

## CO-OP CONNECTION

### Reconnecting Face-to-Face

By Tom Boland, President & CEO



What a difference a year can make. Our board and management travelled to Spokane in November for director education and an industry update with the Northwest Regional Cooperative Institute. It was a great in-person event and we could actually shake hands and see each others smiles! That reality was repeated a month later when I attended the CHS Annual Meeting in Minneapolis.

Cooperative leaders from across the country ventured to the upper Midwest for what turned out to be a few sunny, mild days. CHS is the largest cooperative in the world, in terms of overall sales, and they are our largest vendor partner as well. We purchase much of our refined fuels, lubricants, fertilizer, chemicals and propane through them. The ease and comfort everyone shared seemed to indicate that many are ready to reconnect and to do it as we're accustomed to: face-to-face.

A common concern in both Spokane and Minneapolis was the cost and availability of fertilizer, chemicals, crude oil, and just about everything else. It's been a generation since we've seen inflation like this, and it appears that early hopes this would be a short-term phenomenon weren't accurate. There doesn't seem to be a lot of downside pricing pressure coming from supply, supply chain or demand. Industry experts predict prices on ag inputs will remain where they are at least through the spring of 2022 and could go even higher.

The industry had low inventories at the end of the 2021 growing season. Even with regular production, growers will largely consume what is produced this winter because there are strong market incentives to plant acres this spring. It could be later in the year that manufacturers and ag supply retailers start filling up storage across the system to try to get ahead of the fall business.

*NOTE: In a fast-moving market, that information could be old by the time you read this.*

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SFS Board members and management tour our feed mill in Spokane on Nov. 9, 2021.



## CO-OP SPOTLIGHT: SNOHOMISH CO-OP'S EMPLOYEE AND CUSTOMER FOCUS

Snohomish Co-op retail  
store and fuel station

By Brianna Hackler, Graphic & Multimedia Specialist

For Snohomish Co-op, the ability to react quickly to what is happening locally and nationally in a way that benefits employees and customers is one of the strengths of the business and of the cooperative business model itself.

"One of the best things about co-ops is that we get to impact the community," said Mike Lukjanowicz, who has been general manager of the Snohomish-based cooperative for about a year. "Not just at the employee level, but through every community member locally."

During Lukjanowicz's first year as GM, Snohomish Co-op has been able to make a tangible difference. This was most evident during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, when businesses were forced to alter the way they conducted their operations for the safety of their customers and employees.

that many of these businesses, especially the restaurants, moved much of their business outdoors for safety and maximum capacity. As autumn came, many restaurants had to purchase propane heaters to keep customers warm outdoors.

To help these businesses reduce costs, Snohomish Co-op introduced a Propane Membership--a free program for any local business that needed propane or propane accessories. The membership offered a generous discount to local businesses to help offset new heating costs.

The co-op's Snohomish location also offered a section of its parking lot to vendors who would normally participate in the local Farmers Market, which was cancelled in 2020 due to COVID concerns. Lukjanowicz said the mini market was a hit, and the store plans to continue to offer this space to vendors at no charge next summer as well.

"That's our mind set," Lukjanowicz said. "We're involved in the community, because we are a part of the community."

Snohomish Co-op, founded in 1936, was designed to help farmers increase their buying power as they purchased fuel and supplies for their operations. At one time, the co-op even delivered fuel to farms and had bays in-store where farmers could bring their vehicles or equipment for repairs. The co-op even made approved tires for farm equipment.

"Since then, we've grown and changed a little bit," Lukjanowicz said. "We're not solely focusing on farmers; instead, we're focusing on the whole community and the area."

Today, Snohomish Co-op has two retail locations: one in Snohomish and one in Monroe. The stores specialize in farm and feed supplies, with supplies for gardening, fencing and backyard homesteading, as well as livestock and pet care. The co-op also has in-ground fuel with ethanol-free fuel, B99 biodiesel, bulk kerosene, propane, off-road diesel and even VP110 racing fuel, to service the local racetrack.



Snohomish Co-op partnered with CHS for training on best practices for its board of directors.

