

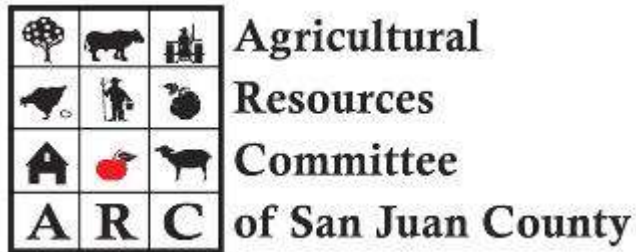
## Adam Zack

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**From:** Faith Van De Putte  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 16, 2021 5:11 PM  
**To:** Comp Plan Update  
**Cc:** Mike Thomas; Christine Minney; Annie McIntyre; Brook Brouwer; Caitlin Herlihy Leck (artofnourishment@gmail.com); Charlie Behnke; dbkane; dillingham.samantha@gmail.com; Kyle Dodd; learner.limbach@gmail.com; Mike Ramsey; Sarah Benson; Sarah Hanson; Steph Coffey (info@sjiaguild.com); Steve Bernheim (savernheim@gmail.com); stonecrestonlopez@gmail.com; sunnyfieldonlopez@gmail.com; 'Winnie & Bob'  
**Subject:** Comments  
**Attachments:** Comments on DCD 2\_5\_21 Memo.docx

Hello,  
Please find attached comments for the 2/19 Planning Commission meeting.  
Thank you,  
Faith

Faith Van De Putte  
*Agriculture Resource Committee of San Juan County*  
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faithv@sanjuanco.com



**TO:** SJC Planning Commission  
Adam Zack, Planner II, DCD  
Linda Kuller, Planning Manager, DCD  
Mike Thomas, County Manager

**From:** San Juan County Agricultural Resource Committee (ARC)

**Date:** 2/16/21

**Subject:** Agricultural Resource Committee (ARC) Comments on the 2/5/21 DCD Memo on San Juan County Comprehensive Plan Element B.2 Land Use and Rural Natural Resource Land Goals and Policies

**Purpose:**

To respond to the 2/5/2021 Department of Community Development comments to the Planning Commission on the ARC's recommendation for the addition of Section 2.2.N Agriculture to the Land Use Element of the Comprehensive Plan.

The ARC originally submitted this recommendation 10/9/2019 and reiterated the recommendation in a memo submitted 1/12/21.

**Notation**

In an effort to keep the thread of comments on this recommendation understandable we continued to use the notations utilized by Department of Community Development (DCD) staff in their 2/5/21 memo and added additional notations for the ARC's response to the DCD comments.

Key to Notations:

- **Blue highlighted bold** ARC recommended policy that stands as originally recommended with no comments from DCD or further comments from ARC.
- ~~Yellow Highlighted and strike through text~~ indicates an ARC recommended policy that DCD staff proposes deleting;

- [Bracketed Text] DCD staff notes or ideas in need of further discussion
- Yellow Highlighted text indicates policy revisions or rewrites suggested by DCD staff
- Green highlighted text indicates ARC's responses to DCD staff's recommendations

**Goal: Protect agricultural land and promote diverse agricultural activities that enhance stewardship and economic viability, and maintain the rural character of San Juan County.**

**Policies:**

**1. Encourage agricultural best management practices that conserve and regenerate soils; sequester carbon; build climate resilience; and protect water quality, fisheries, and wildlife through incentives, education and promotion of programs such as the Voluntary Stewardship Program. (ARC)**

**2. Protect farmland and encourage agricultural productivity by designation and zoning, including innovative zoning techniques and accessory uses listed in RCW 36.70A.177. (ARC)**

**3. Adopt a policy of no net loss of Agricultural Resource Land (ARL). [two ideas: conversion to uses and quantity designated. Replace with two policies below] (SJC STAFF)**

**Conversion to uses:** Encourage owners of farmland to maintain agricultural uses on existing farm properties (SJC STAFF).

