

**JEFFERSON COUNTY  
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

**AGENDA REQUEST**

**TO:** Board of Commissioners  
**FROM:** WSU Jefferson County Extension  
**DATE:** May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2010  
**RE:** Letter of support

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**STATEMENT OF ISSUE:**

WSU Jefferson County requests the BOCC sign a letter of support for their grant proposal to the Washington State Office of Farmland Preservation.

**ANALYSIS:**

WSU Jefferson County is applying for funding to facilitate an agricultural lands preservation strategic plan. If awarded, WSU will undergo a public process, working with stakeholders to identify priority areas for protection through County Conservation Futures, the State Farmland Protection Program, and purchase or donation of development rights through Land Trusts or similar entities. The project also addresses how zoning, infrastructure and markets impact the viability of agriculture, and identifies barriers and action steps to strengthen agricultural capacity for the rural economy.

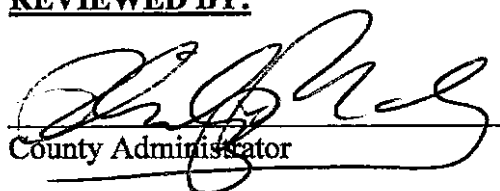
**FISCAL IMPACT:**

All project costs will be covered by grant, including room rental fees.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

WSU Jefferson County requests that the BOCC and the County Administrator sign a letter of support for this project.

**REVIEWED BY:**

  
County Administrator

5/21/10  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



**1820 Jefferson Street  
P.O. Box 1220  
Port Townsend, WA 98368**

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Phil Johnson, District 1    David W. Sullivan, District 2    John Austin, District 3

May 24, 2010

Office of Farmland Preservation  
PO Box 47721  
Olympia, WA 98504

RE: Farmland Preservation Strategic Planning Technical Assistance Grant

To Whom It May Concern:

The Jefferson County Board of County Commissioners would like to pledge its support for WSU Jefferson County Extension's proposed project to create a strategic plan for *farmland preservation*. Agriculture is, and has historically been, a very important sector here economically as well as a defining feature of our rural county. We recognize the benefits that agriculture provides - land stewardship, jobs, and quality of life - and believe that these can be enhanced through strategic planning to protect this valuable resource.

WSU Jefferson County Extension is a strong and capable project lead for the proposed planning process. Staff there has been instrumental in growing the local farm economy in the past 10 years, and are skilled facilitators of public processes. Their involvement in finding creative solutions to complex natural resource issues makes them the obvious lead for this planning process. The Department of Community Development and Environmental Health also support this important work.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

David Sullivan, Chairman

Phil Johnson, Member

John Austin, Member



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
CONSERVATION COMMISSION

*PO Box 47721 • Olympia, Washington 98504-7721 • (360) 407-6200 • FAX (360) 407-6215*

April 26, 2010

Farmland Preservation Grants  
Available to WA Counties

The 2007 Legislature created the Office of Farmland Preservation (OFP) within the Conservation Commission.

An important goal of the OFP is to work with existing local farmland preservation programs. However, there are not many local programs in existence and in some cases the existing programs are not working at a level they would prefer.

A limited number of technical assistance grants are available to Washington State counties and their partners for the development of farmland preservation programs. Funding is through the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP), a statewide grant program administered by the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO). Farmland preservation is one goal within the WWRP. The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board has reserved up to \$200,000 in WWRP Farmland Preservation Program (FPP) funds for a block grant to OFP who would administer these technical assistance grants.

The grants are intended to assist counties in establishing an agricultural strategic plan and increasing capacity of existing programs. While only counties may apply, they are encouraged to work with other agencies and non-government organizations. Work accomplished through the grants must be completed by June 30, 2011.

The technical assistance grants may not exceed **\$25,000 each**. There is no cost-share match requirement; however, applicants providing additional resources will receive extra consideration.

A primary objective of these assistance grants is to help counties identify and prioritize farms or ranches that would be good candidates for long-term protection through a agricultural conservation easement<sup>1</sup>. Technical assistance grants may explore a range of preservation options as long as FPP easements are among them. However, because the WWRP only allows acquisition from willing landowners, the technical assistance grants cannot fund preservation strategies that include using the power of eminent domain (condemnation).

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<sup>1</sup> Easement grant applications for farms and ranches that are consistent with a local farmland preservation plan or strategy will receive more points in the FPP criterion on "fit of the project to local priorities" than those where no local strategy or plan exists.