"Snohomish has a really small-town feel with a really vibrant Main Street, full of shops and restaurants," said Lukjanowicz, noting





Farmers Market vendors at Snohomish Co-op store. The co-op offered its parking lot when the Farmers Market was cancelled in 2020.



Monroe location of the Snohomish Co-op retail store

The co-op has about 60 employees across both locations, including the procurement and financial control teams. In the future, the co-op hopes to add a third location and expand its distribution and delivery services.

Over the years, the membership has grown and changed. Today, said Lukjanowicz, the co-op has more than 3,000 traditional members and just under 200 voting members. Many of the voting members are producers, but some are retired farmers who are still interested in being involved in the future of the co-op.

Membership benefits include retail and fuel purchase discounts. Additionally, the co-op offers commercial memberships, designed for companies with fleet vehicles or larger fuel needs, such as dump trucks, construction rigs or landscaping companies.

The co-op is run by a seven-person board of directors, many of whom have sat on the board for more than a decade.

"They're not just invested in the co-op but in the community as well," Lukjanowicz said.

The board includes President Mark Craven, Vice President Alison Gamage, Secretary/Treasurer Michelle Canfield and Directors Jeff Telgenhoff, Claire Talltree, Dave Hutzenbiller and Neil Landaas.

Lukjanowicz said another benefit of the cooperative model is a greater care for the employees and customers alike. During the past year, Snohomish Co-op has made it a priority to get employees to use its 401k program.

"We wanted to make it even easier for our team members to start saving for their future," Lukjanowicz said.

The co-op shortened the eligibility period for enrollment in the 401k program; part-time employees are now eligible after six months instead of two years, and full-time employees are eligible after 30 days instead of a year. The program structure also changed from an opt-in program to an opt-out, so more employees are participating.

Lukjanowicz adds that because the co-op's primary focus isn't solely profit, customers get better service in stores. While a big box store might have less employees on the floor to save money, Lukjanowicz said Snohomish Co-op prides itself on having experts available to help customers.

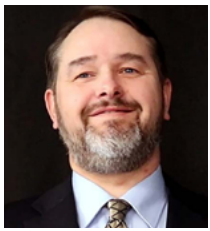
"The great thing about our co-op is that we're really invested in the afterlife of your purchase," Lukjanowicz said. "We're making sure that whether you're buying baby chicks for the first time or suddenly experiencing an animal with an illness, we do our best to give you an educated group of people and resources to move down the right path. And if we don't have all the answers, we will get you those answers."

The cooperative model isn't just about working well as a team or in the community the store is based in. Snohomish Co-op also works with AFCO to purchase pet food and supplies, and feed. SFS supplies the co-op with propane.

"Both of us have the same idea in mind--being positive members of the community--so we want to work together as opposed to being competitors," said Lukjanowicz. "We're in the same business, but we're partners for the community more than adversaries in the retail business."

# Directors Work Hard for You

By Nels Lagerland, Board Chairman



It's been a busy fall, and it's shaping up to be a busy winter for the board of directors of Skagit Farmers Supply (SFS).

We joined other cooperative directors from across the PNW in Spokane in early November for director education and for a tour of our Spokane operations.

In December, we invited the accounting firm Moss Adams to our board room to go over the 2021 audit.

We'll conduct our annual board planning sessions later in January, and then it's on to the National Council of Farmer Cooperative meeting. It's nice to get back together in person. We needed that.

## VOTE BY MAIL!

All voting members of SFS should have received notice of the upcoming director elections. Those elections will once again be held by mail-in ballot. Terms being served by Jenn Smith and Spencer Fuentes are up this year. Both of these directors are running for re-election.

We are planning an in-person annual meeting this March in Mount Vernon. That notice will be mailed out in February.

Your cooperative continues to have strong financial results. We will be allocating over \$5 million of patronage and will share those numbers at the annual meeting. The board has approved another year of paying

50% in cash and a non-qualified distribution for voting producer members. That means the co-op will pay the taxes on the stock portion of a voting producer member's patronage paid this year, and the member will not have to pay the tax until the stock is retired in the future. We're currently on a 10-year revolvment.

