

# Office of Farmland Preservation

## 2008 Report to the Washington State Conservation Commission

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## INTRODUCTION

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Washington farm families play an important role in our state's economy, in our rural communities, and in the quality of all of our lives. These farmers are doing more with their land than ever before. A few key statistics illustrate this change:

- In 2007, agricultural output in Washington rose 20 percent, from \$6.8 billion in 2006 to \$8.2 billion.
- In 2007 animal agriculture revenue increased 23.6 percent, from \$1.6 billion in 2006 to \$2 billion.
- Between Washington, Oregon, California and Idaho, Washington had the largest increase in crop revenue, increasing 21 percent, from \$4.4 billion in 2006 to \$5.3 billion in 2007.
- Washington farmers more than doubled their net farm income. Net farm income increased 133 percent, from \$1 billion to more than \$2.4 billion.

However, overall farm numbers are down in Washington. Development pressures and rising land values make it more and more difficult for Washington's farms to survive.

Between 1997 and 2007, Washington lost over 5,000 farms totaling 460,000 acres. Of those 4,000 farms, 3,000 were family farms. More than 3,000 of the total farms lost were between 1-50 acres.

In the Puget Sound basin, between 1991 and 2001, 190 square miles of forest land was converted to other uses, equaling 2.3 percent of the remaining forests. This loss of productive agriculture and forest land jeopardizes the future of farming and forestry in Washington.

In 2007, Governor Christine Gregoire and the state Legislature recognized that we are losing critical farmland across our state. They realized this wasn't only a loss of land, but also a loss of a way of life, a loss of our rural character, and a loss of key element of our state's economy – agriculture. The Office of Farmland Preservation (OFP) was created to address this threat.<sup>1</sup>

***“Given the social economic and environmental values these working lands provide, it is a priority for the state to focus attention, provide options and explore ways we can grow while preserving our working agricultural and forest economies.”***

***Governor Christine Gregoire  
“The Next Washington”***

The Office was established within the Washington State Conservation Commission and was assigned a number of tasks, including:

- providing input to the Commission on conservation easements;
- create and support a farmland preservation task force established in statute;
- provide an analysis of the major factors that have led to past declines in the amount and use of agricultural lands in Washington;
- develop model programs and tools, including innovative incentives, for landowners;
- provide technical assistance to localities as the develop and implement programs and tools for the retention of agricultural lands;

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<sup>1</sup> See generally the OFP statute at 89.10 RCW.

- develop a grant process for locals to receive grants for farmland retention programs;
- provide analysis and recommendations on the development of a farm transition program; and,
- serve as a clearinghouse for incentive programs.

In the first year, the OFP has set the course for a strong and firmly established farmland preservation program in the state. First year accomplishments include:

- Distributing \$200,000 in farmland preservation grants to eight counties.
- Establishing the Farmland Preservation Task Force that traveled to six regions of the state, meeting with farmers, ranchers and local citizens to get their input on farmland preservation, resulting in key recommendations found in this report.
- Funded a farm transition conference in Skagit County.
- Developed and is distributing a farmland preservation newsletter to over 2000 recipients across the state.
- Created the OFP web site, which includes farmland preservation information on contacts for every county in the state.

More detailed information on the accomplishments over the past year can be found in the report. Also included is a review of what other states are doing in their farmland preservation programs. This information provides some important ideas and new thinking that can be considered for our state.

Key elements of this report are the recommendations presented to the Conservation Commission by the Farmland Preservation Task Force. The issues surrounding each recommendation are described in this report.

For 2009, the OFP will continue to work with the Farmland Preservation Task Force to implement the recommendations and provide input to the Commission. The OFP will also enhance the state clearinghouse on farmland preservation incentives. The transition program will also be developed to provide information to landowners on the various tools available to them for keeping their land in farming.

A key project in 2009 will be the development of “farmland at risk of conversion” maps. These will help guide policy efforts at the state level and farmland preservation activities at the local level, in an effort to protect the most critical and at-risk farms in the state.

## OFP ACTIVITIES FOR 2008

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### **Early Action Projects**

- √ Distributed \$200,000 in farmland preservation grants to eight counties
- √ Funded an Open Space Tax Act report used to develop policy
- √ Developed research on other states' structure for easements

### **OFP**

- √ Initiated state-wide discussions on farmland preservation
- √ Presentation to State Planning Association on farmland preservation
- √ Assisted landowners with questions about preservation
- √ Recommended funding levels for the Conservation Easement Account
- √ Provided analysis to Task Force on emerging and existing issues
- √ Participated in a national conference on farm transition
- √ Participated in a national conference on farm preservation
- √ Researched land use issues including permitting
- √ Worked with University of Washington develop land use models

### **Transition**

- √ Funded a farm transition program in Skagit County
- √ Researched transition programs from different states

### **Farmland Preservation Task Force**

- √ Held six meetings and tours throughout the state
- √ Heard from stakeholders on preservation
- √ Developed recommendations targeting farmland preservation
- √ Officially endorsed a mixed use facility in Okanogan County

### **Outreach and Publications**

- √ Developed a monthly Farmland Preservation Newsletter
- √ Web page development to host clearinghouse and farmland information
- √ Distributed publications to over 2000 individuals
- √ Created a new display which travelled to numerous functions
- √ Expanded communication efforts by implementing the OFP-News listserv
- √ Developed an informational one page color handout on OFP
- √ Partnered with Farming and the Environment at annual awards ceremony
- √ Referenced in numerous statewide media publications
- √ Participated in a public radio series on the status of farming in our state

## OFP PROJECTED ACTIVITIES FOR 2009

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### **Early Action Projects**

- √ Report on University of Washington's mapping work for OFP
- √ Identify indicators for farmland preservation success

### **OFP**

- √ Assist counties in their comprehensive planning
- √ Create a purchase of agricultural easement checklist
- √ Develop a model policy for state farmland preservation
- √ Initiate an agricultural strategic plan model
- √ Work on increasing matching funds for federal grant dollars
- √ Continue work raised in Task Force recommendations
- √ Produce a researched product illustrating two farms and their challenges
- √ Assist landowners

### **Farmland Preservation Task Force**

- √ Meet quarterly for general business and tours
- √ Form sub-committee on developing an easement model
- √ Form sub-committee to initiate a model statewide farm transition program

### **Transition**

- √ Develop an ongoing farm transition program with stakeholder input
- √ Form a statewide transition network

### **Clearinghouse**

- √ Continue to integrate all land programs onto OFP webpage as resource

### **Outreach and Publications**

- √ Assist counties in their comprehensive planning
- √ Continue monthly publication of Farmland Preservation Newsletter
- √ Distribute the travelling OFP display
- √ Expand OFP-News Listserv
- √ Continue public and media outreach
- √ Revamp OFP one pager
- √ Partner with agricultural groups to promote preservation

## VARIOUS ONGOING PROCESSES RELATING TO FARMLAND PRESERVATION

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Over the past two years there have been several stakeholder processes examining the subject of agricultural activity in Washington. Although some of these discussions are more broad than just farmland preservation, the subjects they cover have implications for the long-term viability of agriculture, and therefore also have implications for maintaining farms as working farms and preserving farmland.

### **Office of Farmland Preservation**

In 2007, Governor Gregoire signed into law SSB 5108 which created the Office of Farmland Preservation and established the Farmland Preservation Task Force. The Office was created within the Washington State Conservation Commission to support the retention of farmland and the viability of farming for future generations.

With input from the Task Force, the Office has been working to provide an analysis of factors that have led to past declines in amount and use of agricultural lands and also to provide recommendations to the Task Force for consideration.

### **Office of Farmland Preservation Task Force**

Established in 2007 through SSB 5108, the Task Force was created to provide policy input to the Office of Farmland Preservation as it pursues several farmland-preservation goals outlined by lawmakers.

Comprised of farmers, legislators, county commissioners, and agency representatives, the Task Force is considering several recommendations as a first step towards preventing loss of farmland. As issues arise, the Task Force is poised to take action to collaboratively address what they believe is important in the prevention of farm loss.

The mission of the Task Force as decided by its members is to promote the vitality of farming, farmers, and ranchers by ensuring that we will continue to have productive agricultural lands in Washington State. They will achieve this through policy recommendations to the Governor, the

Legislature, the Office of Farmland Preservation and others and by enlisting public support. Programs will be voluntary, recognize local priorities, and provide for economic incentives.

During 2008, the Task Force has held public meetings throughout the state taking input from stakeholders, interested parties and the public. Based on the meetings and tours, the Task Force will be able to develop recommendations that fit their mission and intent of the legislature.

### **Future of Farming**

The Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) Future of Farming project will develop a strategic plan to guide decision makers as they work to support the continued economic viability of the state's \$34 billion food and agriculture industry. The goal of the project is to pass on a vibrant farm economy to the next generation of Washington producers.

A project steering committee representing a broad cross-section of the industry has met to develop a framework for prioritizing discussions. As opportunities and challenges are identified, private and public sector economists, agronomists, educators and other specialists will provide detailed input where appropriate.

During the spring and summer of 2008, listening sessions with farmers, food processors and other members of the public were held throughout the state. Based on this input and other information the steering committee will develop a report and recommendations that will be delivered to the Washington State Legislature in 2008. The strategies identified in the report will be structured to assist the Legislature and other governments to enact policies that benefit agriculture. The 2007 Legislature provided funding for the project.

