

WINTER 2025

CO-OP CONNECTION

*Icicle Village Resort, site of our 2024
Winter Grower Education Meeting.*

TO PRESERVE AND ENHANCE VIABILITY OF THE LOCAL AGRICULTURE ECONOMY

– Tom Boland, President & CEO



Our 2025 budget was presented to the board this fall. As part of this presentation, Skagit Farmers Supply (SFS) Administrator Raelene Smillie supplied your directors with the updated cost of the many annual events we host. Here are some of the details she provided.

We host two holiday parties which attract approximately 500 employees. Our member-appreciation BBQs in Burlington and in Lynden attract around 1,000 people. In addition, SFS annually hosts four employee retreats, a manager leadership retreat, and our board planning

session. In addition, we host other member specific events including recertification meetings, corn plots, and grower education meetings of various types.

Raelene pointed out that inflation has steadily increased the cost of these events. On the other hand, she noted that SFS sales have increased by 70% over the past decade while our employee count has largely stayed the same. So, our investments in member and employee events have made us more profitable and efficient, despite the rising costs. Proactive engagement with our employees and membership has led to success for Skagit Farmers Supply.

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As the board's minutes might state, "a discussion ensued." The directors agreed that these were impactful events which contributed both to the success of SFS and to the success of its members. That aligns with our SFS mission statement and underscores the fact that your board understands the membership and the value of a local cooperative.

A RECENT EVENT

One of these events took place in Leavenworth, WA on Dec. 12-13, 2024, at the Icicle Resort. Our agronomy team put on a two-day "2024 Winter Grower Education Meeting" with more than one hundred members, speakers and SFS staff attending.

"It has been exciting to watch growers turn from skepticism of nanotechnology to realizing the benefits of Nano-Yield's liquid products: higher yields and healthier crops. Thank you for the opportunity to present at your Leavenworth grower meeting.

—Jeff Howe, Nano-Yield

The focus of the meeting was innovation, best practices, and insights for berry, potato and seed crops. Laina Gray with FineField presented their Harvey autonomous electric blueberry harvester. Asa DeForest with Agri Spray Drones discussed insights on the use of drones in agriculture. Steve Mantle with Innov8.Ag, who has done a lot of work on berries in the PNW, demonstrated what soil mapping can do for your crop.

Presenters from Washington State University covered insect management. Nicole Anderson from Oregon State University spoke on managing perennial ryegrass and tall fescue seed. Tommy Roach with Nachurs gave an impassioned presentation on potassium acetate for potatoes. Other presenters covered fertilizer, chemicals and biologicals.

The Leavenworth meeting was a member-focused event meant to offer solutions to farmers, helping them grow more fresh food while using fewer inputs. These solutions can have a positive economic result for our members. Many of these solutions also align with the larger consumer sentiment of "eating healthy."

BACK TO THE BOARDROOM

The SFS board has a long history of making decisions that positively impact our region. Each year, they approve budgets that engage our employees and membership, and that bring our communities together. The board also approves patronage that flows to farmers, businesses and homeowners across northwest Washington.

"Skagit Farmers Supply is a trusted, innovative resource for their members. It is a privilege to work with a co-operative that works hard to improve the lives and businesses of their members"

—Steve Groen, Nachurs Alpine Solutions

Vibrant cooperatives strengthen communities. It just makes sense that directors elected by members from Skagit, Snohomish and Island Counties understand the challenges of agriculture in our region and vote to support patronage, education, and engagement that will enhance a grower's opportunity for success. Our board has helped SFS build out our ag support infrastructure to the point where we have the highest capacity in our area with more liquid, dry, and organic storage, faster blending capacity, a larger fleet and more sales staff. Add to that the ability to connect growers to traditional technologies while bringing the latest innovations in soil and plant health. We're a local company with our mission focused on local ag production.

IT'S ABOUT SUCCESS...AND ABOUT PEOPLE

It's tricky hosting a meeting in Leavenworth in December. The allure of a beautiful mountain town all decked out for the holidays, with the possibility of a snow event that could close Stevens Pass. We've hosted several grower and Land O' Lakes Cornerstone events in Leavenworth, and the snow has only added to the natural beauty of the mountains. It was great to see so many members attend and to hear how they look forward to this event every year.