**Quantity designated:** Ensure that the quantity of land where agriculture is allowed provides enough land supply to support a thriving local agricultural industry and increase local food security.(SJC STAFF)

**3. Adopt a policy of no net loss of Agricultural Resource Land (ARL).**

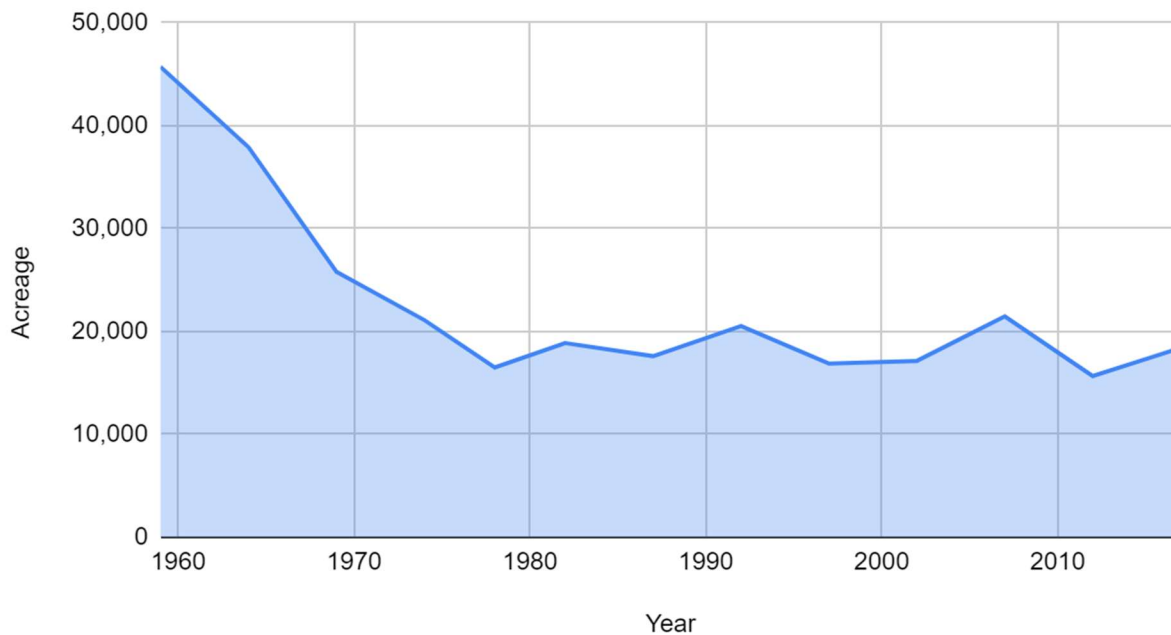
ARC recommends retaining this policy as originally recommended for the following reasons:

- The Growth Management Act requirements for designation of ARL include protections for the current and future agricultural use of that land whether or not the land is currently in ag use. The intent of the land owner is not a consideration in the designation of resource land.
- There is currently a demand for access to agricultural land in San Juan County. This has been recorded in Listening Sessions sponsored by the ARC in 2019, 2020 and 2021, in the continued utilization of the Farmer to Farmland program run by the Ag Guild and in data from the Ag Viability Survey conducted by WSU Survey Center which found that 17% of respondents found access to affordable farmland a challenge and 14% found it a slight to moderate challenge. In that same survey 42% of respondents indicated that they wanted to expand production in the next 5 years.
- ARL is a backstop for the future and provides important but weak protection for agricultural lands. It is a safeguard against development that would make it

unusable in the future for agricultural activities. Why would we want to reduce that potential?

- ARL designation does not force agricultural activity and is compatible with other conservation goals.
- There are examples in WA state of the utilization of a no net loss policy in comprehensive planning for Agricultural Resource Land (or equivalent) they include:
  - Thurston County- OBJECTIVE A: Conserve (no net loss) and enhance agricultural lands for long-term farming use. See page 3-30 of [Comp Plan Draft](#).
  - King County- Removal of land from the Agricultural Production District may only occur if it is mitigated through the replacement of agricultural land abutting the same Agricultural Production District that is, at a minimum, comparable in size, soil quality and agricultural value. See page 24 of [Comp Plan Draft](#).
- The use of ARL designation is a low cost way for our county to permanently protect farmland with existing policy.
- Since 1979 the average total acreage per year of farmland in San Juan County is 19,000. In recognition of this long track record of agricultural activity that has not dropped below a threshold of 15,669 acres (in 2012) we feel that maintaining our current ARL resources are consistent with the needs reflected historically of the amount of land needed for agricultural viability into the future. Data in Chart below is from the USDA Ag Census.