### **Ruckelshaus Center - 5248 Process**

The William D. Ruckelshaus Center, a joint service of the Washington State University and the University of Washington, has been asked by the Governor and the Washington State Legislature to assist in resolving conflicts surrounding agricultural activities and the development and implementation of critical areas protections of the Growth Management Act (GMA). Controversy over agricultural and other land use issues played out strongly in the Initiative 933 campaign in 2007 and also within the 2007 legislative session and resulted in SSB 5248, which has been signed into law.

SSB 5248 directs the Center to work and consult with agricultural, environmental, tribal and local government interests to develop potential solutions for effective policies and practices that ensure protection of environmentally sensitive areas in ways that support the preservation of farm lands and a strong farm economy.

In accordance with SSB 5248, the Center will carry out a two-phased approach. The first phase will include initial stakeholder input and fact finding efforts, followed by a second phase that includes arranging and facilitating discussions between parties with the objective of developing policy recommendations to bring forward to the Governor and Legislature. In conjunction with these discussions, the Center will bring its research and analytical capabilities to bear in supporting the development of recommendations. The Center issued a progress report to the legislature in December, 2007 and will prepare another progress report in December, 2008. A final report will be issued in September, 2009.

## TRANSITION

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*“Provide analysis and recommendations as to the continued development and implementation of the farm transition program...” RCW 89.10.010(g)*

Developing and implementing an effective farm transition program is critical in preserving farmland for future generations. Considerable effort can be put into preserving the land but if there's no one to work the land, then the efforts have not been successful. Farmland preservation requires a focus on creating and enhancing opportunities for farmers to continue to work the land.

Because transferring the farm can be an emotional topic for farmers, transition planning is oftentimes delayed until it's too late. A successful transition program requires an acknowledgement of the emotional connection to the land and work with the landowner to help them plan for the future.

The OFP transition program will focus on educating landowners on the various transition options, educating the professionals who work with farmers on transition issues (bankers, attorneys, financial planners) as to the tools available to the landowner to keep the land as a farm, and identifying potential purchasers and individuals interested in entering farming.

### STATE TRANSITION PROGRAM UPDATES

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In the summer of 2008, OFP staff reported on the efforts of several states that have successful programs and described in general how they function.

#### WASHINGTON

Washington currently has a FarmLink program in King and Snohomish counties linking willing buyers and sellers. Since 2002, over 800 individuals have requested information, enrolled in the program, and/or participated in one of nearly 30 educational workshops. To date Washington FarmLink has helped keep over 300 acres in agricultural production.

The Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has partnered with Oregon State University to bring to Washington a transition program focused more on forest landowners called “Ties to the Land.”

In the fall of 2008, DNR teamed up with Underwood Conservation District to bring this program to South Central Washington. 16 participants, primarily forest owners, came to the two day meeting representing about 7 families. Feedback was tremendously positive with active participation from those in attendance.

DNR also put on a meeting in Dayton with the local extension agent. That meeting had 27 people attend. The families present mostly owned large tracts of land with both agriculture and forest. Again, this was widely viewed as a success.

More meetings are scheduled in 2009 for Lewis County and potentially Clallam County, working with the Clallam Conservation District.

## OTHER STATE TRANSITION PROGRAMS

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### VIRGINIA

Virginia Farmland Preservation coordinator reported that the Virginia Department of Agriculture is now the administrator of FarmLink programs in the state. FarmLink is associated with government in some states, universities in some states and non-profit organizations in others. Washington FarmLink is sponsored by King and Snohomish Counties and operated in partnership with Cascade Harvest Coalition.

Virginia also has a FarmLink database. It cost \$8,500 to have an IT contractor set it up. It was called “a glorified Craigslist.” It currently has 182 seekers of land owners.

### NEBRASKA

They are doing farm and ranch legal and financial clinics. They are doing case studies on the treatment of heirs to farm property. Their focus is to create “equity, not equality” in that treatment. The years an heir has been working in the farming business should be calculated somehow, so that heir is treated differently than another heir who has not worked in the business. They also work to get the older generation of farmers to define what “retirement” means to them.

### OHIO

They have been facilitating “speed dating” workshops, where older farmers meet younger would-be farmers for short periods. Recently these workshops have led to two “matches”, which result in the younger farmers keeping the land in production.

### ILLINOIS

They have become involved with “Annie’s Project.” This is networking just for farm women. One participant said “Mom’s going to end up with the farm anyway.” There was a lot of enthusiasm among attendees for this program.

### MISSOURI

They have a mediation program to settle disputes between landowners. Few attorneys specialize in this area. They got the Missouri Bar involved. This led to mention of the Coalition of Agricultural Mediation Programs, or CAMP. Iowa has an extensive section of law on agricultural disputes and mediation.

### CALIFORNIA

They host three regional conferences. They have forms for model lease agreements in their publication “Farmers’ Guide to Securing Land.” However, they are somewhat nervous about being accused of practicing law without a license. They also host “mixers” where land owners meet would-be farmers.

They have an easement program that they feel is innovative because it requires active farming of the land. It is a first with public funds in the state. The speaker called it “complicated.”

They are finding that part of the real estate foreclosure situation in California is bankers stuck with farmland they don’t want.

## OFP AND FARM TRANSITION WORKSHOPS

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In anticipation of developing the OFP transition program, WSCC staff attended a national conference on farm transition and heard from several mediators and facilitators of transition programs from across the country. One successful approach to initiating a farm transition program is the development of a series of transition workshops for landowners, professionals, and new farmers. The OFP provided funding for one transition workshop in the Skagit County area and is planning at least two conferences in other locations in the state in 2009.

The program will also bring together interested stakeholders to discuss what they would like to see in a program and meld their collective experience towards a common goal. Participants will include representatives from the Department of Revenue, Washington State University, Farm Credit, Washington Farm Bureau, Washington Cattleman's, Washington Dairy Federation, Washington Realtors, attorneys and estate tax experts.

The role of conservation districts statewide in the implementation will be central to the success of hosting or facilitating transition workshops across the state. Conservation districts are in a unique position to offer support and education to land managers across the state. Many landowners already seek out the assistance of their local conservation district and the trust element that already exists between the two entities.

As evidenced by the success of the workshop hosted in part by the Underwood Conservation District in Southwest Washington, the potential exists for all districts to annually or semi annually host and facilitate a transition workshop.

## MODEL PDR PROGRAM

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### Purchase of Development Rights

Under a Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program, a landowner voluntarily sells his/her rights to develop a parcel of land typically to a public agency or qualified conservation organization. The landowner retains all other ownership rights attached to the land, and a conservation easement is placed on the land and recorded on the title. The buyer (often a local unit of government or land trust) essentially purchases the right to develop the land and extinguishes that right permanently, thereby assuring that development will not occur on that particular property. In placing such an easement on their farm and/or forest land, participating landowners often take the proceeds from sale of the development rights to invest in their farming operations or retire from the business, and may allow another farmer to purchase the land at lower rates (i.e. rates devoid of development rights).

According to the December 2008 William D. Ruckelshaus Center Report Number 2 submitted to the Governor, there are approximately 92,000 acres protected by conservation easements in Washington representing around 2000 individual easements. Those 2000 easements are held by a myriad of entities including state, county, and private non profits for a total of 31 holders. Only a small portion of the 92,000 acres under easement exist to protect commercial agriculture, the vast majority of easements exist to protect critical areas and their functions.<sup>2</sup>

To effectively preserve working lands, the farm business has to be profitable. Profitable lands provide all the incentive a land manager needs to stay in production. PDRs offer that potential. The best uses of PDRs and easements are in making the farm business equitable and profitable, ensuring continued operation. Easements and PDRs can permanently protect farmland from non-farm development and significantly reduce transfer taxes in cases where the market value of the land is much greater than its restricted value as is often the case in areas in and near major populations. Easements also keep the land, in most cases, in private ownership and on local tax rolls. They are also flexible documents that can be tailored to meet the goals of individual farmers and ranchers and the entity holding the easement specific to their properties. Most importantly, they can be a useful tool in transferring land to a new generation of producers.

There are drawbacks to easements and PDRs as well. When you begin discussing the conditions of the easement, often times the holders of the easement are geared towards retiring the rights to develop and plans on holding the easement in perpetuity. This adds to the difficult decisions families and land owners must make when working to determine what is right for them and their family. PDRs and easements do not ensure that the land will continue to be farm ground.

Differing from permanent restrictions, *term* easements impose restrictions for a specified number of years. Regardless of the duration of the easement, the agreement is legally binding on future landowners for the agreed upon time period. At the time of sale, it may be difficult to find subsequent landowners to purchase the land and uphold the easement terms.

An easement can be modified or terminated by a court if the land or the neighborhood changes and the conservation objectives of the easement become impossible to achieve. Easements can also be terminated by eminent domain proceedings.

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<sup>2</sup> William D. Ruckelshaus Center: Report Number 2, December 1, 2008

## MODEL PROGRAM FOR STATE AGENCIES AND LOCAL JURISDICTIONS

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In 2009, OFP staff will be working with other stakeholders to develop a model PDR program for state agencies and local jurisdictions. The primary focus of the model program will be to establish criteria and a decision making structure that will allow for targeted PDR acquisitions. This will ensure that the farms on which a PDR is secured will be those that are most likely to be successful long-term.