We're happy to welcome many new members to our cooperative. Letters were mailed out in November informing all who are eligible to join SFS as voting, producers members of their status. Since there are tax benefits to being a producer member, management took the additional steps of hosting an informational meeting for prospective new members in Lynden in late November. We were worried that the flooding that had

occurred might cause those letters to get lost in the mail; happily, more than thirty interested growers attended.

One change to note for fiscal 2022 is that the minimum amount of agribusiness a producer needs to do to become a member has been raised to \$15,000 a year. That has changed through the years and has been \$10,000 a year for the past several years. The patronage, the amount to be paid in cash, the non-qualified distribution, the 10-year revolve, and the minimum purchase requirements are all things that your board of directors considers each year and are subject to change.

Thank you for your continued support and have a Happy New Year.



Pictured above is an informational luncheon for prospective new members held at the Steakhouse 9 Bistro & Lounge of Lynden on Nov. 30, 2021.

## BOARD APPROVES LIQUID TANKS



Above, workers installed two 21,000-gallon liquid fertilizer tanks at our Burlington Agronomy Plant in November. The installation continues a three-year expansion of the cooperative's liquid storage at Burlington and brings overall storage at that plant to almost 200,000-gallons, all fed by rail.

Much of the product stored at this plant is NACHURS® liquid fertilizer. Skagit Farmers Supply is the largest marketer of NACHURS liquid fertilizer in northwest Washington. We create custom blends for different crops based on the soil needs of our geography.



# BOARD'S NRCI-SPOKANE TRIP



The SFS November board meeting was held at our AFCO distribution center. One director joined via Microsoft Teams.

Three members of the SFS board and management attended the Northwest Regional Cooperative Institute (NRCI) seminar in Spokane in November. The NRCI gathers cooperative leaders from Montana, Idaho, Oregon and Washington for director education, timely updates and legal issues pertaining to agriculture and cooperatives with an emphasis on the PNW.

Board members Nels Lagerlund, Spencer Fuentes and Mark Wesen attended the seminar. They also toured our Spokane Central Country Store and AFCO Feed Mill & Distribution Center (DC).

The board was impressed with the many improvements at the AFCO Feed Mill since their last visit and benefited from interactions with the many crew members they were able to meet along the way.

The board conducted its November meeting at the AFCO DC conference room on November 10, 2021. "A common refrain over the three days was, "It's nice to be back at these meetings in person!"



The tour also included our Country Store in Spokane.



Cooperative leaders from four states met Nov. 8-9 for the annual director education meeting.



Our AFCO distribution center is 150,000 square feet of warehouse space. We market pet food and supplies along with feed across seven states and into our Country Stores

# GROWER SPOTLIGHT

## Lynden Creamery Thrives with Robots

Brianna Hackler, Graphic & Multimedia Specialist

Technology plays an important role at the Lynden-based Twin Brook Creamery. Instead of a stool and pail, cows file in one at a time into a gated area, where a robot performs all the milking duties.

Each cow is fitted with a collar that notifies the robot exactly which cow has entered the milking area. While the cow snacks on grain at one end of the gated area, the robot attaches to the cow, milking for no more than six minutes. During the milking, the machine measures not only how much milk is being produced by the cow, but also how much butterfat, protein and other nutrients are in the milk. If the cow isn't ready to be milked or has an infection, the robot can sense that too, and can react accordingly by releasing the cow without milking or by dumping the milk until the infection has healed.

Each cow is different, from how long it will need to be milked to how often, as well as the location of its teats. The robot can read all this information, either from the collar or by attaching to the cow, and it can react appropriately.



Twin Brook Creamery bottles its products in glass bottles at its processing facility, located on the Canadian border.

**The robots were installed about seven years ago, and Mark Tolsma, one of the owners and operators of the creamery, says the investment has been well worth it.**

"Before the robots, the cows had to go into a holding area in the milking parlor," said Tolsma. "That could leave cows standing on their feet for three or four hours while they waited. [Today's robot milking] keeps cows off their feet, and they're not away from their feed or their bed longer than about six minutes."

One of the biggest changes with robotic milking is that the cows decide when and how often they are milked. They come into the barn on their own when they are ready.

