



Protecting and Preserving Snohomish County's Farmlands

**Craig Ladiser, Director
Snohomish County Department
of Planning & Development Services**

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A History Of Farmlands In Decline

- Total farmland acreage has been declining for 60 years
- 195,000 acres in 1945 has declined to 69,000 acres in 2002



The Pace Of Loss Has Slowed

- 1,900 acres per year lost during 1982-1992 decade
- 550 acres per year lost during 1992-2002 decade



Farmlands Are Still Being Lost

- At the current rate of loss (1.4% annually), Snohomish County will lose another 5,000 acres of farmland by the year 2007





Snohomish County Has A Historical Mandate To Preserve Farmlands

- 1982 Snohomish County Agricultural Preservation Plan targeted 72,000 acres
- 1993 Interim GMA Agricultural Conservation Plan targeted 69,000 acres
- 1995 GMA General Policy Plan targeted 63,000 acres



The County's Mandate To Preserve Farmlands Is Scrutinized

- Oversight by Growth Management Hearing Boards
- High standard for removal of farmlands from designation
- County decisions regarding designation and conservation of ag lands subject to appeal



How Do Current Regulatory Activities Affect Farmlands?





Two Key Principles Guide The County's Regulation Of Agriculture

- It is our responsibility to preserve farmlands by regulating against conversion to non-agricultural uses
- It is our responsibility to create a flexible regulatory environment that allows legitimate farming enterprises to expand and innovate



Regulatory Influences...

- Coordinated
 - Complementary
1. 7-Year Compliance – December 1, 2004
 2. 10-Year Compliance – April 1, 2005
 3. Shoreline Mgmt. Plan – December 31, 2005
 4. Critical Areas Ordinance – Spring 2005



The Comprehensive Plan...

The Comprehensive Plan...

- Goal LU 7
Conserve agriculture and agricultural land through a variety of planning techniques, regulations, incentive and acquisition methods.



The Comprehensive Plan...

- Objective LU 7.C
Conserve and enhance the agricultural industry through development and adoption of supporting programs and code amendments





Shoreline Management...

Shoreline Management...



Shoreline Management...

- **Goal:**
Promote the development and growth of the county's agricultural industry and preserve the county's existing and potential agricultural land





Shoreline Management...

- **Policies:**

Protect prime agricultural lands from incompatible and preemptive patterns of development

Preserve and maintain for present and future needs all existing and potential areas having a high capability to support agricultural activities



Environmental Revisions Underway

Critical Areas Regulations Revision:

- Regulations are codes
- Some ag areas are also Critical areas
- Draft regulations and environmental document due out for public review Feb. 2005



Agricultural Code Amendments Address The Changing Nature Of Farming

An initiative to enhance farm viability that expands opportunities for:

- Farm Product Processing
- Farm Support Business
- Farm Stand
- Farmers Market
- Farmland Enterprises
- Public Events/Assemblies on Farmland

Incentives Are Being Developed To Preserve Farmlands

- Transfer of development rights
- Purchase of development rights



Other Regulatory Actions To Preserve Farmlands

- Right to Farm Notice
- Right to Plow Provisions
- Setbacks for adjacent development
- Minimum lot sizes on farmland





The County Must Balance Diverse Needs And Interests In Agricultural Regulations

- Residential and commercial development
- Conservation of fish and wildlife habitat
- Federal and state environmental regulations
- Local land use regulations, zoning, allowable uses, land values
- Changing nature of agriculture industry



Preserving Farmlands For The Future

It will require an ongoing collaborative effort to maintain a balance between opportunities and abuse



Preserving Farmlands For The Future

As we move forward to enhance the economic viability of farming, how do we ensure this balance?

We welcome your ideas
and participation!



An aerial photograph showing a vast rural landscape. In the foreground, there are large, rectangular agricultural fields in various shades of green and brown. A winding river or canal flows through the lower right portion of the image. In the background, a dense urban area is visible, followed by a range of mountains under a clear sky. The text "Thank You!" is overlaid in the center of the image.

Thank You!