Where I live:** Edison, Wa We have owned the property since 1992 and lived here since 2005.

**What I do:** Retired vice president of a large demolition company in Snoqualmie, Wa.

**I have been a member of SPF:** 1 year

**Why I support SPF:** It goes back to my family roots. I was raised in a culture where we grew a lot of our own foods. It was part of our lifestyle to have access to farm fresh foods that either we grew or raised or that we bought from friends. When I retired I realized how much I missed that tradition. I wanted to give back to an organization like SPF because I support the mission to stop sprawl through securing development rights, to preserve farmland and make it economically viable for farmers to farm, and ultimately to have access to high quality food.

One of the greatest pleasures that my husband and I enjoy is sitting down to a wonderful meal of delicious, locally grown and prepared foods. I have seen over the past 30 years what happens when urban sprawl takes over farmland for more "profitable" efforts and it saddens me. The potential of losing what we have in this Valley is why I joined SPF and volunteer on a regular basis.

## Skagit County Businesses Support SPF

Thanks to the generous donations of these Skagit County businesses, SPF is starting off the New Year with several technology and office upgrades:

**Carletti Architects**, Mount Vernon, network file server

**Seven Sisters, Inc.**, Sedro-Woolley, external tape drive

**G-Bros Incorporated**, Sedro-Woolley and Burlington, cabinet, desk and chairs.

Their support has saved SPF thousands of dollars and contributed to more streamlined and secure operations. Thank you!

## Camera Anyone?

SPF is in need of a point-and-shoot digital camera, 8 MP. If you would like to donate a gently used or new one, please give us a call at 360.336.3974.



Check out SPF's Preserving Skagit Valley Farmland group at [www.flickr.com](http://www.flickr.com), search "Skagitonians" and considering adding your photos.



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## Want Your SPF News in Color? Go Green with SPF's Online Bulletin!

SPF is stepping up efforts to conserve resources even more in light of the economic situation. We encourage you to sign up to receive the quarterly news bulletin electronically. Help us save on postage and printing costs, and enjoy SPF's updates in color! Just e-mail [info@skagitonians.org](mailto:info@skagitonians.org), put "SPF E-mail News" in the subject line and we'll add you to the list. If you prefer to receive the mailed version we will gladly send to you.



## Volunteers Requested

SPF events and programs are made possible with the help of volunteers who contribute their time, talent and resources to raise awareness about SPF and its mission. If you have an interest in volunteering for SPF, we can match it! Please call us at 360.336.3974 if you would like to discuss any of these opportunities:

**Outreach and education**—Crop Identity signs, InFARMation Radio, representing SPF at community events, SPF Member Picnic

**Fundraising**—Special events like the Harvest Dinner & Auction (procure auction items, assist with the dinner, dessert dash, registration, check-out, set up and clean up)

**Administrative**—mailings, filing, data entry