

To: BOCC of Kittitas County
Re: compliance comp plan

From: Lila Hanson, 674-2748
May 12, 2008

You have a great many things to consider in your decision making on this matter. It's my hope that a few more general comments will call your attention to items of importance to us. Although John and I are and have been on a variety of land use committees and boards, these are my personal observations as an observer and student of land use issues and should not be associated with any group of which I am or was a member:

Large lot zoning is destructive of agriculture, taking more land from farming than is advisable when housesite sales might allow a farm to make it for a few more decades. Lot splits, 3 acre zoning, TDRs, and innovative planning can protect ag from large lot zoning and should be supported or explored. Some of this is in the courts now.

Designation of resource lands as of statewide importance (whether called long term commercial significance or productive agriculture or whatever the trendy term) should be recognized as a first step in having state and not local control. The implication is that other uses will be discouraged and so it is important that anything designated as a resource land of the state be truly economically sustainable. For that reason, for family farmers, the ability for "living wage" profitability must be part of that "property rights restriction" on their farms. In our county, availability of water is obviously a necessity. Even Futurewise recognizes the profit requirement when it footnotes a price increase for Nebraska durum wheat in the Chicago market as reason to consider adding dryland cropland to the ALLTCS in Kittitas County.

And doesn't that illustrate why land use decisions should be local? Dryland wheat in Kittitas County couldn't make the grade for durum, wouldn't yield what it does in Nebraska, and wouldn't even come close to returning wheat growing costs here even at last winter's price. We all know that but how should we expect Seattle lawyers to know about it? Besides, the article they footnote talks about the impact of speculators in the commodity markets, a key reason for the run-up last winter.

Your implementation of the ag producers committee allowed by the comp plan and urged by the EW hearings board should be a good source of local information for the future. And ag lands decisions should be subject to frequent reconsideration, not the seven year period suggested by staff. Annually is not too often as conditions in farming can change abruptly. Loss of water – or of special markets come quickly to mind.

There are too many other items to mention. Someone said that complexity is to government what secrecy is to business. The charge that public participation has been lacking is unfair. It seems to me that there have been ample (too many) calls for public participation. If anything has restricted the general populace from participation it has been the absurdity and complexity imposed from outside sources and their local instigators. We had a widespread public participation event, the election of county commissioners, but the appellants seem intent on over-riding the will of the local people.

Thank you for your consideration of the above.