

Memorandum to improve the Ag Lands Buffer Proposal

To: Planning Commission

From: David Whipple

Subject: Incentive to promote participation in development of conservation plans

Date: 3/3/03

Proposal

Amend the DCD recommendation so that properties that are GMA Ag lands, participate in the Tax Exempt Program, or are able to demonstrate commercial agricultural activities will receive an exemption from the buffer requirements when they have developed and implemented a conservation program that incorporates best management practices and is approved by the Conservation District. The requirements of this proposal could be similar to those developed in the recent Skagit County regulations, but strengthened to remedy some of the shortcomings regarding enforcement and continuation of unsound practices.

Points of Emphasis

1. By making the exemption contingent on having a plan developed and implemented property owners will be financially encouraged to participate in the Conservation District's watershed management projects.
2. This effort is to limit further damage and not to mandate restoration.
3. The BMP's that could be used are listed in the Skagit Co reg. appendix.
4. The enforcement process would be complaint driven and property owners who have implemented an approved plan would be able to easily document their compliance. Monitoring compliance would also be quite straightforward.
5. All properties would be treated fairly and have equal opportunity to gain the benefits available to others.
6. Mitigation efforts will be designed to meet the needs individual properties and designed to address the particular properties situation.
7. This meets the goals of the county, the litigants, and affected owners.
8. This will further the Conservation Districts goal of developing watershed management and enhancement plans. Additionally, this will improve data collection and coordination opportunities.
9. It will be important to identify and improve parts of the Skagit Co. program that should be better developed. One area would be to make the exemption contingent upon implementation of an approved plan.