On a personal note, Kelly and I were fortunate to enjoy Christmas and New Years with our family together, as our daughters traveled home from college. A short and busy Advent has been followed by some rest and two SFS holiday parties. It's nice to celebrate with those close to you. I hope you had a Happy Holiday, too!



Leavenworth, WA, the site of our 2024 Winter Grower Education Meeting.



Steve Groen presents on the value of premium liquid fertility for healthy blueberries.



SFS CEO Tom Boland welcomed members to the Leavenworth meeting.



More than 100 members, SFS staff and speakers attended our winter meeting.

COMMITTED TO EXCELLENCE

– Melissa Hill, Administrative Manager, AFCO Distribution & Milling



At LMF Feeds, our commitment to supporting the equine community goes far beyond providing high quality feed. Our team is dedicated to sharing knowledge and expertise to help horse owners optimize their horse's health, performance, and overall well-being.



Pictured left to right: Dr. Steve Duren, Rachel Hoar (working student at Polestar farms), Meika Decher (owner of Polestar Farms), and Harris Statema (LMF Feeds).

LMF Feeds recently spent time in Western Washington, teaming up with Dr. Stephen Duren from Performance Horse Nutrition to deliver cutting-edge equine nutrition knowledge and personalized support to horse owners and enthusiasts in the region. The multi-day visit included farm calls, veterinary visits, educational seminars, and meaningful discussions about equine health and feeding strategies. Throughout the week, LMF Feeds and Dr. Duren demonstrated their commitment to supporting horse owners with science-backed nutrition solutions and practical advice.

The farm calls and veterinary visits offered a unique, hands-on opportunity for horse owners and handlers to address specific concerns about the horse's diet, training regimen, and health. Each visit highlighted a different focus and purpose.

In addition to the farm visits, LMF Feeds hosted evening education seminars to recharge and refresh the equine community. Partnering with Monroe Co-Op in Monroe, WA, and the Country Store in Stanwood, WA, these successful seminars drew equine enthusiasts from across the region. Topics covered included the importance of gut health, understanding forage quality, strategies for feeding performance horses, the science of equine digestion, tips for a balanced diet, and the benefits of LMF's premium feed formulations.



"Our Goal: To optimize horse health, performance, and overall well-being."

Thank you to Monroe Co-Op and Stanwood Country Store for hosting our seminars and to all the horse owners who participated in this rewarding experience. We look forward to continuing our education outreach with Dr. Duren and serving the equestrian community with top-quality feed and trusted expertise. Together, we're making strides in improving equine nutrition and education.



BOARD AT SEMINAR, TOURS EASTERN SFS

–Nels Lagerlund, Chairman

The Skagit Farmers Supply (SFS) Board of Directors traveled to Spokane in November for the annual Northwest Regional Cooperative Institute (NRCI) Educational Seminar. Farmer directors from across Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and Montana gather each year in Spokane to hear updates on politics, cybersecurity and weather trends, and to attend board educational sessions related to proper governance, legal concerns, and clarifying the aims of the local cooperative. This was the third year in a row of record attendance, which speaks to the value of the conference and is a testament to the team at the Northwest Ag Co-op Council which plans the meeting.

After the conference wrapped up, the SFS board toured our cooperative's facilities in Spokane and Colville, WA. This included our AFCO distribution center, the Aslin-Finch feed mill, and our two Country Stores. The geographic reach of the business units of SFS has expanded, and it's impactful to visit the locations and meet the many employees who achieve the good results we continue to see.

Again this year, our 2025 SFS Annual Meeting will be held at McIntyre Hall. Watch your mail for all the board election and annual meeting information.

NOTE: We recently heard from our auditors at Moss Adams, and we'll be able to share the financial results from Fiscal 2024 with those of you who attend the annual meeting.



SFS Board Members Mark Wesen, Jenn Schuh, Spencer Fuentes, Nels Lagerlund and Jennifer Jones joined members of the SFS leadership team for a tour of the Colville, Country Store.