## MAPPING FARMLANDS AT RISK

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### Lands at Risk

One challenge to the preservation of farmland is understanding which lands are most at risk of conversion. Mapping that identifies where prime agricultural lands currently exist with the ability to query and understand the relationship those parcels have to land use/zoning maps and growth trends in relation will help in developing strategies to preserve the prime agricultural lands.

The Office of Farmland Preservation, through the State Conservation Commission, initiated and funded a farmland mapping project in cooperation with the University of Washington College of Forestry to develop the system to identify these lands.

The Washington State Parcel Database, housed at the University of Washington's College of Forest Resources (CFR) is maintained by staff of the Rural Technology Initiative (RTI). RTI Staff have developed relationships with Washington's thirty-nine counties and land management agencies to collect and normalize their parcel GIS data into a single dataset in a common statewide format that will be updated annually.

Using the Statewide Parcel Database as a foundation, research staff has constructed the Washington State Forestland Database. By generating forest land cover from satellite imagery and using land use information and assessed land values from the database, forested lands can be identified and categorized into ownership categories such as public, conservation, tribal, industrial and other private. In addition, the Forestland Database contains information about relevant physical and political features such as parcel, contiguous tract, owner and forest acres, regulatory buffer acres, slope information, stream and road density/length and a conversion potential metric calculated as the difference between current use and highest-and-best use land values.

A similar database will be constructed with existing information for agriculture lands. This database will enable a new understanding of agricultural change in Washington similar to the Forestland Database. It will also allow the OFP to target farmland preservation strategies to those lands most at risk of conversion.

WSPCC has contracted with the University of Washington to provide a series of maps specific to agriculture lands. UW will present as maps and data by state sub-regions:

- Acres in agricultural use as identified by assessor data.
- Acres in Agriculture classified under current use (RCW 84.34) as identified by assessor data.
- Acres in agriculture use, but NOT in current use tax status
- Acres in agriculture-related use as identified by assessor data.

This information and the overall data may possibly be overlaid with the WSDA Crop Mapping efforts which identify crop types on agricultural lands state wide. WSDA has developed an agricultural land use geodatabase to assess the effects of agricultural production on Washington's natural resources. The geodatabase can store, query, and manipulate geographic information used to identify agriculture land use in Washington. WSDA has been collecting crop data for over 4 years in a GIS format. Data is gathered using a combination of field surveys and aerial photography.

## OFP GRANTS – STATUS REPORT AND SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS

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*“Provide technical assistance to localities as they develop and implement programs, mechanisms, and tools to encourage the retention of agricultural lands;*

*“Develop a grant process and an eligibility certification process for localities to receive grants for local programs and tools to retain agricultural lands for agricultural production;...”<sup>3</sup>*

In 2007, the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) identified \$200,000 in grant money from the farmland preservation portion of the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program funding for grants to local governments for farmland preservation activities. Eight counties began or further developed farmland preservation programs this past year with grants of \$25,000 each.

Kittitas, Clark, Clallam, Jefferson, Whatcom, Thurston, San Juan and Klickitat Counties were the recipients of the grants. Activities funded occurred in calendar year 2008. Those activities varied under the terms of individual county proposals that were approved following a competitive application and evaluation process. Activities eligible for funding under the program included assessing community interest in farmland preservation, developing priorities for farmland to be preserved, writing a county farmland preservation strategy or establishing a local process for identifying high priority farms to protect.

Overall, the response and effort put forth by the counties has been extremely positive. Several counties were able to establish and facilitate important conversations in the community about what preservation may look like in their area. Feedback from the entities involved illustrates the importance of preserving farmland and how each individual county uniquely adapted their grant money for the needs of the county in whole. Below are updates and status reports from the eight counties. For a complete report on activities please contact OFP staff.

A key “lesson learned” from the process is counties are facing very difficult financial decisions for all the services they provide. Farmland preservation activities at the local level may suffer not because of lack of interest but because other issues such as criminal justice, transportation and social services are a higher priority. In the future the farmland preservation grants should be available to entities other than counties, such as conservation districts or non-governmental organizations, who would then work with the counties to implement the activities covered by the grant.

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<sup>3</sup> RCW 89.10.010(3)(e-f)

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## RESULTS FROM COUNTY OFP GRANTS

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To date, the follow county recipients have reported results. All county grant results are due to be completed by March 2009.

### **Clallam County**

Trust for Public Land (TPL) convened a meeting with a coalition of local groups to discuss the content of the Clallam County conservation finance survey, and prepare a draft of the survey for review. A review of TDR programs from around the state was initiated. The coalition conducted an initial review of the county comprehensive plan and zoning code for sections that address agricultural activities and prepared an action plan to address these codes. Information was obtained from the North Olympic Land Trust indicating land already preserved through conservation easements for processing into the GIS database. GIS information was also obtained from the Clallam Conservation District identifying locations of farmland and farming activities to help develop a land data base that will identify key at risk farms.

### **Clark County**

An agricultural preservation advisory committee was organized. Seven meetings of the advisory committee were convened and the group developed an initial list of farm issues to be discussed by the committee. The committee heard a presentation by a conservation consultant entitled "Clark County Farm Designation and Protection Programs" as well as a presentation on "Land Use Planning and Agricultural Land: The Oregon Perspective." With this information, the Committee commenced discussion of geographical areas of long term agricultural interest in the county and began identifying strategies to protect these areas.

### **Klickitat County**

Klickitat County contracted with the American Farmland Trust (AFT) who made an initial assessment of potential issues and prepared a working discussion paper on "Options and Issues for Protecting Agricultural Lands in Klickitat County" along with supporting materials. Public meeting notices of six community meetings conducted by AFT were distributed. All meeting notices were published in the local paper and county planning staff contacted forty-five landowners by written correspondence or phone calls to invite to the meetings. AFT created and followed an outreach plan for the broad distribution of notice of the six public meetings. During the meetings AFT presented various tools used for farmland preservation; the presentation was followed by a facilitated in-depth discussions that focused on community vision of farming in the County in the future, impediments to maintaining farmland in farm use, and possible solutions. Twenty-two recommendations were developed in the document "Keeping Farmland Available for Klickitat County Agriculture: Report to the Klickitat County Commission" This was distributed to the Klickitat County Commission in December of 2008. Report can be found here: <http://www.farmland.org/programs/states/WA/Klickitat-County-Papers.asp>

## San Juan County

The county Agricultural Resources Committee (ARC) is the lead, with help from San Juan Conservation District, San Juan County Land Bank, and San Juan Preservation Trust. Two articles on farmland preservation were published in three printed newspapers and three online newspapers. Articles gave an overview of state Ag Open Space Tax program, and the process of donating or selling conservation easements to either the Land Bank or Preservation Trust. So far, one landowner has contacted ARC interested in a conservation easement. ARC has discussed an "early warning system" with the County Assessor where ARC would find out if a landowner is soon to be out of compliance with the Ag Open Space Tax program. ARC would contact the landowner and offer assistance. Three public meetings held on three different islands. The meetings shared information on farmland preservation, the county open space tax, and a workshop on inheritance and farm transition. ARC worked with the County Public Works Dept to develop a map to help in prioritizing farmland preservation areas.

Two additional articles on preservation were published in the local paper where ARC now has a monthly spot. Articles covered economics of farmland services and need, and outlined the benefits of local food. Also conducted a live radio interview covering local food, preservation, and a "farm to school" program. While the "early warning system" ARC has with the County Assessor has not stopped farms from leaving the program, the close alliance with the assessor has been very beneficial for agricultural data. Media and outreach efforts have led several land managers to contact ARC for more information. ARC updated the San Juan County Council and presented recommendations including incorporating a 'no net loss' of farmland policy into the county's comprehensive plan, allocation of funds from farms leaving Ag Open Space to finance farmland preservation, rewriting the Public Benefit Rating System of Open Space to facilitate preservation and consideration of building permit quotas, down zoning, and a PDR program. ARC continued its collaboration with WSU Extension and San Juan Islands Agricultural Guild to establish baseline data on farming and food in San Juan County. They also coordinated with Snohomish County to create a regional food shed map. The scope of the agriculture mapping project was enlarged to gather more data.

An audit of San Juan County's Open Space program was initiated by the Washington Department of Revenue. The County Assessor mailed an audit to all farms in the county. ARC mailed a follow up letter illustrating the significant ramifications of not responding and offering assistance in completing the audit questionnaire. This technical involvement allowed ARC to assist the county in rewriting the county's Public Benefit Rating System which will allow farms removed from Open Space Ag to be included in the Open-Open Space Program. Monthly articles continue to appear in local newspaper which goes to each box holder in the county. Collaborative survey was sent to farmers. Surveys continue to be returned. ARC participated in the San Juan County Fair for public meetings. Featured local farms, local chefs sharing recipes using local foods, discussion about historic barn preservation, farmers market projects, and noxious weeds. Mapping project was displayed with many farmers placing their farm on the map and completing the survey. Twice presented updates and recommendations to the San Juan County Council.

## **Thurston County**

County staff has been working with the county Ag Advisory Committee to develop an agriculture strategy for the county. As part of this effort, the County and the Committee held a workshop with members of the community, providing an opportunity for county residents to learn about the need for, and explore strategies to conserving working lands. Allow land owners to express desires for specific requirements and benefits to be included in a conservation plan. The county Ag Advisory Committee has committed to pursue a parallel process to advocate for farm and working lands conservation. This workshop was held and the information from the public was incorporated into the Ag Advisory Committee consideration of a county agriculture strategy. The Committee is continuing work on the proposed ag strategy and when completed it will be presented to the County Commissioners.