Because they can decide how and when they are milked, Tolsma said he has noticed a difference in the cows' demeanor. Previously, when he or other members of the staff would walk through the herd, the cows would expect to be moved somewhere new, like into the barn for milking. Now, he says he can walk through his herd, and the cows are friendly and relaxed.

This is one of the biggest benefits of the robotic milking system, Tolsma said. Improving the cows' mood, keeping them calm and content, helps improve the quality of the milk.

The robot can also perform basic health duties, such as

cleaning and spraying the teat with iodine to prevent infection after milking.

Additionally, Tolsma said the robots are great for the farmer.

"The nicest benefit is for us," he said. "We used to start milking at three in the morning. This gives us who run a dairy more 'normal people' hours."

Previously, Twin Brook had one employee who worked 12 hours a day, six days a week, to complete all the milking. Tolsma



The Lynden creamery produces several products, including chocolate milk, as well as 1%, 2% and whole milk, eggnog and heavy cream.





joked that the dairy didn't know what it would do if this employee ever retired. The robot has replaced this employee, who now works in another area of the creamery's operation.

Tolsma said the robot also removed human emotion and error from the milking process.

"If you hire someone, and they're in the barn and a cow starts kicking them, you hope that person is going to respond in a good way, but you never know," he said. "Whereas this thing, a cow can kick it, and it just keeps doing its thing. It takes the emotion out of it."

Twin Brook Creamery was founded in 2007. The creamery is run by Tolsma and his wife, Michelle, as well as her parents, Larry and Debbie Stap. The operation has over 270 cows, milking about 230 at any given time. The dairy is made up of Jersey cows, which Tolsma said have higher butterfat, protein and nonfat solids content in their milk, making for a better flavor.

Skagit Farmers Supply supplies Twin Brook Creamery with seed, liquid and dry fertilizer, chemicals, equipment rental and custom corn planting services.

The Tolsmas are fifth-generation dairy farmers. The creamery sits on the same land where Jacob and Tryntje Stap, Larry's great-grandparents, started a dairy in 1910.

While consumers might not see the behind-the-scenes robotics at the creamery, they do notice Twin Brook in the stores. The Lynden creamery is one of the few that still packages its product in glass bottles, something that both stores and consumers like, Tolsma said. Stores and customers purchase the bottles for a down payment when they buy the milk and then receive a refund when they return them after the milk is gone.

The processing facility, which is located just a few roads over from the dairy near the Canadian border, bottles more than 1,400 gallons of milk per day in half gallon and quart containers. Products include 1%, 2%, whole and chocolate milk, as well as eggnog and heavy cream. The products are generally very fresh, usually reaching the store in just one or two days after milking.

Twin Brook had its products in just two stores its first year, The Green Barn produce stand and the Bellingham Co-op. The next year, Haggen grocery stores asked to carry their products; in following years, more stores called the creamery, asking to carry Twin Brook products. Now, their products are in more than 220 stores across Washington and North Oregon. The company recently began expanding to Eastern Washington stores.

Tolsma says the creamery faces similar challenges as many area farms – matching wages, finding quality employees and farmland costs. However, he said Twin Brook tries to see some challenges as opportunities.

"Farmers hammer on, 'The town's encroaching, there's too many people.' But sometimes you have to learn to turn that into your advantage instead of your disadvantage," he said. "That just means there's that many more people to sell your product to. It all depends how you look at it."



Twin Brook Creamery has two locations, a dairy and a production facility, where products are made and bottled. Most milks only take a few days to get from the dairy to store shelves.



The dairy has about 270 Jersey cows, milking about 230 at any given time.



About seven years ago, the dairy installed a robotic milker, which can milk the cows in under six minutes per cow and reduce the amount of time the cows are on their feet, away from their feed.

# NEW TO SFS AGRONOMY



## KRISTINE BLACK

Kristine Black is our new agronomy administrative manager. She comes to Skagit Farmers Supply with a wealth of knowledge from years as machine operator, quality assurance, front line supervisor, systems manager and operations manager. We look forward to working with Kris on software integration, purchasing, operations standards, logistics and much more!