CREDIT APPROVAL REQUIRED

A reminder to all farmer members ahead of the 2025 growing season. If you are seeking deferred terms or operating on our farm budget program, you must apply and be approved by our credit department.

Please email us at credit@skagitfarmers.com to start the process.



OUR PEOPLE

AFCO DRIVER DINNER

– Stephanie Hanson, HR Specialist



On Friday, Nov. 8, 2024, we had the pleasure of hosting our Annual AFCO Driver Dinner. Our drivers are busy hustling and bustling throughout the summer, starting with heavy deliveries from the Buying Show orders, followed by events like SuperZoo, the Country Store's Truckload Sale, Pet-a-Palooza, and Wilco's Farm Sale.

With all these major deliveries and events, we don't get to see our drivers every day, or even every week. That's why we're so grateful for the opportunity to come together with them over dinner each fall, to show our appreciation and provide some company updates.



"Showing our appreciation and providing company updates."

A huge thank you to all our drivers for consistently going above and beyond. By so doing, you help to enhance the AFCO distribution experience for our customers. The exceptional service you provide truly sets us apart.



2024 CORN AND SILAGE MEETING

– Jon Jarvis, Agronomy Sales Manager

The SFS Agronomy Department has kicked off meeting season with a new Corn & Forage Meeting in Southern Whatcom County. This local event is designed for our dairy and hay producers who are often tied to their operations and unable to attend the Leavenworth Winter Grower Meeting.

Held Nov. 6, 2024, at scenic Carson Creek Estates, the meeting brought together over 60 attendees to hear from 10 industry experts on a range of topics: corn seed varieties, irrigation management, quality forage selection, premium liquid fertility programs, alfalfa management practices, cover crop guidelines, silage and forage inoculants, nano technology in forage production, and harvest products.

The day included insightful presentations, a delicious BBQ lunch, and a social hour that allowed everyone to connect and share ideas.

A huge thank you to all our vendors and the SFS staff for making this event possible. It's gatherings like these that set us apart from our competitors!



"Gatherings like these that set us apart from our competitors!"



David Heimkes reported results from the past season and shared insights for the future with SFS members attending the corn and silage meeting at Carson Creek Estates.



Harmony Dairy: LOVE OF FARMING & ANIMALS

– Brianna Hackler, Graphic & Multimedia Specialist

A passion for farming and love for animals fuels the owners of Harmony Dairy.

“We have the love of farming, and that makes a big difference,” said Jason Vander Kooy, one of the owners of Harmony Dairy. “Overall, I can’t see myself doing anything else.”

Jason and his brother, Eric, own and operate Harmony Dairy in Mount Vernon. The operation has about 1,500 cows at several locations throughout the valley.

The brothers agree that while operating the dairy can be challenging and time-consuming work, they both enjoy it.

“We’re out there all the time; we’re really dedicated to the farm,” Jason said.

Each brother has an area of expertise; Jason manages the machinery and growing crops to feed the cattle, while Eric heads up animal care and reproduction. The system works for the brothers, and they say they enjoy digging into their individual specialties.

“I really like working with the animals,” Eric said. “I see a lot of joy from other people with the animals, too. You get really excited about that kind of stuff.”

The operation has two main farms; each has a milking barn that can milk 28-30 cows at a time. The milking barns have a combination of manual labor and technology. Cows are milked three times a day, and milking goes on around the clock.

The Vander Kooy brothers have been working on the family operation since the early 1990s, when both began helping their dad around the farm. They saw how hard their dad worked to maintain the operation, and they decided to pursue a career in dairy through the family farm to help out.



Harmony Dairy has been based in Mount Vernon since the early 1970s. (Photo provided by Shawn Linehan.)



Jason Vander Kooy with his family at one of the Harmony Dairy farms. (Photo provided by Shawn Lindehan.)



The Vander Kooy brothers have different specialties on the farm – Eric takes care of the cows, while Jason manages the machinery and crops. (Photo provided by Shawn Linehan.)

Today, the brothers are actively in the process of taking over the operation from their parents, Dick and Olga, who have been operating the dairy since the early 1970s. Olga’s parents started the operation a few years prior.