## **Whatcom County**

Discussion of agriculture target areas was completed. The County created build-out maps for ag zone parcelization. A development rights analysis is underway in agriculture and rural areas. A Purchase of Development Rights white paper was completed. The local group Farm Friends was contracted with to draft a public involvement plan. A Technical Review Committee was formed and convened. A questionnaire was developed and mailed to landowners in the county. County staff drafted an outreach/public involvement plan and completed a public involvement summary.

The easement requirements and local Conservation Futures funding program was reviewed. They also reviewed local CAO and Ag code issues with internal county staff and local conservation district. Provided summary of impediments and opportunities created through various levels of regulation of the agricultural program. Included recommendations for improving local control and revenue generation, and drafts of ordinances and zoning changes that may support this. Feasibility report of a TDR program in Whatcom County completed.

## CLEARINGHOUSE FOR INCENTIVE PROGRAMS

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*“Serve as a clearinghouse for incentive programs that would consolidate and disseminate information relating to conservation programs that are accessible to landowners and assist owners of agricultural lands to secure financial assistance to implement conservation easements and other projects.”<sup>4</sup>*

Over the course of 2008, the foundation for the clearinghouse was established with the creation of the OFP web page. Staff completed the overall structure for the web page and began populating it with a wealth of information. The site can be found at <http://ofp.scc.wa.gov>. The page lists resources for each county in the state and includes information on local conservation futures programs, links to county web pages, information on local resources for farmers, ranchers and other agricultural producers, and links to other local farmland preservation programs. The web page also includes information on the latest news relating to agriculture and farmland preservation.

The Office of Farmland Preservation staff has also started a monthly farmland preservation e-newsletter that’s distributed to 2,000 email subscribers. The newsletter serves as an important link for timely information on farmland preservation.

For 2009 the OFP staff will begin to structure the web page to include information on incentive programs available state wide from federal, state and local agencies, as well as from non-profit organizations. The information will be organized in such a way that landowners anywhere in the state can access the information and tailor it to their specific needs. They will also be able to find contact information to enable them to take advantage of these programs.

Finally, in 2009 the OFP will participate with the full State Conservation Commission to explore how the existing structure of the Conservation Commission and Conservation Districts could be used to improve service delivery to landowners of information on incentive programs available to them. This approach would provide a more efficient and focused method of working with landowners to help them understand the array of incentive programs that may be available to them. The District staff could also serve as liaisons for the landowners helping them make contact with the appropriate agency for assistance.

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<sup>4</sup> RCW 89.10.010(i)

## WHAT OTHER STATES ARE DOING ON FARMLAND PRESERVATION

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Many states across America have a farm preservation program. Many differ in their approach and the programs they offer, but one of the most popular processes for preservation in the other states is a Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easement program (PACE).

According to a study done by American Farmland Trust, as of May 2008, 27 states have a preservation program that authorizes state-level PACE programs. The following table displays the status and summarizes important information about farm and ranch land protection programs in 21 states that have funded easement acquisition. Washington is not listed as the Easement account is currently not funded.

Some programs (e.g., Delaware and Massachusetts) purchase and hold easements directly. Others also have the authority to acquire and co-hold easements with partners (e.g., county governments). Similar to Washington, a few programs (e.g., New York and Virginia) only provide grants to eligible entities to buy easements.

State	Acres Protected	Program Funds Spent to Date
California*	40,784	\$61,511,000
Colorado*	334,826	\$107,533,255
Connecticut	32,300	\$94,010,529
Delaware	85,045	\$111,628,717
Georgia	290	\$533,000
Kentucky	28,173	\$13,823,269
Maine	5,950	\$4,109,376
Maryland*	323,090	\$428,208,505
Massachusetts*	59,972	\$162,032,674
Michigan	19,065	\$26,547,672
Montana	9,923	\$888,000
New Hampshire	12,109	\$14,382,808
New Jersey*	161,281	\$647,902,318
New York*	28,138	\$70,721,783
North Carolina	4,712	\$2,504,000
Ohio	31,898	\$19,179,518
Pennsylvania*	382,845	\$630,540,464
Rhode Island	5,366	\$22,489,848
South Carolina	8,650	\$4,702,500
Utah	74,718	\$12,743,172
Vermont	124,057	\$51,450,502
<b>STATE TOTALS</b>	<b>1,773,192</b>	<b>\$2,487,442,910</b>

\*indicates the funding sources in the below table

Funding for these programs come from many different sources. Most common though is state appropriations. A list of funding sources for the top spending states is below:

<b>State</b>	<b>Funding Sources used to Date</b>
California	Appropriations, bonds, private contributions, FPP
Colorado	Local government contributions, portion of lottery proceeds, FPP
Maryland	Agricultural transfer tax, bonds, local government contributions, private contributions, real estate transfer tax, FPP Bonds, local government contributions, private contributions, real estate transfer tax
Massachusetts	Appropriations, bonds, local government contributions, private contributions, transportation funding, FPP
New Jersey	Appropriations, bonds, local government contributions, portion of state sales and use tax, private/foundation contributions, sale of fee-simple purchased properties, FPP
New York	Bonds, local government contributions, real estate transfer tax, FPP
Pennsylvania	Appropriations, bonds, cigarette tax, interest on securities, local government contributions, FPP

## STATE FARMLAND PRESERVATION PROGRAMS

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### California

The California Farmland Conservancy Program (CFCP) seeks to encourage the long-term, private stewardship of agricultural lands through the voluntary use of agricultural conservation easements. The CFCP provides grant funding for projects which use and support agricultural conservation easements for protection of agricultural lands.

### Colorado

Since 1994 when Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) awarded its first grants, through FY 2008, GOCO has committed approximately \$578 million for more than 2,800 projects throughout the state. GOCO dollars are helping to: protect more than 850,000 acres of open space in perpetuity: Land along river corridors and in mountain valleys; land for wildlife habitat; agricultural lands; land in the heart of cities; land that separates communities; and land that buffers state and local parks from encroaching development.

### Connecticut

The Connecticut Department of Agriculture preserves farmland by acquiring development rights to agricultural properties. The farms remain in private ownership and continue to pay local property taxes. A permanent restriction on nonagricultural uses is placed on these properties. The program is voluntary on the part of the applicant. As of January 3, 2007, the Farmland Preservation Program has preserved 31,782 acres on the 228 farms. More than half of these acres are classified as prime and important farmland soils. The goals and reasons for Farmland Preservation remain unchanged.

A goal of preserving 130,000 acres, with 85,000 acres of cropland continues to be in effect for the Department of Agriculture.

## **Delaware**

The Delaware Agricultural Lands Preservation Foundation preserves farms - the cornerstone of rural Delaware. The Foundation preserves historic structures, wildlife habitats, important environmental features, wetlands, and forests, as well as setting aside, permanently, the critical farmland for future generations of Delawareans. The program is voluntary. Delaware's farmland preservation program has two major components Agricultural Preservation Districts and Agricultural Conservation Easements.

## **Kentucky**

The Kentucky General Assembly in 1994 established the Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easement Corporation and authorized the state to purchase agricultural conservation easements in order to ensure that lands currently in agricultural use will continue to remain available for agriculture and not be converted to other uses.

The PACE Corporation has purchased agricultural conservation easements on 88 farms totaling 20,927 acres for \$17,873,444. The easement costs have averaged \$854 per acre. The farm size has averaged 238 acres. In addition, 34 easements on 4,638 acres have been donated to the program, bringing the total inventory to 122 farms containing 25,565 acres.

Since the inception of the program, the Department has received 816 applications from 75 counties statewide totaling over 160,000 acres. A total of 667 applications are currently pending for a total of over 129,000 acres with an estimated easement value of over \$100 million.

## **Maine**

Technical assistance is provided to farmland owners who are interested in applying for the state's purchase of development rights funds through the Land for Maine's Future program.

The Land for Maine's Future Program (LMFP) was enacted in 1987 to acquire land and interests in lands (easements) to protect important conservation areas, water access, outdoor recreation, fish and wildlife habitat, and farmland. The program requires a fifty-cent match for every dollar requested.

## **Maryland**

The Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF) was established by the Maryland General Assembly in 1977 and is part of the Maryland Department of Agriculture. The Foundation purchases agricultural preservation easements that forever restrict development on prime farmland and woodland.

During its 25th year of preserving agricultural land, MALPF will have helped landowners permanently protect from development more than 250,000 acres on almost 2,000 farms. The Foundation has preserved farmland in all of Maryland's 23 counties. Today, the Foundation manages a public investment of over \$333 million in permanently preserved land. The Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Program is one of the most successful programs of its kind in the nation. Maryland has preserved in perpetuity more agricultural land than any other state in the country.

## Massachusetts

The Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) Program is a voluntary program which is intended to offer a non-development alternative to farmers and other owners of "prime" and "state important" agricultural land who are faced with a decision regarding future use and disposition of their farms. Towards this end, the program offers to pay farmland owners the difference between the "fair market value" and the "agricultural value" of their farmland in exchange for a permanent deed restriction which precludes any use of the property that will have a negative impact on its agricultural viability.

Massachusetts' APR program, begun as an act of the Legislature in 1979, was the first in our nation and has since been a model upon which many other states have built their programs. As of 2008 the Massachusetts APR program has permanently protected over 725 farms and a total land area of over 61,855 acres. The primary purpose of the APR program is to preserve and protect agricultural land, including designated farmland soils, which are a finite natural resource, from being built upon for non-agricultural purposes or used for any activity detrimental to agriculture and to maintain APR land values at a level that can be supported by the land's agricultural uses and potential.