## **Part 1 - Eligible Grant Activities**

A successful grant application will address the following activities:

Grants may be used to:

- **Develop or update a county agricultural strategic plan.** Plans must consider how to identify priorities for farmland preservation in their communities, including preservation through the FPP grant program. This may be accomplished by some or all of the following:
  - **Developing a local process for identifying high priority farms to protect.**
  - **Identifying a list of high priority farms to protect.**
  - **Developing priorities for types of farmland to be preserved.**
  - **Developing a farmland preservation strategy addressing the range of tools available to landowners who want to preserve their farmland.**

NOTE: these methods of identifying high priority farmlands, and/or a process for strategizing farmland preservation may become the basis for a new plan, be incorporated into an existing plan, or become a stand-alone element.

## **Part 2 - Applications**

Date of announcement: **April 26, 2010**

Grant applications due to OFP: **May 26, 2010 - 5:00 pm**

Successful applicants will be notified on or about: **June 15, 2010**

Grants start: **July 1, 2010**

Applications will consist of a narrative proposal and be evaluated by the Office of Farmland Preservation. The applicant's narrative should discuss:

- The current farmland preservation program in the county if there is one.
- The method by which the County will develop an agricultural strategic plan and the elements of the plan as identified in Part 1.
- The type of farmland preservation program ultimately envisioned by the county legislative authority.
- A definition or statement of how the proposal will lead to identification of farmland eligible for future protection through an agricultural conservation easement. This may be by general farmland type, location, size, etc., or by specific parcels.
- The grant amount requested and the activities that would be undertaken with the funding.
- A proposed schedule to start, execute and complete the work.
- A summary of how the applicant will involve the public in drafting and/or reviewing the proposed deliverables.

In addition to the narrative, applicants must submit:

- A transmittal letter signed by a county department head or higher.
- Answers to each of the six evaluation questions below.

### **Part 3 – Evaluation of Applications**

Applications will be evaluated based on the material submitted. Submissions are limited to no more than five typewritten pages not including transmittal letter (may be one or two-sided copies, but no more than five sides total), Use 8-1/2 x 11” paper and 12-point-size standard font (ex: Aerial, Times Roman, etc – but not a condensed type).

The applications will be evaluated based upon the degree to which the proposal will produce the following (in priority order):

1. A local process for identifying high priority farms to protect with agricultural conservation easement grants through the OFP or FPP.
2. A list of high priority farms to protect with agricultural conservation easements, to submit for farmland preservation grants through the OFP or FPP.
3. A county agricultural strategic plan. NOTE: Counties who have an existing agricultural strategic plan should identify how their plan addresses a local process for identifying high priority farms and a how it will produce a list of farms to protect. If an existing plan does not include these elements, grant funds may be used to amend the existing plan.
  - a. Elements of an agricultural strategic plan include:
    - i. Inventory of existing agricultural land,
    - ii. Existing zoning,
    - iii. Existing agricultural activity,
    - iv. Agricultural infrastructure,
    - v. Local interest in agriculture,
    - vi. Development of local markets (Community Supported Agriculture, farmers markets, road side stands, etc),
    - vii. A strategy for preserving a viable agricultural sector in the community, and
    - viii. A process for prioritizing farms, or a list of prioritized farms, that would be eligible as the subject of future acquisition opportunities including a FPP grant application for preservation through an agricultural conservation easement.

As part of this process, successful applicants may contract with the local conservation district for no more than \$1500 to complete data for the WSDA Crop Mapping GIS layer which identifies where existing agriculture is occurring, and thus assist the local entity in identifying where the high priority agriculture is in their county.

4. Priorities for farmland to be preserved. This could include identification of priority agricultural activities, soil types, size, locations, etc.
5. A farmland preservation strategy that addresses the range of tools available to landowners who want to preserve their farmland through acquisition (fee or less-than-fee), landowner incentives, and voluntary actions. This strategy must include the FPP. This information may be included as an element in your agricultural strategic plan or may be a stand alone strategy.
6. Readiness: Is the county ready to undertake the activities proposed in the grant request? Please explain.

7. Match: In addition to this grant, is the county (or a participating partner) offering additional resources in the form of cash, employee time, or volunteer time? Please explain.

