

Skagit County Farm Bureau  
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Vice President  
Chairman of the Legislative Committee

Letter to the SPF, Save Skagit Venues, and others reviewing current policy.

August 2, 2023

I am writing this response as today I may not be available in time to attend the meeting as I am caring for my father that has been diagnosed with several forms of cancer.

Outlined below are a couple of the key beliefs and polices of the Washington State Farm Bureau. These clearly indicate that they support the Ag-tourism and rights outlined in the U.S. Constitution.

#### Farm Bureau Beliefs

The central issue in all societies is freedom of the individual versus concentration of power that destroys freedom. Economic progress, cultural advancement, and ethical and religious principles flourish best where citizens are free, responsible individuals. America's unparalleled progress is based on freedom and dignity of the individual, sustained by basic moral and religious concepts. We believe:

- 1) In our constitutional form of government and its division of powers as intended by the nation's founders, the competitive free enterprise system, and the protection of God-given unalienable rights of the individual.
- 2) The United States is a true republic (rule by law), with the federal Constitution as the supreme law of the land. We support a strict, literal interpretation of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.
- 3) In freedom of press, speech, peaceful assembly, and religion. We pledge ourselves to the preservation of these unalienable rights and the defeat of socialistic tendencies whenever they appear and however small in nature the tendency may appear.
- 4) That the economic law of supply and demand, private ownership management, and the profit and loss system ultimately determine true market prices.
- 5) Personal property rights, including water rights, are fundamental. By protecting property rights, we preserve our economic stability, the health and welfare of our citizens, the public good of this state, and the sovereignty of our nation. We oppose any erosion of these rights. Property rights cannot be taken away without infringing on rights guaranteed by the Constitution.
- 6) That the centralization of power and authority is a threat to our very existence, life, and liberties. We advocate local control in as many areas as possible. Government's regulatory functions should be based on law and be minimally intrusive. Farmers and ranchers should be included as stakeholders in all policy discussions affecting agriculture.
- 7) That we have the right and responsibility of speaking through a voluntary organization without government intervention. To safeguard and restore our unalienable rights, we need to actively engage in public discourse at all

levels of government through proactive participation in policy development, community action, or any other necessary public process.

8) The strength of every civilized society is the family. We support and encourage the promotion of the fundamental principles and family values on which our nation was founded.

9) That a monopoly wherever found (labor, industry, government, or agriculture), jeopardizes freedom and self-government.

10) That government should stimulate, not discourage, individual initiative.

11) In the vital role education plays in helping students understand and appreciate the basic principles of our system of government and the competitive enterprise system.

#### 4.7 – Tourism

We support efforts to promote ag-tourism and ag-education so the public will be aware of the value of agriculture to their lives. We encourage local and state groups (including government) to support efforts to facilitate and promote on farm ag-tourism in conjunction with an ongoing farm. (2005)

It is my interpretation that any attempts to limit the number of days of operation would be paramount to a taking and/or the denial of the right to free association under the constitution. With that being said there also needs to be an understanding the farmers have the right to farm and if or when complaints come from neighbors, service providers, or tourists visiting events, the county should refuse those complaints unless they can quote the specific code or law that has been broken in the NRL zone. I have submitted a compliant form as part of written information at the hearing last week. I think something like that should be required to be completed before action can be taken against any farmer in the NRL zone.

It is still my belief that there needs to be a partnership between farmers, and the venues, to inform and teach the public about the needs of the farm community to continue to farming in this competitive environment. These key issue statements could be developed by the Ag - advisory board or the same group that is meeting now. They could include topics like 1.) water for irrigation, 2.) maintenance of tide gates and drainage, 3.) overtime and other labor related issues, 4.) elk damage (spread of disease and food safety audits). These topics could then be part of the education that is displayed, taught, dispensed, and passed along in some form to those attending the venues in order to build a better bridge between the farmers needs and the publics' understanding of what it takes to survive in farming.

I could write much more on this topic but I am limited on time so for now I wanted you to see the Farm Bureau perspective.

Thank you!

Sincerely,

Larry R. Jensen  
Vice President  
Skagit County Farm Bureau