## Michigan

The Michigan Farmland and Open Space Preservation office works with four farmland preservation efforts which are detailed below.

### *1. Local Purchase of Development Rights (PDR)*

This program was established in 2000 and is intended to provide grants to local purchase of development rights programs. The funding source for this program is a recapture of benefits from participants in the program described below in #2. They have had two grant cycles with local entities. The amount they had available was limited to \$1.3 million in 2005 and \$1.48 million in 2007. They had received requests for \$26 million in those two years so the demand exists for this type of program. In general permanent conservation easements are expensive and can be complicated for a local unit of government to complete. They frequently take more time than the local government expects. Those communities that have been the most successful have designated a staff person to complete the work.

The Michigan local grant program is somewhat unique in that grants are not made for specific parcels but are granted to pre-approved programs. It is also not an entitlement program so these local governments must compete for the funds. Their Board spent considerable time coming up with a scoring system for these state funds that creates incentives for the local units of government to plan for farmland preservation as well as to create incentives for local governments to recognize and encourage farming in their communities. In addition the program creates incentives for intergovernmental cooperation.

Purchase of development rights is relatively expensive. Under their state, direct purchase of development rights program (which no longer is funded - item #3 below) they purchased the development rights on 69 farms for about 15,000 acres at a cost of \$30 million.

### *2. PA 116 (Temporary conservation easements)*

Since 1974 the State has administered a program where landowners restrict their land to agricultural use in exchange for exemptions from special assessments and in exchange for receiving a tax credit through their state income tax. The tax credit is calculated based on the relationship

between the landowner's income and the landowner's property taxes. If their income is low they would typically receive a credit. If their property taxes are high they would typically receive a tax credit.

Currently they hold 41,000 Agreements or contracts with landowners. Last year the state issued credit checks for about \$36 million to the farming community. This program protects about 3.3 million acres of farm ground. When land comes out of the program it is required to repay the tax credits received during the last seven years of the Agreement. These funds are used by the Michigan Agricultural preservation fund to make grants to local PDR programs (Item #1).

### ***3. State Purchase of Development Rights Program***

As indicated previously, they no longer directly purchase development rights on farmland under this program since funds for this program have now been directed to the Michigan Agricultural Preservation Fund. However under this program they purchased 69 permanent conservation easements. This initial state program helped to establish the locally run programs. Once the state purchased development rights in a community there was a greater understanding of the process and greater acceptance to establish a locally run program. In some states such as New Jersey all conservation easements are purchased and owned by the state. In others such as Pennsylvania, block grants are made to counties with local programs. There are advantages and disadvantages to each method. For example, if the program is a direct purchase through the state, there is consistency in the execution and enforcement of the conservation easements. On the other hand, local programs may have a better sense as to which parcels to preserve. The ability to execute the local programs varies depending on the proficiency of the program.

### ***4. Donation of Conservation Easements***

An unexpected off shoot of the purchase program has been the donation of conservation easements on farmland. They currently hold 21 of these conservation easements and are working on an additional four. Improved tax incentives at the federal level have been of some use (although they expire December 31, 2009). The key factor in obtaining these donations has been the state direct purchase program which established a track record for those considering donation. Part of the reason they are seeing farmland donated conservation easements is because most conservancies are not ready to acquire a conservation easement on working lands such as farmlands. In Michigan the perception that open space land is the only option available for conservation easements is changing and more conservancies seem willing to embrace protection of working lands.

## **Montana**

The Montana Agricultural Heritage Program was created in 1999 to help stem the loss of critical farm, ranch, and forest land to development. The program received an initial allocation of \$1 million from the general fund. A citizen commission oversees the acquisition of conservation easements from willing sellers and donors. In its first year of operation, the commission approved eight landowner grant applications totaling \$888,000. This figure was matched by \$6.36 million from various federal, local, and private sources, including the participating landowners. These easements have preserved 9,923 acres of agricultural land.

## **New Jersey**

The State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) leads in the preservation of New Jersey's farmland and promotes innovative approaches to maintaining the viability of agriculture having preserved more than 170,000 acres of farmland preserved statewide.

The SADC administers the Farmland Preservation Program, providing grants to counties, municipalities and nonprofit groups to fund the purchase of development easements on farmland; directly purchasing farms and development easements from landowners; and offering grants to landowners in the program to fund up to 50 percent of the cost of soil and water conservation projects. It also administers the Right to Farm Program, oversees the Transfer of Development Rights Bank, and operates the Farm Link Program, which helps connect farm owners with farmers seeking access to farmland and farming opportunities.

The SADC consists of 11 members – six citizens appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate, and five ex-officio members. Four of the citizen members must be actively engaged in farming, and the other two represent the general public.

## **New York**

Through the New York Agriculture and Markets Law, the Commissioner of Agriculture is authorized to administer two matching grant programs focused on farmland protection. One assists county governments in developing agricultural and farmland protection plans to maintain the economic viability of the State's agricultural industry and its supporting land base. Since the inception of this program in 1994, the Department has awarded over \$2 million to 48 counties across the State.

The other program assists local governments in implementing their farmland protection plans and has focused on preserving the land base by purchasing the development rights on farms using a conservation easement. The purchase of development rights (PDR) can help where the benefits and protections available through agricultural districting and other planning tools may not be sufficient to overcome local development pressure and other issues affecting farmland. Since the inception of this program in 1996, the Department has awarded nearly \$80 million to protect approximately 36,000 acres on 200 farms in 18 counties.

In 2004, a total of 43 municipalities requested more than \$86 million under this highly competitive grants program, and a total of \$12.5 million in Environmental Protection Fund resources were awarded to 15 municipalities to purchase the development rights on 20 farms. This continues a trend of rapidly escalating interest in the use of conservation easements among municipalities and farm owners to protect farmland since this grants program was initiated.

## **North Carolina**

Since 2002, North Carolina has lost more than 6,000 farms and 300,000 acres of farmland. This puts North Carolina in the position of leading the nation in farm loss.

Preserving working family farms is one of North Carolina Agriculture Commissioner's top priorities. In March 2005, the General Assembly passed House Bill 607 establishing the Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund. The purpose of the fund is to support the farming, forestry, and horticulture communities within the agriculture industry by:

- Supporting the purchase of agricultural conservation easements (on farm, forest, and horticulture lands), including transaction costs.
- Funding Public and private enterprise programs that will promote profitable and sustainable family farms through assistance to farmers in developing and implementing plans for the production of food, fiber, and value-added products, agritourism activities, marketing and sales of agricultural products produced on the farm, and other agriculturally related business activities.

- Funding conservation agreements (on farm, forest, and horticulture lands) targeted at the active production of food, fiber and other agricultural products.

## Ohio

The Ohio Office of Farmland Preservation educates the public about the importance of saving farmland. The office also assists farmers and local officials with their farmland protection efforts and hosts an annual farmland preservation summit.

The office implements the Clean Ohio Agricultural Easement Purchase Program, the Ohio Agricultural Easement Donation Program, and provides technical assistance to communities implementing the Agricultural Security Area program.

### **Clean Ohio Agricultural Easement Purchase Program (AEPP)**

Of the \$400 million Clean Ohio Fund, \$25 million was set aside to purchase agricultural easements on productive farmland from willing landowners. Over a span of seven years, approximately \$3.12 million was provided each year to purchase agricultural easements. Since the AEPP's inception in 2002, the department's Office of Farmland Preservation has received more than 1,800 Clean Ohio AEPP applications. Due to limited funding, the department has preserved only 135 of those farms, totaling 26,813 acres. Following this year's round of funding, the \$25 million allocation from the Clean Ohio Fund will be depleted. The Governor and the General Assembly's Bipartisan Economic Stimulus Package, a \$1.57 billion investment in Ohio's economy and infrastructure that will create tens of thousands of new jobs, includes a \$400-million bond renewal for the Clean Ohio Fund. If passed, this money will not only help preserve farmland but will also preserve green space, develop recreational trails, and clean up brownfield sites.

### **Ohio Agricultural Easement Donation Program (AEDP)**

Since 1999, the department has accepted the donation of agricultural easements from landowners who wish to protect their farm and keep it in agricultural production. Donations are evaluated individually, because certain legal requirements must be met in order for an easement to be granted. More than 4,400 acres have been preserved through the donation program.

### **Agricultural Security Area (ASA)**

This program authorizes one or more landowners of at least 500 acres of contiguous farmland to request enrollment into an ASA for a 10-year period. This voluntary request is made through boards of township trustees and county commissioners. ASAs provide certain benefits to farmers that include protecting the land from non-agricultural development, maintaining a critical mass of land to help keep farming viable, and possibly providing tax exemptions on new real property. The department's Office of Farmland Preservation provides technical assistance to farmers and local officials in creating an ASA program. Since the creation of this program in 2005, there have been more than 17,800 acres enrolled in the ASA program.

## Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania's state-level Easement Purchase Program has protected more farmland than any other state-level Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easement (PACE) program in the country.

The Pennsylvania Bureau of Farmland Preservation oversees the Commonwealth's program to purchase agricultural easements and administers legislative programs designed to preserve farmland through the State Agricultural Preservation Board.