Jason and Eric also have children who are interested in farming and working at the dairy; the brothers hope they can one day pass the family business to their kids.

“Now the next generation is coming up, and they’re starting to help out on the farm,” Jason said. “It’s good to see. It gives you some motivation, knowing you’re doing something for the next generation.”

Harmony Dairy has grown a lot over the past three decades. The Vander Kooy brothers say most – if not all – of the growth has come from accumulating other dairies that were closing when the farmers decided to stop farming or retire.

“It means there are lots of different pieces of the puzzle, but you make it fit for your operation,” Jason said. “It took some time, but I think we’ve got it dialed in now where everything serves a purpose and flows good.”

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“The brothers hope to pass the family business to their children.”

The brothers say they are less concerned about growing the operation now. Instead, they are concentrating on streamlining the process and making the operation as efficient as possible.

One way they increase efficiency is by growing their own feed for the cows on about 2,000 acres, including grass, clover, alfalfa and corn.

They also utilize a digester, a machine that breaks down cow manure to produce energy. When operating at high efficiency, the digester can power about 750 homes, Jason said. The farm can also use the biproducts from the process as bedding for the cows.

“We’re able to take something that used to be a huge hassle—cow manure—and turn it into a commodity,” Jason said with a laugh.

The dairy has about 20 employees. They do all the milking and farming themselves, which allows them to get rid of the middleman on most aspects of the farm. Skagit Farmers Supply provides Harmony Dairy with propane and fuel, as well as agronomy services, such as spraying fields, planting corn, and applying fertilizers to the fields.

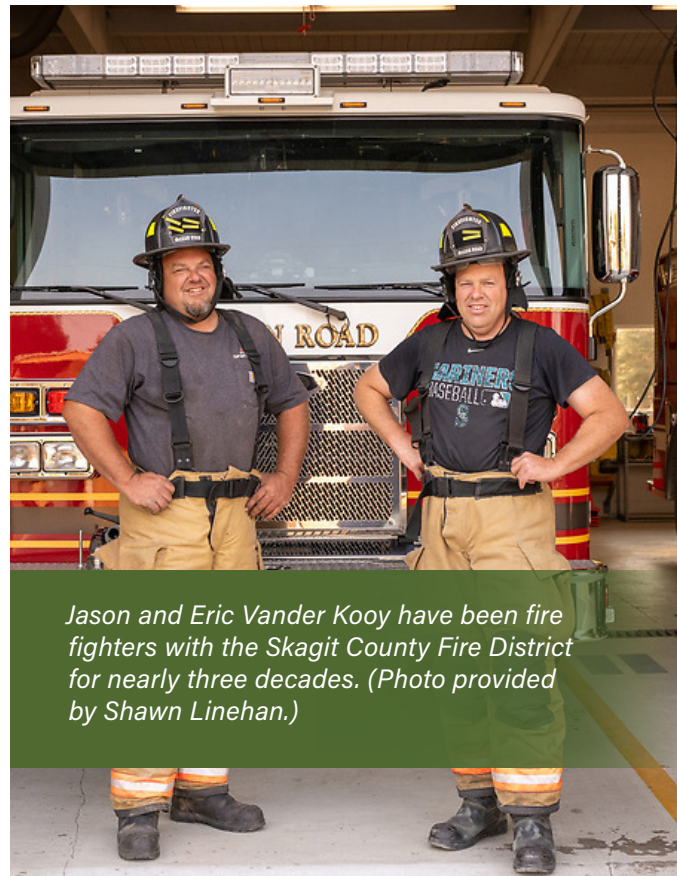
When not working, both brothers also serve as fire fighters for Skagit County Fire District #2. They have been fire fighters for nearly 30 years.

“It’s a great way to use your mind on something other than farming,” Jason said.

“Like maybe you’re in a rut on the farm, it’s great to get the opportunity to get out to go help someone,” Eric added. “Then you can come back to the farm feeling good.”



Cows are bred, born and raised at the farm. (Photo provided by Shawn Linehan.)



Jason and Eric Vander Kooy have been fire fighters with the Skagit County Fire District for nearly three decades. (Photo provided by Shawn Linehan.)