Through her sophomore year in high school, Kris lived in King Cove Alaska, where her dad worked in the seafood processing industry. She moved back to her dad's hometown in Coupeville, Wash., where she graduated from high school. Kris continued to spend her summers in Alaska where she worked in a salmon cannery business to put herself through college. She earned a Bachelor of Science degree in agriculture (animal science/food science) with a minor in agricultural economics (management and marketing.)

After college, Kris worked mainly in the food processing industry from salmon canning and freezing to fruit and vegetable canning. Rarely straying far from the agricultural industry, she has worked with meat processing and macadamia nut processing. More recently she worked in processing crab and other fin fish.

*EDITOR: For the past 17 years, Kris has lived in Coupeville with her husband Joe. Their household includes two cats, one old dog and about 20 chickens.*



## JON SCHMIDT

Jon Schmidt is our new Conway location manager. He spent the first nine years of his life in the Mount Vernon area before moving to Ephrata, Wash., where he graduated from Ephrata High School and went on to Big Bend Community College in Moses Lake, earning his associate degree in Agriculture.

After college, Jon joined the McGregor Company where he spent four years managing one of the company's seed cleaning facilities. Jon worked primarily with wheat seed and would bring in different varieties during harvest to be cleaned, treated and then sent out to growers. Jon was a jack-of-all-trades at McGregor where he managed employees, inventory, running machinery, maintenance and all logistics.

Growing up, Jon was big into hunting, fishing, and sports. His favorite sport is baseball (he spent his summers playing college ball) and following the Seattle Mariners. He made a lot of memories in the Skagit Valley duck hunting and fishing on the Skagit River. Jon is very happy to be back in the Skagit Valley and is looking forward to starting his journey with Skagit Farmers Supply.

**Please join us in welcoming Kris and Jon to Skagit Farmers Supply!**



**Have questions regarding Skagit Farmers Supply in-house financing programs for the 2022 growing season?**

**Please contact SFS Credit Manager Shannon Perkes at 360-757-6053 or [shannonp@skagitfarmers.com](mailto:shannonp@skagitfarmers.com).**





# Wrestling with the National Labor Shortage

By Mike Hunskor, Director of Human Resources



Navigating the hiring demands of a pandemic comes with its fair share of challenges. The economy's workforce has experienced an exodus of workers for multiple reasons. These reasons include other job opportunities, unemployment, early retirement, parents staying home due to lack of childcare or

increased childcare costs

Technology that was available 10-15 years ago is being adopted to fill in the labor gaps and is requiring more skilled laborers to tend to that technology at a higher wage. Since many high school graduates attend four-year colleges, many skilled labor jobs go unfilled.

## WHAT WE'RE DOING

At Skagit Farmers Supply (SFS), we've evaluated our hiring methods and renewed our focus on new ways to reach job seekers. HR and department managers are continuously evaluating wages and benefits, staying competitive with the market, and trying to keep medical benefits as affordable as possible for our employees.

Our retail and wholesale distribution positions have suffered the most. While our turnover isn't high compared to industry averages, getting qualified job seekers in the door is often met with stiff outside competition.

Our compensation and benefits package are attractive, and we have many long-term employees. Our greater challenge is retaining newer employees who are chasing a highly competitive hourly wage. It's not unheard of for a competitor to snag a fresh employee by dangling the carrot of a buck an hour more. This can happen before the employee is immersed into the company's culture or develops in-house skills and relationships that would otherwise inspire them to think long-term.

## THE LOCAL JOB MARKET

Your co-op continues to be successful in many areas, positioning nearly full staff counts to meet the demands of its agronomy and energy divisions; however, in retail and distribution areas, stores are operating at reduced hours. What should be a temporary scenario now starts to feel indefinite. Keeping morale up is key – and SFS employees are known to show resilience.



Our job fair at our Stanwood Country Store on September 18, 2021. Store Manager Allene Stuller, Energy Manager Ryan Nootenboom and HR Director Mike Hunskor discuss job opportunities at SFS with job seekers.



SFS HR Specialist Stephanie Hanson at our Central Spokane Country Store & AFCO Distribution job fair on Sep. 22, 2021

In November, SFS HR Specialist Stephanie Hanson spoke with the cooperative's board of directors about recruitment challenges.