Agricultural Security Areas (ASAs) are a tool for strengthening and protecting their quality farmland from the urbanization of rural areas. Key features of the program are:

- Voluntary for farmers. Petitions are submitted to township supervisors by the farmers to create the ASA. They are reviewed every seven years; however, new parcels of farmland may be added to an established ASA at any time.
- A minimum of 250 acres from among all the participating farmers is required.
- An ASA may include non-adjacent farmland parcels of at least ten acres or be able to produce \$2000 annually from the sale of agricultural products.
- Participants receive special consideration regarding:
  - Local ordinances affecting farming activities.
  - Nuisance complaints.
  - And review of farmland condemnation by state and local government agencies.

An ASA qualifies land for consideration under the Easement Purchase Program at the landowner's request, if the ASA has at least 500 acres enrolled.

The Pennsylvania Agricultural Conservation Easement Purchase Program was developed in 1988 to help slow the loss of prime farmland to non-agricultural uses. The program enables state, county and local governments to purchase conservation easements (sometimes called development rights) from owners of quality farmland. The first easements were purchased in 1989. Counties participating in the program have appointed agricultural land preservation boards with a state board created to oversee this program. The state board is responsible for distribution of state funds, approval and monitoring of county programs and specific easement purchases.

## Rhode Island

The Rhode Island State Land Conservation and Acquisition Program operates to identify, assess, acquire and protect lands consistent with the Department's responsibility to provide recreational lands, protect farmland, and save environmentally sensitive open space for Rhode Island's future generations. This office also coordinates land acquisition with other state, federal and non-profit land acquisition programs and leverages funding from these various sources. The land protection team works to acquire land consistent with state regulations for the acquisition of property, and to develop funding sources for these acquisitions.

## Vermont

Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB) make loans and grants to nonprofit organizations, municipalities and state agencies for the acquisition of land and for the purchase of conservation easements. All conservation projects are protected in perpetuity by conservation easements recorded in the land records which travel with the land upon resale. The conservation easements are co-held by the applicant organization or a sponsoring organization, VHCB, and, in the case of farmland conservation projects, by the Vermont Department of Agriculture, Food & Markets.

The VHCB Farmland Preservation Program is focused on retaining the state's quality agricultural land base in strong farming regions of the state. The purchase of conservation easements on farmland preserves Vermont's working landscape--the open farm fields, woodlands and farmsteads that comprise the third largest sector in the state's economy and draw the visitors that make tourism the largest sector. Because of the Board's investment in conservation easements, Vermont's most productive farmland will remain undeveloped and the best soils will remain available for farming in the future. In Vermont, 251 farms comprising more than 83,000 acres of agricultural land have been conserved with VHCB funds since 1987.

## Virginia

In 2001, the Virginia General Assembly established the Office of Farmland Preservation within the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services to help reverse the trend of farm loss. The General Assembly charged the Office with four important missions:

- To work with other governmental and private organizations to help establish local purchase of development rights (PDR) programs by creating model policies and practices, establishing criteria to certify programs as eligible to receive funds from public sources, and determining methods and sources of funding for localities to purchase agricultural conservation easements
- To create programs to educate the public about the importance of farmland preservation
- To help farmers with farmland preservation efforts
- To administer the Virginia Farm Link program

# FARMLAND PRESERVATION TASK FORCE

## BACKGROUND

When creating the Office of Farmland Preservation the Legislature also established the Farmland Preservation Task Force.<sup>5</sup> The Task Force is assigned the role of providing guidance to the OFP on conservation easements, and providing input to the OFP on the Office’s analysis of the major factors that have led to the past declines of agricultural lands in the state.<sup>6</sup>

The 18 member task force was appointed by the Governor in October of 2007 and consists of six farmer representatives from each region in the state, four legislators, two county commissioners, and a representative of the Washington Association of Conservation Districts, three state agency representatives and two non voting members representing the USDA-NRCS and Community Trade and Economic Development.

<b>Member</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
<b>Mary Margaret Haugen</b>	State Senator
<b>Jim Honeyford</b>	State Senator
<b>Joel Kretz</b>	State Representative
<b>Larry Springer</b>	State Representative
<b>Jacob Anderson</b>	South Central Farmer Representative
<b>Sheryl Cox</b>	South East Farmer Representative
<b>Jeff Emtman</b>	North East Farmer Representative
<b>Bob Hart, Chair</b>	North West Farmer Representative
<b>Greg Schoenbachler</b>	South West Farmer Representative
<b>Richard Thomason</b>	North Central Farmer Representative
<b>Rudy Plager</b>	Adams County Commissioner
<b>Don Munks</b>	Skagit County Commissioner
<b>Lynn Bahrych</b>	Washington State Conservation Commission
<b>Lee Faulconer</b>	WA State Dept of Agriculture
<b>John Mankowski</b>	Governors Executive Policy
<b>Roylene Rides at the Door</b>	USDA-NRCS
<b>Dee Caputo</b>	Community Trade and Economic Development
<b>Fred Colvin</b>	WA Association of Conservation Districts

<sup>5</sup> RCW 89.10.020

<sup>6</sup> RCW 89.10.010(3)(a) and (c).

## WORK OF THE TASK FORCE

### FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE LOSS OF FARMLAND

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Part of the charge to the Office of Farmland Preservation is to identify the factors contributing to the loss of farmland in the state and to make recommendations on how to reverse the trend:

#### **RCW 89.10.010(c)**

*With input from the task force created in section 3 of this act, provide an analysis of the major factors that have led to past declines in the amount and use of agricultural lands in Washington and of the factors that will likely affect retention and economic viability of these lands into the future including, but not limited to, pressures to convert land to nonagricultural uses, loss of processing plants and markets, loss of profitability, productivity, and competitive advantage, urban sprawl, water availability and quality, restrictions on agricultural land use, and conversion to recreational or other uses;*

The meetings and field trips for the Task Force were designed to address the factors leading to the decline of farmland and develop recommendations to stem this loss. The general issues covered included:

- Water
- Regulations
- Management of State Lands
- Land Use, Permitting, and Open Space Taxation
- Marketing and Agricultural Infrastructure

For each general issue area, the Task Force members were briefed on the background of the issue so each member was working from the same base of information. The members then discussed the issue, providing perspective on their own experiences with the issue or adding a local perspective on how the issue works on the ground for the farmer. The recommendations in this report are based on these discussions.

## REVIEW OF TASK FORCE MEETINGS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR 2007-2008

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The OFP Task Force held its first meeting in December of 2007 in Olympia. The Chair of the Conservation Commission, Mr. Bill Boyum, and the Commission's Executive Director, Mr. Mark Clark, outlined the legislative mandate that created the Task Force within the auspices of the Conservation Commission:

### **RCW 89.10.005**

The legislature finds that there is a finite quantity of high quality agricultural land and that often this agricultural land is mistakenly viewed as an expendable resource. The legislature finds that the retention of agricultural land is desirable, not only to produce food, livestock, and other agricultural products, but also to maintain our state economy and preferable environmental conditions. For these reasons, and because it is essential that agricultural production be sufficient to meet the needs of our growing population, commitment to the retention of agricultural land should be reflected at the state policy level by the creation of an office of farmland preservation to support the retention of farmland and the viability of farming for future generations.

Along with other state and federal agency representatives, Director Valora Loveland of the Department of Agriculture encouraged the Task Force to discover ways of sustaining the state's farms and farm families. She challenged the Task Force and its partners to achieve the goal of "no net loss of farmland." She also invited the Task Force to work closely with her agency in its "Future of Farming" project. This project will develop a strategic plan to guide decision makers in preserving the state's most valuable industry, its thirty-four billion dollar agriculture and food production industry.

To facilitate a close working relationship, Mr. Bob Hart, the Chair of the Task Force, was selected to serve on the Future of Farming committee. Mr. Lee Falconer, Special Assistant with the Department of Agriculture and its representative on the Conservation Commission, also serves on both committees. Mr. Hart and Mr. Falconer provided excellent communication between the Task Force and the Future of Farming committee throughout 2008.

During its first year, the Task Force held meetings on alternate months in six agricultural regions throughout the state. The Task Force toured farms in the Mt. Vernon area of Skagit County, Walla Walla County, Klickitat County, and in the greater Spokane area of Spokane County. The Task Force concluded the year with a meeting in Wenatchee in Chelan County.

The two-day public meeting format included touring several representative farms followed by a full day meeting. Both events were open to the public and had great public involvement. In each of the six meetings, key farmland preservation issues were addressed by experts to provide the Task Force with a common baseline of knowledge.

From surveys sent to the 47 statewide conservation districts and from farmers interviewed on the farm tours, the Task Force identified these contributing factors to the loss of farmland:

- Cost of land
- Market pressures to sell for residential development
- Public agency purchase of agricultural land for open space/wildlife habitat

- Water availability and stability of sources
- Inadequate markets for farm products
- Oppressive regulations
- Inadequate or unreliable labor
- Shrinking size of farms
- Loss of infrastructure such as cold storage and slaughter facilities
- Lack of transitional planning for the next generation
- Land use regulations
- Various tax uncertainties

During the course of the year, the Task Force heard presentations from experts, notably Mr. Don Stuart of the American Farmland Trust, on Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easements (PACE); Mr. Bob Rose, former director of Skagitians to Preserve Farmland, on the Open Space Taxation program; Mr. Brian Underhill, director of British Columbia's Agricultural Land Commission, on their Agricultural Reserve program; Mr. David Brown, of NRCS, on USDA's Federal Farmland Preservation programs; and Gerald Anhorn along with Greg Farrens of the Walla Walla Community College on fundamentals of water rights.

