



JEFFERSON COUNTY

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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YOU'RE INVITED TO A MEETING TO DEVELOP AN "AGRICULTURE, FISH & WILDLIFE PROTECTION PLAN" FOR YOUR WATERSHED

Thursday, March 17, 2005, 7PM at the Quilcene Community Center

In March 2002, Jefferson County and Washington Environmental Council entered into an agreement to address several environmental issues related to regulatory protections for 'critical areas' found in the Unified Development Code (UDC) (Ordinance No. 11-1218-00), in an effort to comply with the Washington State Growth Management Act, RCW 36.70A. One of the issues was the level of stream and wetland buffer exemptions for agricultural practices. Jefferson County agreed to:

- Amend the UDC so that the exemptions from standard stream and wetland buffers would only apply to clearly defined 'existing and ongoing agriculture.'
- Commit staff and resources to collaborate with stakeholders in the development of watershed-level plans for protection of fish and wildlife habitat on lands where 'existing and ongoing agriculture' is being practiced.

'Existing and ongoing' agriculture is defined as: *"Any agricultural activities conducted on an ongoing basis on lands enrolled in the Open Space Tax Program for agriculture or designated as Agricultural Lands of Long-Term Commercial Significance on the official map of Comprehensive Plan Land Use Designations, provided that agricultural activities were conducted on those lands at anytime during the five-year period preceding April 28, 2003."* Your agricultural property may be included in this designation and, if so, your existing operations are protected under this plan. Land **not** included in this designation is subject to the provisions of the UDC that protect 'critical areas' such as streams and wetlands.

The first priority for planning was the Chimacum Creek Watershed, for which a plan has been completed. The next phase of the project is to develop a plan for the other watersheds in East Jefferson County.

Jefferson County has provided funding to the Jefferson County Conservation District to work with agricultural stakeholders in the remaining watersheds to develop a voluntary watershed-level plan for protection of fish and wildlife habitat on agricultural lands. As an agricultural land owner, you are invited to attend a meeting to review the terms of the settlement agreement between Jefferson County and WEC and to explore interest in participation on a committee to draft a voluntary plan.

An important aspect of this planning process has been the recognition that Jefferson County farmers have made strides in protecting and enhancing habitat on a voluntary basis over the last 20 years and that the continuation of agriculture is an important community objective. The plan will address protecting existing fish and wildlife habitat on agricultural land and provide a framework for additional habitat improvement on a voluntary, site-specific basis rather than mandating 'one size fits all' measures.

Information about Jefferson County Agricultural Lands Planning can be found on the County website: www.co.jefferson.wa.us/commdevelopment/Agriculture.htm. Questions or comments on the planning process can be addressed to Al Latham at the Conservation District office, 360-385-4105.