COMMUNITY

SKAGITONIANS HARVEST DINNER AND AUCTION

Nothing gets a fundraising crowd going more than two interested bidders competing for one great donation. The event was the annual Harvest Dinner and Auction sponsored by the Skagitonians to Preserve Farmland (SPF). The attire was bling and blue jeans. The tables were set. The champagne was served. The credit cards were being maxed out. The excitement in Mount Vernon’s St. Joseph Center on this Saturday evening followed many hours of planning that went into this annual event.

Held on Sept. 21, 2024, the 26th annual event was a big success in raising money to help keep the Skagit Valley farming. **SPF’s mission is to ensure the economic viability of Skagit County agriculture and its required infrastructure through farmland protection, advocacy, research, education, and public awareness.**

“To an extent, the supporters of SPF and its mission overlap the mission and membership of Skagit Farmers Supply,” observes our cooperative’s CEO Tom Boland, relating how the SFS Board of Directors shows its support of the annual Harvest Dinner and Auction.

Skagit Farmers Supply wasn’t just a sponsor for the SPF event. We also contributed an auction item reflecting the diverse farming talents of our members. We donated a freezer containing over 75 pounds of meat and desserts purchased from SFS members. This auction item included burger, steak and roasts from Ovenells’ Double O Ranch in Concrete, WA. Bristol Bay salmon, pies, and ice cream from Fuentes’ Hazel Blue Acres in Sylvana; burger, ribs and ice cream from Muzzall’s 3 Sisters Farm in Oak Harbor; steaks and burger from Albert’s Andrews Hay in Arlington; chocolate covered berries from Enfield Farms in Lynden; bacon, sausage and whole chicken from Widnor Farms in Custer, WA, and steaks and burger from North 40 Farms in Sedro Woolley, WA.



Pictured at this year’s Harvest Dinner and Auction: Kim Rubenstein, the current SPF president, and Bryn Phillips, SPF staff member.



Inside the Freezer

WHATCOM FAMILY FARMERS 2024 RALLY

– Brianna Hackler, Graphic & Multimedia Specialist



In November, Whatcom Family Farmers hosted its annual Farmer Rally in Lynden. The event gave area family farmers and support organizations the opportunity to meet and discuss the state of family farming, including sharing challenges and success stories.

Farmers from Whatcom and Skagit Counties gathered at the Northwest Washington Fairgrounds on Nov. 20 to network and discuss the impact of Whatcom Family Farmers during the past year.

Skagit Farmers Supply (SFS) was a title sponsor for the event, and many members of our Lynden agronomy team attended to visit with customers and show their support for Whatcom Family Farmers.

“Members of our Lynden agronomy team attended to show support.”

“They’re here to support these family farms in Whatcom County to make sure they stay long-term, and that’s really important,” said Doug Lambert, SFS agronomist. Gerald Baron, who served as the first executive director of Whatcom Family Farmers, was the keynote speaker at the event, sharing a message of hope in the face of crisis, as well as communication during crisis.

Whatcom Family Farmers is an organization that works to preserve the legacy and future of family farming.

“We recognized that, as the family farming community continue to shrink and deal with the issues we have to deal with, it is really important to start building public support for who we are and what we do,” said Fred Likkel, the organization’s current executive director. “Because the truth is, we need to be telling our story, and letting the world know that we really do value our community and value farming.”

The organization was started nine years ago, when the dairy community in the area united to better tell its story and communicate with the public. After a few months, other farmers in the area’s agricultural community realized the benefit of increased communication with the public and joined the dairy farmers to create Whatcom Family Farmers.

A year later, the organization grew even more to create Save Family Farming, a state-wide organization dedicated to protecting family farming through outreach, advocacy, and education.

Likkel said the first step is education—teaching people what it means to be a farmer and how family farms operate. This includes education of young people who are just beginning to understand where food comes from and the role farms play.

Next, the organization moves to outreach--talking with the public about the issues farms face, then moving to advocacy--helping build laws and regulations that benefit and support family farms.

Likkel said that while many of the organization’s members are still family farms, Whatcom Family Farmers is also made up of support industries like Skagit Farmers Supply.