During the six regional meetings, numerous other expert speakers provided information on each of the issues listed above that threaten Washington's agricultural industry.

The farm tours provided on-the-ground education to the Task Force, illustrating both successful and unsuccessful farming activities. One successful farm, the Sakuma Brothers Farms in Skagit Valley, produces a range of berries and other high-value crops using a community-based labor force including an education component for local schools.

Also in the Skagit Valley, the Task Force learned how foreign-grown produce is supplanting local products, such as cucumbers. Cucumbers that used to be raised in the Skagit Valley on a large scale for a major pickle producer are now purchased in India. To compete with cheaper, imported pickles, Pleasant Valley Farm has diversified to products such as gourmet sauerkraut.

In Walla Walla, the Task Force saw first-hand the conversion pressures that are turning third-generation onion farms into one-acre home sites. In Goldendale, the Task Force heard from farmers who are designing a new land use program to preserve their way of life for future generations. Instead of selling their farms to residential developers, they have designed a land use program that they believe will allow them to continue farming sustainably.

In Bingen Washington, the Dickey Farms demonstrated a diversified approach using small-acreage row crops, a guest worker program, and a vegetable, grain, and feed "farm stand" on the main highway through town. Their farm stand now accounts for 40% of the farms' gross receipts. In Trout Lake, the Task force toured an organic dairy, learning about the challenges the Organic Valley Dairy faces from the rising cost of feed.

In Spokane, the Emtman Brothers Farm provided a bright spot of exemplary stewardship. With 10,000 acres of grass and wheat using the latest no-till drills, they save fuel and reduce soil erosion while producing high quality grass-fed beef to local markets. In Peone Prairie, in Mead, just outside of Spokane, the Task Force learned how a local farmer has adjusted to the subdivision of large farms into 10 and 20-acre residential parcels by growing and harvesting hay on these smaller parcels and selling the hay in smaller round bales for local livestock owners.

## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

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The following is a summary of the Task Force recommendations. A complete description of the work of the Task Force and the issues can be found in Appendix C.

### WATER ISSUES

The Task Force discussed the importance of water to agriculture and working lands and adopted as a fundamental principle the statement that “*adequate and consistent water is essential for the preservation of agriculture and farmland.*”

As our state has moved into this new millennium, the impact water has on lands continues to be magnified. Washington State has gone through a period of rapid growth and development. That growth has occurred not only in the wet climates of Western Washington, but also in the drier climates east of the Cascades. Municipalities and local governments have been active to bring water to their communities to meet the demands of a growing population. The Task Force identified two issues that stood out as being instrumental in continuing economically viable working lands operations: transfer of water rights out of basin and water relinquishment.

The transfer of water rights out of basin presents a threat to continued farm production in basins where water is critical for agricultural production. Once a water right is separated from the land it's unlikely that a new right can be obtained. If the right is moved out of basin the result is a reduction of the available water in the originating basin impacting long-term agricultural production in that area.

Water relinquishment limits the ability of the farmer to manage their water in a manner that meets their crop needs as well as water conservation goals. The potential exists through relinquishment laws that water use may be used inefficiently to stem the potential of losing the water right in light of the “use it or lose it” law.

The Task Force also discussed the question of why the protected water cannot be issued to new water right applications if the use is centered on agriculture.

#### RECOMMENDATION: WATER RIGHT TRANSFERS

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A water right is the right of the holder and may be sold only for agriculture use.

#### RECOMMENDATION: RELINQUISHMENT

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To encourage the wise use of water, relinquishment laws need to be modified. The holder of the right should not lose the right or a portion of the right through non-use for a period of time. The water right holder should not be punished for conserving or non-use for a period time.

## EASEMENTS, TRANSFER OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS

Easements are a popular method for preserving land for a variety of characteristics including habitat, open space and production agriculture. Land trusts are the primary entity involved in the preservation of these lands. The Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) was recently allocated \$9 million for farmland preservation grants for the acquisition of interests in viable farmland. The RCO ranked and funded several important projects across the state in their 2008 grant cycle.

Transfer of Development Right<sup>7</sup> (TDR) programs can be another tool to provide additional revenue to farmland owners while allowing the farmers to remain in production. TDRs may also advance mutual county goals of preserving and enhancing agricultural lands while meeting development and density objectives within urban growth areas. However, the programs can be complex. Landowners, both farmers and developers, need to be aware that they exist and are available to them.

### RECOMMENDATION: CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

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The Farmland Preservation Task Force would, through the OFP and Commission, provide input on the policy framework for developing the ranking criteria used by RCO or other groups evaluating and ranking farmland preservation projects.

### RECOMMENDATION: TRANSFER OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS

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The Farmland Preservation Task Force recognizes that TDRs are a possible tool in the preservation of working farmlands if strategies for indentifying receiving areas can be developed.

## STATE LAND MANAGERS

Several state agencies are owners and managers of thousands of acres of agricultural land. During field tours around the state, Task Force members observed several instances where acquisition or management of state lands had major impacts on working lands in the area. Farmers commented that when an agency seeks to acquire property, other farmers who also might want to purchase the land are put at a disadvantage because the agency has “deeper pockets” for the purchase price. Also, there are issues in many areas around the state with the management of the lands with respect to weed control and wildlife management and the consequent impacts on neighboring farmland.

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<sup>7</sup> A “transfers of development rights” (TDR) is a market-based technique that encourages the voluntary transfer of growth from a place where a community would like to encourage less development, referred to as a sending area, to a place where a community would like to encourage more development, referred to as a receiving area. In a typical TDR transaction, conservation-oriented, permanent deed restrictions are placed on sending area properties to ensure that the land will be used only for approved activities such as farming, forest management, conservation, or passive recreation. Under this technique, the costs of purchasing the recorded development restrictions are borne by the developers who receive a “building credit” or “bonus.” In return, developers may use this building credit or bonus to obtain or enhance development rights in the receiving area. Typically, the end result of this process is that a rural or natural area (e.g., agricultural, forest, or open space land) is preserved through permanent restrictions on development, while the receiving area is subject to increased development and/or population density as the result of changes in zoning requirements.

## RECOMMENDATIONS: AGENCY LAND MANAGERS

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Private ownership of lands is the preferred alternative to state agency farmland acquisition. State agency acquisition of agricultural lands should be put on hold unless these agencies have developed and adopted land acquisition and management plans that follow farmland preservation strategies.

Possible strategies include:

- Development of an Agriculture Impact Statement for agency land management activities. Whenever a state agency proposes to acquire any interest in property (fee simple or easement, or other), or when an agency proposes to become a lessee or lesser, that agency must complete an Agriculture Impact Statement (AIS) and submit the AIS to the State Conservation Commission for review and comment. The agency must then address the WSCC comments provided in response to the AIS prior to making the final determination on the acquisition. The WSCC should also submit a report to the Governor and Legislature once every two years on the results of agency acquisitions and their impact on agricultural production.
- Agencies should be required to complete an AIS whenever an agency undertakes an activity that requires the agency to complete a SEPA analysis. The AIS would be submitted to the WSCC for review and comment.
- State agencies should be encouraged to develop voluntary public access agreements and habitat easements to achieve their goals with landowners for recreational activities such as hunting and fishing and providing the landowner with alternative revenue streams.
- Interagency coordination of long-range land acquisition, disposal and management plans will include local governments and agricultural interests to ensure the long-range plans are connected to those interests.
- WDFW wildlife management plans should consider the impact of wildlife on agricultural activities and implement strategies to address these impacts.

## OPEN SPACE TAX PROGRAM

The Farmland Preservation Task Force requested a review of the Washington State Open Space Taxation Act (chapter 84.34 RCW) as part of its work plan for 2008. Staff and Task Force members have received numerous communications and inquiries about how the law works, why lands are included or excluded from preferential Current Use tax classification, and how the law could be improved or amended to further the goals of protecting farmland and enhancing the future of farming in our state. Out of those discussions and the report, several recommendations were adopted.

## DEFINITION OF FARMLAND AND COMMERCIAL AGRICULTURE

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**Issue:** Land not currently in production due to conservation practices may be interpreted to not be in compliance with current use standards.

**Recommendation:** The DOR WAC definition of “commercial agricultural purposes” should consider current agricultural and conservation practices. (20% Rule)

## RELATIONSHIP OF THE GROWTH MANAGEMENT ACT (RCW 36.70A) AND THE OPEN SPACE TAXATION ACT (RCW 84.34)?

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**Issue:** The regulatory framework of GMA, with its recognition of incentives and non-regulatory approaches, and the incentive framework of the current use tax law need to be integrated.

**Recommendation:** The Office of Farmland Preservation should investigate the extent to which the open space tax laws and the Growth Management Act are working to preserve farmland and identify any inconsistencies or areas where coordination could be improved.

## THE DEFINITION OF “OWNERSHIP” FOR A COMMERCIAL FARMING OPERATION

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**Issue:** Currently, adjacent parcels each with different owners are evaluated individually for Open Space Tax eligibility. This approach can be a disadvantage where the parcels are owned separately but the agricultural activity across all parcels is managed as a single operation. For example, a 60 acre farm made up of a number parcels of less than 20 acres each held by family members with the parcels recorded under different names would not be considered a farm of over 20 acres for current use farm and agricultural classification and would thereby be required to enroll each parcel individually and meet the income requirements.