#### **Part 4 – Administrative Details**

Grant recipients will be required to submit a progress report by December 31, 2010 and a final report detailing what was accomplished, providing the deliverable products described in the grant, and, if applicable, details of further action needed to fully develop a successful farmland preservation program.

Grant funds may not be used for non-direct costs, such as office overhead. Funds may be used for direct costs such as staff time, consultant fees and mileage. All project expenses must be invoiced monthly. Whether with grant funds, match or donations, invoiced expenses must fit into one of the following categories:

- Goods and services:
  - Communications: public announcements, for example for public meetings or to solicit comments on issues, options, or specific proposals. Costs could include postage, printing, binding, copying, mailing, and Internet site development.
  - Professional Services: planning consultants, opinion surveys, mapping/GIS, web site development, etc.
  - Rentals and Leases: equipment rental, meeting rooms.
- Salaries and Benefits: county employees, volunteers (valued at \$14 per hour, unless specific skill is valued higher by Employment Security Department)
- Supplies: forms, maps, stationary; general supplies, publications.
- Transportation/Travel: mileage, per diem, etc.
- Payment numbers and dates will be required for all expenses

Submit applications to:

Josh Giuntoli, Project Coordinator  
Office of Farmland Preservation  
P.O. Box 47721  
Olympia, WA 98504-7721  
(360) 407-7474 wk  
(360) 407-6215 fax  
[jgiuntoli@scc.wa.gov](mailto:jgiuntoli@scc.wa.gov)  
**Electronic submissions are preferred.**

## **PLANNING FOR VIABILITY: Strategic Planning for Agriculture in Jefferson County, WA**

The time is ripe for agricultural strategic planning in Jefferson County, Washington. With one of the highest median age of landowners in the state, 60, (*2007 Census of Agriculture*) this county can expect to see over half of its farmland change hands in the next 20 years (*Leopold Center, Iowa State University*). With thoughtful and informed planning, farmland here can remain productive and the trend of increased farm gate sales may continue. Without it, Jefferson County can expect to see rates of conversion to non-farm uses consistent with the rest of the Puget Sound region. Jefferson County and its partners are committed to fostering the continued growth of agriculture and recognize the benefits of planning to keep this important sector of our rural economy viable.

WSU Jefferson County Extension (WSU) is well positioned to implement the Planning for Viability project. They have vast experience in facilitation of public meetings and have worked on complex natural resource issues. WSU has worked with 45 local farm entrepreneurs to start and grow their enterprises. They are known as creative problem-solvers among rural landowners, government agencies and community organizations. As the economic development agency for the County, WSU also provides pertinent data and resources for assessing the state of the industry.

### **Current Trends in Local Agriculture**

Jefferson County is witnessing a resurgence of small farms, consistent with other counties in the Puget Sound region, and enormous support for local farms. According to the USDA Census of Agriculture, from 2002 to 2007 the number of farms and total acreage in production both increased. Sales of local farm products increased thirty percent. The Port Townsend Farmers Market reported sales of \$950,000 in 2009, making it one of the largest non-urban markets in the state. Jefferson County residents support local farms, purchasing from them four times more than the national average (*Report on Jefferson County Agriculture, Ken Meter 2008*). The 2009 WSU Farm Tour saw nearly two thousands enthusiasts visiting area farms. Agriculture is a cherished contributor to the rural quality of life appreciated by Jefferson County residents.

This enthusiasm translates into zoning, planning and land use that is favorable to agriculture. The County's Comprehensive Plan ("Comp Plan") states:  
*"It is Jefferson County's intent to protect and foster opportunities for the successful practice of agriculture. The land in Jefferson County was examined to assess the long-term commercial viability of parcels considered for agriculture zoning. While undeveloped land with prime agricultural soils as identified in the Natural Resources Conservation Service's Soil Survey of Jefferson County, Washington, clearly must be preserved, additional parcels also have long term commercial significance for agriculture at the local level. Successful, commercial agriculture can be practiced on many types of soils, through a variety of environmentally sound means on small parcels as well as large."*

The United Development Code, revised and adopted in 2005, allows for land use that is extremely favorable to farm operations on land under any designation in the Comp Plan.

This Code has been upheld regionally as a model for land use language that promotes economic opportunity for farmers.

Still, many landowners identify regulation as a barrier to successful farm operations, and this strategic planning project will identify where these hurdles exist and may help guide future policy or programming.