### Acreage vs. Year



4. ~~Develop incentives to~~ [Discussion: develop incentives everywhere or just in AG land? The incentives may be covered in Policy 17 below] encourage agricultural activities, ag-related facilities and infrastructure provided these facilities are located in such a way as to minimize their impact on prime agricultural lands. (SJC STAFF) ~~Incentives could include~~

tax credits, expedited permit review, reduced permit fees, permit exemptions for activities complying with best management practices or similar programs. See REVISED 4 (ARC)

**REVISED 4: Develop incentives for agricultural activities that could include tax credits, expedited permit review, reduced permit fees, permit exemptions for activities complying with best management practices, Voluntary Stewardship Program or similar programs. (ARC)**

5. [covered in staff proposed policy 17 below] Allow farmstands, including direct sales of food, flowers, fiber and value-added agricultural products originating in San Juan County where agriculture is allowed. Ok to strike if key elements are included in REVISED 17 below (ARC)

6. [covered in staff proposed policy 17 below] Allow agritourism where agriculture is allowed. Ok to strike if key elements are included in REVISED 17 below (ARC)

7. [ARC proposed] Amend the Open Space Plan's conservation stewardship goals for agricultural lands to prioritize agricultural production and working farms. Ok to strike if 8 is retained (ARC)

8. [staff proposed, instead of 7 above] **Prioritize agricultural production and working farms on publicly held agricultural conservation lands OK, suggest striking conservation(ARC)**

9. Encourage the leasing of lands held in public trust for agricultural use.

10. Support agricultural viability by encouraging investment in infrastructure on agricultural lands held in public trust.

11. Encourage public agencies to develop conservation easements that support long term agricultural viability.

12. Allow necessary infrastructure and services, which support commercial agriculture and contribute to growing, storing, processing, and distributing a local food supply.

13. Avoid duplication of federal and state regulations that apply to agriculture, resource-based industries and value-added production while reserving the authority to address issues of local concern regarding agricultural activities.

14. Allow flexible options for housing seasonal and year-round agricultural workers

15. [ARC proposed] Create a program whereby Housing REET funds are available to create farm worker housing. Ok to strike (ARC)

16. Encourage the recycling and beneficial use of island biomass and retention of nutrients through composting and biochar production. [Relocate to Climate Change general policies win 2.2.O] **Ok to relocate (ARC)**

17. [staff proposed, instead of 5 and 6 above and 18 below] Allow and establish development standards for agricultural accessory uses, farmstands, agritourism, and farm-based businesses for lands where agriculture is allowed.

**REVISED 17 Allow agricultural accessory uses, such as farm stands, direct sales of agricultural products, agrotourism and farm-based businesses where agriculture is allowed. Establish comprehensive definitions for agricultural accessory uses. (ARC)**

18. [ARC proposed] Define Agricultural Activities as RCW 90.58.065. Create and Revise definitions related to Agriculture, including but not limited to; Farm Stand, Farmer, Farm Worker Housing and Farm Stay in partnership with the Agricultural Resource Committee. **Ok to strike if definitions included in REVISED 17 (ARC)**

19. Explore options that would allow for additional verification of primary agricultural use beyond CUFA for farm stay, farm worker housing and other agriculture related land uses. **Ok to strike (ARC)**

20. Implement right-to-farm provisions that assure agricultural uses are not considered a nuisance in San Juan County.

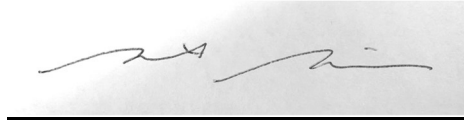
21. Establish a New Unit Notification program to notify property owners of best practices and available resources for maintaining farms on agricultural land. **Ok to strike (ARC)**

22. [staff proposed instead of 23 below] Support agricultural marketing, branding, and educational programs, agricultural policy advisory committees, and local agricultural grants. **Ok (ARC)**

23. agricultural policy advisory committee including Agricultural Resource Committee, Washington State University Extension and local grant opportunities.

Thank you for your consideration. We apologize for submitting these comments at this late hour. Our ARC meeting was scheduled for 2/16/21. We appreciate the considerable effort and thoughtfulness that the Planning Commission and DCD staff are bringing to this process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Meike Meissner', written on a light-colored background. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Meike Meissner, Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Faith Van De Putte', written on a light-colored background. The signature is highly stylized and cursive.

Faith Van De Putte, Coordinator