“Support like what we get from Skagit Farmers allows us to do so much,” Likkel said. “It’s how we grow the education portion—how we get our story out there.”

For more information about Whatcom Family Farmers, visit whatcomfamilyfarmers.org.



Door prizes contributed by Skagit Farmers Supply.



Skagit Farmer Supply crew members Mike Hawley (left), Blake Carson, (center) and Doug Lambert attended the rally.

Whatcom Family Farmers Executive Director Fred Likkel (left) and Education Director Ellie Steensma Corbin (right) addressed the hundreds in attendance.



MANAGE YOUR ACCOUNT FROM YOUR PHONE

– Brianna Hackler, Graphic & Multimedia Specialist



Skagit Farmers Supply (SFS) will soon roll out a new portal to provide customers additional options in paying their bills. The new portal will offer more options, increased accessibility, and additional convenience.

In addition to making payments online through the SFS website, customers will now be able to log in to this web-based portal on their mobile devices, through a portal app: AdVantage Pockt.

“That’s the big reason why we did this—a more convenient way to pay,” said SFS Contoller Jennifer Lundberg.

Both the app and the online portal will offer the option to make payments, check balances, order fuel, see past orders and pre-pay for orders.

“Customers will be able to get it from anywhere, so they don’t have to be at a computer,” said Lisa Sick, vice president of marketing for AgVantage, the company that created AdVantage Pockt. “The screens will look a little different, but customers will have more access and easier access.”

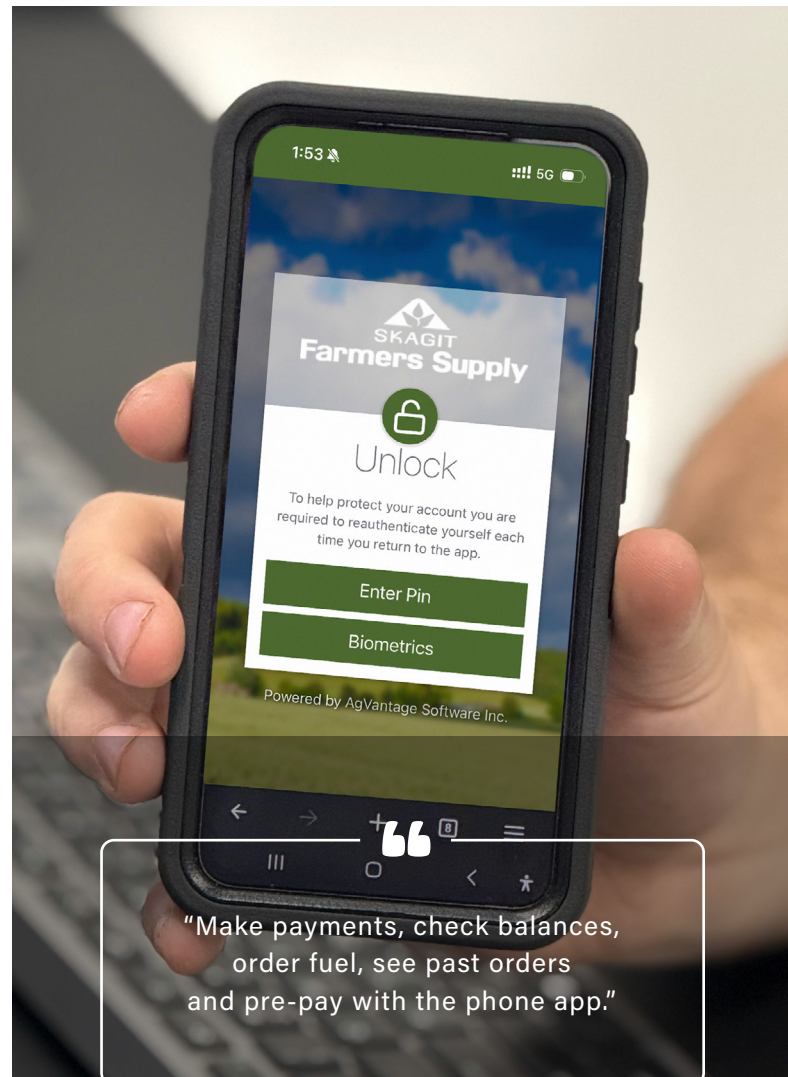
When the SFS switches to the new portal, customers will be prompted to create a login and password when they make their first on-line payment. They will also have the option to download the portal app on their mobile device at that time.

