

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL AGENDA BILL

NO. AB2009-308

CLEARANCES	Initial	Date	Date Received in Council Office	Agenda Date	Assigned to:
Originator: C. Dean Martin	CMM	6/23/2009	<div style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold; letter-spacing: 0.5em;">RECEIVED</div> <div style="font-size: 1.2em; font-weight: bold;">JUN 29 2009</div> <div style="font-size: 1.1em; font-weight: bold;">WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL</div>	July 7, 2009	Natural Resources / County Council
Division Head:					
Dept. Head: David Stahleim	DS	6-23-09			
Prosecutor: Royce Buckingham	RB	6-23-09			
Purchasing/Budget:					
Executive: Pete Kremen					

TITLE OF DOCUMENT: Declaring the County Council's goals for farmland preservation, its priorities for consideration and adoption of policies to further farmland preservation, and requesting the county administrator to allocate staff support to accommodate this important policy initiative

ATTACHMENTS:

Resolution
Agricultural Land Preservation Tools: Recommendations to the County Council from the Agricultural Advisory Committee; dated April 7, 2009.

SEPA review required? () Yes (x) NO SEPA review completed? () Yes () NO	Should Clerk schedule a hearing? () Yes (x) NO Requested Date:
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SUMMARY STATEMENT OR LEGAL NOTICE LANGUAGE: (If this item is an ordinance or requires a public hearing, you must provide the language for use in the required public notice. Be specific and cite RCW or WCC as appropriate. Be clear in explaining the intent of the action.)

The resolution affirms the County's goal of maintaining at least 100,000 acres of agricultural land in Whatcom County and accepts the Agricultural Advisory Committee's Rural Land Study (2007) that recommended additional protection for identified lands.

The Agricultural Advisory Committee has reviewed the work of the Agricultural Land Technical Review Committee and has made recommendations regarding agricultural land preservation tools (attached). The resolution requests that the Agricultural Advisory Committee and staff develop code and planning document recommendations related to protecting land identified in the Rural Land Study and other agricultural lands.

COMMITTEE ACTION:
7/07/2009: Forwarded to Council for approval

COUNCIL ACTION:
7/07/2009: Council Approved 7-0
Res. 2009-040

Related County Contract #:	Related File Numbers:	Ordinance or Resolution Number: Res. 2009-040
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Please Note: Once adopted and signed, ordinances and resolutions are available for viewing and printing on the County's website at: www.co.whatcom.wa.us/council.

SPONSORED BY: Consent
PROPOSED BY: PDS
INTRODUCTION DATE: 7/07/2009

RESOLUTION # 2009-040

DECLARING THE COUNTY COUNCIL'S GOALS FOR FARMLAND PRESERVATION, ITS PRIORITIES FOR CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION OF POLICIES TO FURTHER FARMLAND PRESERVATION, AND REQUESTING THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATION TO ALLOCATE STAFF SUPPORT TO ACCOMMODATE THIS IMPORTANT POLICY INITIATIVE

WHEREAS, following consideration of docketing a series of comprehensive plan amendments and zoning code amendments in 2006, the Council agreed to submit the proposed agriculture land work program to a technical review committee and the Agriculture Advisory Committee for review and recommendations; and

WHEREAS, the Technical Review Committee was appointed by the Executive in 2007, and met throughout 2008 to review and consider a variety of strategies for reducing the potential threats to agriculture from rapid or widespread conversion of lands out of agricultural uses; and

WHEREAS, the Agricultural Land Program Technical Review Committee developed information on possible tools and strategies to reduce impacts of development on agricultural lands, and on November 17, 2008 forwarded its conclusions to the Agricultural Advisory Committee for their consideration; and

WHEREAS, the Agricultural Advisory Committee reviewed the Technical Review Committee's work and made recommendations regarding tools and strategies to reduce the rate of conversion and the total development capacity of lands used for agriculture at its March 18, 2009 meeting; and

WHEREAS, the Agricultural Advisory Committee transmitted its recommendations to the County Council at its May 12, 2009 Natural Resources Committee meeting (attached); and

WHEREAS, agriculture is a major industry in Whatcom County with farm gate receipts of approximately \$326 million annually; and

WHEREAS, agriculture requires sufficient land, suppliers, services, and other agricultural infrastructure to be successful; and

WHEREAS, the county has identified 100,000 acres as being the minimum acreage needed in farming to sustain successful long-term agriculture in Whatcom County, and

WHEREAS, there are currently 88,000 acres of agriculturally zoned land in Whatcom County, and

WHEREAS, the Agricultural Advisory Committee recommended additional protection for 22,000 acres of rural zoned land in agricultural use in its 2007 Rural Land Study, and

WHEREAS, while there are varying sets of data relating to the rate of agriculture land conversions to other uses, there is no question that the continuing conversions of agricultural lands to other uses threatens the sustainability of the agricultural industry in Whatcom County and the benefits it brings to the quality of life for Whatcom County residents; and

WHEREAS, The Agricultural Land Program Technical Review Committee developed information on possible tools and strategies to reduce impacts of development on Agricultural lands, and on November 17, 2008 forwarded those tools to the Agricultural Advisory Committee for their consideration; and

WHEREAS, The Agricultural Advisory Committee reviewed the Technical Review Committee's work and made recommendations regarding tools and strategies to reduce threats to agriculture at its March 18, 2009 meeting;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Whatcom County Council that we confirm that 100,000 acres of land available for agricultural use is the minimum goal for ensuring a land base necessary to support a viable agriculture industry in Whatcom County; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the recommendations of the 2007 Rural Land Study by the Agricultural Advisory committee indicating specific rural areas of the County where agricultural land protection efforts should be strengthened are accepted; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Agricultural Advisory Committee and staff are requested to recommend options for code and comprehensive plan amendments to strengthen farm land preservation policies in the areas designated by the Rural Land Study; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the identified tools and strategies presented by the Agricultural Land Program Technical Review Committee and the Agricultural Advisory Committee are endorsed for further development and consideration and that we request that the County Executive authorize County Planning and Development Services staff to work with Council staff and the Agricultural Advisory Committee to develop and recommend appropriate code changes and comprehensive plan amendments enabling implementation of policies to strengthen the protection of agricultural land for agricultural use to include further defining the relationship between protecting agricultural land and critical areas; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that potential effects on agricultural land and its use for agriculture must be considered in the other planning processes currently underway

including the size and establishment of urban growth areas and review of the county's rural areas; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Council acknowledges that the Agricultural Advisory Committee and community-based agricultural interest groups, e.g., Whatcom Farm Friends, support the development of an integrated county land use policy that incorporates and considers the implications for use and availability of water for agriculture, the implications for availability of water for non-consumptive and in stream purposes, and implications on other natural resources in land use decisions.

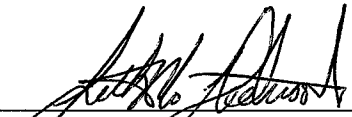
APPROVED this 7th day of July, 2009

ATTEST:

**WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON**



Dana Brown Davis, Council Clerk


Seth Fleetwood, Chairman

APPROVED as to form:


Civil Deputy Prosecutor