Also, it is a common farming practice in many areas of the state for a farmer to own multiple parcels in a county, such parcels not adjacent to each other. These parcels would be treated individually rather than as part of a larger operation and add complexity in the land management for the farmer to meet the Open Space Tax requirements for each individual parcel.

### **Recommendations:**

**Concept 1:** Relevant statutes (e.g. RCW 84.34.020) should be changed to allow the aggregation of contiguous properties to qualify as commercial farming for open space purposes.

**Concept 2:** There should be more flexibility in parcel ownership requirements to allow multiple owners to group their parcels together to benefit from open space designation, consistent with other agricultural production requirements in such a designation.

## COMMERCIAL AGRICULTURE

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**Issue:** The Board of Tax Appeals found it is regular practice for a farmer to allow his land to lie fallow every other year, and therefore the Board did not read the requirement for “continuous and regular” to mean that the land had to be farmed each year.

**Recommendation:** Department of Revenue regulations should be clarified to reflect the language of the Board of Tax Appeals decision<sup>8</sup> that landowners of parcels greater than 20 acres are not required to demonstrate income, and the rules should identify how to show that the land has been in productive agriculture on a “continuous and regular” basis.

## 20-ACRE LIMITATION

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**Issue:** Many of the properties being removed from current use are properties under 20 acres. A review of small parcel for performance may alleviate pressure on assessors to verify small properties.

**Recommendation:** The OFP should engage in a review of criteria for determining small farm performance and methods to check farm income to maintain the open space tax benefits.

## FINANCIAL INCENTIVES OF THE OPEN SPACE PROGRAM

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**Issue:** Even though a property is enrolled in current use, agricultural improvements outside of a staging area such as fence, barn, and fruit trees are assessed at the highest and best use. This can serve as a disincentive for landowners to make necessary improvements to buildings and fences if these improvements will be assessed at a higher value.

**Recommendation:**

**Concept 1:** Structure current use tax to reflect actual cost of services and encourage agricultural investments.

**Concept 2:** The current use tax system should be structured to include agricultural improvements.

## AGRICULTURAL PERMITTING

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<sup>8</sup> The open space statute defines “farm and agricultural land” to mean, in part: “(a) Any parcel of land that is twenty or more acres or multiple parcels of land that are contiguous and total twenty or more acres devoted primarily to the production of livestock or agricultural commodities for commercial purposes.” A question has been raised as to what is meant by “commercial purposes”.

The Board of Tax Appeals in Peak v. Dossett (BTA Docket No. 58738) dealt with this issue by looking at income and intent of the landowner. At issue in this case was pasture ground that had been infested with Scotch broom and no grazing lease or haying income had been generated from the property for the three year period during which the broom was eradicated. The assessor had withdrawn the land from current use classification because there was no income. The board observed that “because the statute does not provide an income requirement for parcels over 20 acres, the regulations also do not provide an income requirement for parcels over 20 acres.” Therefore, the Legislature did not intend a specific income requirement to apply to parcels over 20 acres. The requirement is not for income, but that the land is “devoted primarily to the production of livestock or agricultural commodities for commercial purposes.”

A building permit is required for structures built for agricultural purposes in some counties in Washington. Building codes are applied to the structure and in some cases a fee may be charged for the permit. Building codes can sometimes be onerous when the agricultural structure is of a simple construction and used for a limited purpose, such as hay storage, because standards relating to occupancy of the building are applied rather than a lesser standard for storage or other similar purposes.

Washington currently does not have a state-wide agricultural exemption on agriculture structures. Washington does have an exemption for temporary growing structures used for commercial production of horticultural plants (RCW 19.27.065). However, this is limited to structures with the roof and sides covered in a flexible synthetic material. Adding to the issue is the wide range of agriculture structure permit costs county by county. In the Northwest, both Oregon and Idaho exempt agricultural buildings from building codes and permitting.

## RECOMMENDATIONS: AGRICULTURAL PERMITTING

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**Concept 1:** Enact a new state-wide exemption for agricultural structures with clear criteria for receiving the exemption. The Task Force recommends establishing an educational program to distinguish between commercial agricultural structures and non-commercial agricultural structures.

**Concept 2:** The OFP should examine the possibility of an “Agricultural Permit Fee Schedule” and permitting time line that would apply to building agricultural structures and other activities that occur on agricultural lands.

## Right to Farm

The Washington Right to Farm Act provides that certain agricultural activities and forest practices are, if consistent with good practices and established prior to surrounding non-agricultural and non-forestry activities, presumed to be reasonable, and therefore have some protection from being prohibited in a nuisance lawsuit (RCW 7.48.300-320).

A survey of the 39 Washington counties reveals that many (29) have adopted the Right to Farm Act in one shape or another. While several counties name the Right to Farm Act outright in their code, others are simply included in their Critical Areas Ordinance or nuisance statutes or comprehensive plans. Several counties remarked that they are considering provisions similar to Right to Farm or that they are unsure how effective the Right to Farm Act may actually be. While some counties offer minor protections such as exemptions from noise ordinances, other counties seek stronger protections than the Right to Farm Act.

## RECOMMENDATIONS: RIGHT TO FARM

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**Concept 1:** The Task Force recommends an education and outreach component for counties to implement to educate new landowners on rural living.

**Concept 2:** The Task Force recommends that all counties should have a right-to-farm ordinance. OFP staff should develop a model right-to-farm ordinance that would be presented to counties for their consideration.

## Mapping

One challenge to the preservation of farmland is understanding what lands are most at risk of conversion. Mapping that identifies where prime agricultural lands currently exist with the ability to query and understand the relationship those parcels have to land use/zoning maps and growth trends will help in developing strategies to preserve the prime agricultural lands.

The Washington State Parcel Database is housed at the University of Washington's College of Forest Resources (CFR), maintained by staff of the Rural Technology Initiative (RTI). RTI Staff have developed relationships with Washington's thirty-nine counties and land management agencies to collect and normalize their parcel GIS data into a single dataset in a common statewide format.

This database may prove to be an extremely effective tool in assessing risks to farmlands across the state and allow users to identify specific areas at risk of conversion out of farmland. Such an approach will support policy and planning activities to address these risks, and may prove effective in leveraging funds from both state and federal sources.

## RECOMMENDATION: MAPPING

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The Task Force recommends continued funding for the mapping project to develop the system as a useful and ongoing tool for the identification of prime agricultural lands at risk of conversion.

## Increase Urban Density

The Task Force discussed the link between increasing urban density and a successful TDR program as it relates to preserving working farmlands. Under GMA, cities and counties are required to identify areas of increased urban density. TDR programs identify rural areas in a county from which development rights are purchased and those rights are transferred into urban areas as increased density. In order for this approach to work, urban areas must be willing to accept and allow for these increased densities.

## RECOMMENDATION: INCREASING URBAN DENSITY

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Local jurisdictions should review their zoning regulations to develop programs to allow for greater density within the UGA and link these densities to preserving more farmland.

## Marketing and Agriculture Infrastructure

Opening new markets and opportunities are critical to the successful operations of Washington farmers. Key to this goal is the infrastructure to process the crops in an efficient and economical manner to remain competitive on the open market.

One of the biggest factors leading to the reduction of farmland is the loss of support infrastructure that is required for agriculture to prosper and survive. Not only does infrastructure provide a place for farmers to process their crops, but also provides jobs to local communities. As technology continues to lead the way for efficient handling of product, the demand for skilled jobs increases, which in turn provides better working family wages. The impacts of the creation and retrofitting of support infrastructure and the loss of support infrastructure resonate even today.

### RECOMMENDATIONS: MARKETING

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**Concept 1:** The Task Force supports marketing strategies that support the preservation of working farms and utilizes the ongoing work of organizations around the state.

**Concept 2:** The OFP and Conservation Commission should explore opportunities to support local agriculture product processing so that the necessary infrastructure is in place to maintain viable agriculture across the state.

## Regulations Impacting Farm Activities

Regulations on working lands managers have been identified as an element critical to farmland preservation. A producer is able to manage his operation more effectively and efficiently if some of the many regulations are coordinated or made more understandable. The Task Force is concerned about how producers are expected to understand the litany of federal/state/local regulations that may or may not be applicable to their operation. In discussion on this issue, an anecdotal story was communicated that even the agency charged with enforcing and ensuring compliance was not in full understanding of what regulations were in effect. The point being that with multiple agencies at multiple jurisdictions, a small producer would be hard pressed to keep up with all regulatory requirements. Also, regulations are infrequently evaluated to determine if they are still needed, if they are resulting in the desired outcome, or how they may or may not conflict with subsequent regulations.

### RECOMMENDATIONS: REGULATIONS

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**Concept 1:** A study should be conducted to evaluate regulations impacting farms, looking at various farm operations by type and size, physical location, and crop types. The study should examine either hypothetical farms or actual farms if willing landowners are found.

**Concept 2:** A more detailed examination of existing rules and regulations affecting farm owners should be undertaken and rules or regulations found to be burdensome should be revised or eliminated. Some existing rules and regulations that should be examined include: labor laws relating to agricultural laborers; state and local taxation reporting requirements; business licensing requirements.

## APPENDIX A – OVERVIEW OF MEETINGS AND TOURS

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## APPENDIX B – REGIONAL REPORTS

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## APPENDIX C - RECOMMENDATIONS

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