In addition to providing a convenient way to pay, SFS will also be able to send notifications through the app to customers.

“This is going to be the best communication tool for customers, farmer growers and fuel customers,” Sick said. “They’ll be able to see their contracts, access their accounts, see invoices, see balances and, of course, pay online.”

Additionally, customers will be able to download items such as their 1099 letter through the app, making it easy to find all the information they need when completing their taxes.

SFS plans to roll out the new portal after the New Year. Be on the lookout for additional information.



SERVING SKAGIT, WHATCOM, ISLAND AND SNOHOMISH

– Ryan Nootenboom, Energy Manager



A portion of the SFS fleet getting ready to deliver clean-burning propane gas.

Welcome to our winter update! As the season unfolds, familiar weather patterns are emerging—warmer days and cooler nights: a prelude to the anticipated winter deep freeze. Rest assured, our team is well-equipped and mentally prepared for whatever comes our way.

This time of year, our fleet of 21 propane bobtails hits the road daily, ensuring that over 20,000 residential and commercial propane tanks across Skagit, Whatcom, Island, and Snohomish counties stay topped off and ready for the winter chill.

Our fuel drivers have wrapped up the fall harvest and now look forward to the winter months.

It’s essential to acknowledge the significance of petroleum fuels. Whether it’s heating our homes, operating our vehicles, or powering the equipment that sustains our agricultural practices, these fuels remain an integral part of our modern way of life. Reach out to our energy team if you have any questions or need assistance with your fuel needs, reach out to our energy team at the main office: **360-757-6053**.



I’M THRILLED TO INTRODUCE OUR NEWEST TEAM MEMBER, ED PERRY.

Ed joins us as the SFS Energy Sales Rep. With 40 years of experience at the Les Schwab Tire Center and specializing in sales and customer service, Ed brings a wealth of knowledge to the energy division. His goal will be to understand each of our customers’ needs, from diesel and gas to DEF fluid, propane and Cenex lubricants. Contact Ed at EdPerry@skagitfarmers.com or reach him at the main office.

Stay tuned for more updates as we navigate through the winter season together!



Attention SFS members: the 2025 annual meeting of our cooperative will take place a McIntyre Hall in Mount Vernon on Wed., March 12, 2025. This is an “invite only” event. Please watch your mail for the invite.



1833 PARK LANE • PO BOX 266
BURLINGTON, WA 98233-0266

360.757.6053 • 888.757.6053
WWW.SKAGITFARMERS.COM



MISSION STATEMENT

To preserve and enhance viability of the local agriculture economy through cooperative profitability.



VISION STATEMENT

To be the premier cooperative in the Pacific Northwest by being:

- The producers' first choice
- The consumers' first choice
- The employees' first choice



CORE VALUES

- Customer Commitment
- People
- Integrity
- Performance
- Quality
- Safety
- Community

DIRECTORY

MAIN OFFICE-BURLINGTON

360.757.6053

AFCO DISTRIBUTION & MILLING

800.538.8700

AGRONOMY-CONWAY

360.445.5015

AGRONOMY-LYNDEN

360.755.3615

AGRONOMY-BURLINGTON

360.757.7870

ENERGY-MAIN OFFICE

360.757.6053

PETROLEUM & PROPANE DELIVERY

360.757.6053 // 888.757.6053

EMERGENCY

360.209.0310

COUNTRY STORES

Burlington.....	360.757.4055
Colville.....	509.684.2232
Freeland.....	360.331.1970
MountVernon.....	360.424.4207
OakHarbor.....	360.675.2277
Oroville.....	509.560.7088
SedroWoolley.....	360.856.6567
SpokaneCentral.....	509.534.1412
Stanwood.....	360.629.7033
Stevensville(MT).....	406.777.5527