"The largest methods of hiring have been through Indeed.com and job seekers walking in the door," said Stephanie. "We've also had success with sending physical flyers to trucking schools, resulting in two new hires fresh out of school." The co-op maintains a strong history of relationships with local trucking schools and has numerous employees who have obtained their commercial driver's license in-house. Those connections have been very successful, particularly for staffing truck drivers, of which the nation is experiencing a significant shortage.

While Indeed.com has become the dominant national platform for attracting job seekers, resulting in 40% of the cooperative's new hires in 2021, efforts don't stop there. Human Resources collaborates with SFS's Marketing department to communicate their message via local radio ads, social media, flyers and signage, newspaper ads and promoting in-person and virtual hiring events.

In addition the co-op:

- Promotes a referral program to reward employees who shine a spotlight on SFS as the employer of choice.
- Participates in job fairs and most recently represented the co-op at Washington State University, aiming to attract interns for the 2022 growing season.

In addition to these hiring tools, it's important to remain engaged with employees. Focusing on continuing employee retreats and holiday parties, albeit virtual, helps keep morale up. A welcome addition this last year has been the introduction of virtual CEO Town Halls--inviting groups of employees to meet with Tom Boland and present their questions in an open forum. Over the course of two months, five 90-minute town halls were held with nearly 60 employees participating.

A recurring concern at these town halls is what we're doing to get more people. It's helpful when participants understand the efforts that it takes to bring people in. It's a concern felt coast-to-coast across all industries. It's important to give reassurance to current employees that we haven't quit the battle.

# Nootenboom Joins Propane Board

SFS Energy Manager Ryan Nootenboom stands next to our newest propane bobtail in our tank yard in Burlington. Ryan was recently voted onto the board of the Pacific Propane Gas Association (PPGA) at their annual meeting in Hawaii in October.

The PPGA advocates on behalf of the propane industry in Washington, Oregon, Alaska and Hawaii.



## SFS LARGEST MARKETER



In its corn planting services, Skagit Farmer Supply uses a custom liquid blend, including NACHURS imPulse® and other nutrients.

In a world of constant change (whether pandemic, economics, politics, or family) it's vitally important to maintain our personal and business relationships.

Over the last decade, NACHURS® and Skagit Farmers Supply have developed a positive and respectful relationship built on trust, research and a lot of hard work by the agronomists of our two organizations. Skagit Farmers Supply is, today, the largest NACHURS liquid fertilizer marketer in northwestern Washington.

University and independent research as far back as 1980 has nurtured the growth of

the NACHURS BIO-K® line. Hundreds of yield and quality trials across North America have proven to potato, corn, and specialty crop growers the benefits of the NACHURS Bio-K products incorporated into fertility programs.

The progressive SFS agronomy team has led our region with NACHURS BIO-K programs in all crops. In particular, small fruit growers in the Pacific Northwest have profited from the commitment of SFS and NACHURS to raising the highest quality fruit without sacrificing yield. NACHURS BIO-K fertility products achieve the goals of enhanced root development, fertilizer efficiency, and soil health.

"Skagit Farmers Supply has been a great partner to work with," NACHURS Vice President Bob Ruebel. "We sincerely thank SFS and their patrons for the opportunity and trust you have placed in us."

*EDITOR: NACHURS Steve Groen worked for SFS two separate times in his career, most recently as an agronomist and sales manager.*



# SOLVING PLANT ABSORPTION PROBLEMS

The dry summer of 2021 proved to be a great testing ground for Aqua-Yield® and the company's nanoliquid technology in north-west Washington.

Aqua-Yield® advertises that their nanoliquids effectively work as a delivery system for nutrients and crop protection products. Long-time Skagit Farmers agronomy manager and now Aqua-Yield® regional sales manager Jeff Howe understands the concerns growers have with rising fertility and crop protection costs, not to mention shortages in agriculture in the U.S. and all over the world. He's excited to share a solution.

"Aqua-Yield is a nanoliquid technology company whose products solve plant absorption problems," states Jeff.

"The inclusion of NanoShield® will deliver as much as 25% more active ingredient into the plant," he explains, adding, "the results we saw with NanoPro® and glyphosate and other products have been tremendous."

Jeff encourages growers looking to improve efficiencies to give it a try. "With over 650 trials conducted using Aqua-Yield® nanoliquids, a 3:1 return has been determined," he reports. "Using nanoliquids can help you grow more with less."

Four Skagit Farmers Supply agronomists attended NanoCon 2021 in Salt Lake City in November. It was the official launch for Aqua-Yield's organic Omni Care products: OmniGro®, OmniPro® and CX-1+Pro®. The focus was on ag dealers and farmers who are forward thinking and are open to adapting new technologies. Dealers and growers from all over the U.S. shared their success stories using Aqua-Yield products. CEO Clark Bell reviewed the explosive growth in the U.S. and the expansion into the international market.

Please contact your SFS agronomist to discuss any of the great offerings from Aqua-Yield®

L-R, SFS agronomists Blake Carson, John Vander Veen, Molly Pershing and Torey Wilson attend the NanoCon meeting in Salt Lake City.



## GROWER MEETINGS FEB. 15-16

Our annual grower recertification meetings will be held on February 15-16, 2022, at the Skagit Valley Convention Center in Mount Vernon. We are planning on hosting it in person and having the option of attending virtually as we did in 2021.

Contact Jon Jarvis at [jonj@skagitfarmers.com](mailto:jonj@skagitfarmers.com) or Ryan Hill at [ryanh@skagitfarmers.com](mailto:ryanh@skagitfarmers.com) for more details and to pre-register. You must be registered to attend the event.



The picture above was taken at our 2019 grower meeting in Mount Vernon.



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## 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

#### Farm • Pet • Home

Burlington	360.757.4055
Coeur d'Alene (Idaho)	208.772.2715
Colville	509.684.2232
Freeland	360.331.1970
Mount Vernon	360.424.4207
Oak Harbor	360.675.2277
Oroville	509.560.7088
Sedro Woolley	360.856.6567
Spokane Central	509.534.1412
Stanwood	360.629.7033
Stevensville (Montana)	406.777.5527

## Reconnecting Face-to-Face... Continued from Page 1

### OUR LOCAL SITUATION

Skagit Farmers Supply (SFS) has a history of investing in our assets. We've increased our storage in dry and liquid fertilizer, and we filled up earlier than normal this past fall. We did the same with our spring and summer chemical needs. We didn't anticipate the supply chain and production issues that manufacturers are dealing with, but we have continued to improve our ability to receive and store chemicals, fertilizer and seed.

Our energy department has 23 bobtails on the road this winter, and we switched quickly to using our rail spurs in lieu of drawing from local refineries as they struggled with propane production. In Spokane, we transitioned out of lawn and garden supply, and we're using that warehouse space to stock more varieties of pet food and supplies. We're evolving as our customers evolve.

We couldn't do that without good feedback from you. The thoughts you share with our agronomists, with an AFCO sales rep, or with your Country Store manager or fuel driver come back to us and impact our planning. COVID has reminded me of the importance of good relationships in the different industries in which we operate. As we look across our supply chains, it was often our strong relationships that kept us in front of supply concerns. We placed orders

for propane tanks, bobtails, belt spreaders, liquid tanks, ag chemicals, fertilizer, feed bags, stock tanks and Christmas toys well in advance of when others traditionally do. Most (but not all) of those things arrived on schedule.

Our sales were up 8% in fiscal 2021; no doubt some of that was inflation assisted--especially the second half of the year. Our sales are up 20% in the new fiscal year. We're still a short way into the new year, and more of that increase is due to inflation. Having said that, much of our inventory is in stock and available for sale. We wouldn't be hitting the numbers we are without good industry relationships. Now, all of us must decide how we'll spend our limited resources.

On a personal note, Kelly and I did fairly well anticipating the delays in ordering Christmas gifts this year. The kids were slow to hand over their wish lists, but after they did, the shopping began. The laughter, the hugs and a room full of spent wrapping paper let us know that the holiday was a success. As everyone is finding out, most of what we're looking for is available, even if the prices are higher than we're used to.

We're hoping your new year is also filled with smiles, handshakes and hugs.