Currently, farmland preservation in Jefferson County is a three pronged effort:

1. The County administers its Conservation Futures Fund (CF) for land acquisition and purchase of development rights on open space lands. Since the County does not hold easements at this time, Jefferson Land Trust is a critical partner in preservation. To date, CF has protected 334 acres of farmland.
2. Jefferson Land Trust (JLT) works with willing landowners who wish to sell or donate development rights. To date, JLT holds easements on over 400 acres of farmland, 378 of which were purchased with assistance from a combination of Conservation Futures, FMPP, and FFRP funds.
3. The Jefferson LandWorks Collaborative (JLWC) is a network of seven local organizations that work to support the long-term viability of farm and forest lands. The mission of the Collaborative is to keep working lands available, affordable and productive, to provide farmers and foresters access to business training and capital, and to ensure markets and consumer demand exist to support farm and forest businesses. Members of the Collaborative include: WSU Jefferson County Extension, Jefferson Land Trust, Jefferson County Conservation District, Northwest Natural Resources Group, the Food Co-op, Jefferson County Farmers Market Association and Shore Bank. Jefferson LandWorks Collaborative has been a key player in farmland preservation for the past 3 years, including implementation of the 2008 Office of Farmland Preservation Grant for technical assistance and outreach to landowners, which involved succession planning workshops, outreach to realtors, trainings on land leases and development of land transfer models.

### **Improving Farmland Preservation Strategy**

Though Jefferson County has been successful in both assuring farmland is available in the future and growing the demand for local farm products, there exists no single entity or document to inform the process. Creating an agricultural strategic plan with recommendations for land preservation priorities will allow County government, Jefferson Land Trust and the Jefferson LandWorks Collaborative to work together more effectively, transparently, and efficiently.

The Planning for Viability project will provide the necessary funding and dedicated staff time to carry out a comprehensive public process. The project will result in an Agricultural Strategic Plan for Jefferson County that includes input from all stakeholders: farmers, landowners, business owners, non-profits, public agencies, consumers and more.



**The Planning for Viability project will produce ONE primary deliverable:  
A Strategic Plan for Agriculture in Jefferson County.**

This Plan will be made available in print and digital form and will include:

1. **Maps:** Current and historic farm use maps, including WSDA Crop Map, soils map, preserved lands and areas of priority for future preservation;
2. **Inventory** of local farms, services, businesses, markets and infrastructure;
3. **Current data** on local farm production;
4. Description of current **zoning, planning and regulation** that impacts farmers;
5. **Projections** for future agriculture;
6. **Priorities and strategy** for Farmland Preservation;
7. **Tools** for Farmland Preservation;
8. **Identification of barriers** affecting farmers;
9. **Recommendations and Action Steps** for continued growth of the agricultural sector.

The goal of this project is to have the Agricultural Strategic Plan be adopted by Jefferson County either formally, or used as a guiding document by County Departments that deal with farmers and land use issues: the Health Department, Environmental Health, Department of Community Development (DCD), WSU Jefferson County. Other organizations will also find it valuable in guiding policy: the Planning Commission, Water Resources Inventory Area 17 Planning Unit (WRIA), Jefferson County Conservation District. Findings in the plan may be used as amendments to the Comprehensive Plan are considered in 2011.

**Public Process for Development of Strategic Plan**

Gathering accurate, balanced information from all key stakeholders will be of utmost importance in creating a representative, informed document. WSU will facilitate public Strategy Meetings, following public meeting notice protocol, with key stakeholders presenting pertinent information and the public invited to comment. Discussion will be facilitated where appropriate. These meetings will generate content for the Strategic Plan.

Strategy Meetings and corresponding key stakeholders include:

1. **Farmland Preservation: Identifying Priorities**  
*Jefferson Land Trust, Jefferson LandWorks Collaborative, Conservation Futures*
2. **Water for Agriculture: Planning and Options**  
*WRIA Planning Unit, Department of Community Development, Public Utility District*
3. **Zoning and Land Use**  
*Department of Community Development, Planning Commission*
4. **Processing and Adding Value**  
*Health Department, Port of Port Townsend*
5. **Marketing and Distribution**  
*Jefferson County Farmers Market, The Food Co-op, Port of Port Townsend*

Additionally, a public meeting will be hosted by WSU to present a completed draft of the Strategic Plan. Comments and review will be sought from the public and key stakeholders before being submitted to the Board of County Commissioners.

**GRANT FUNDS REQUEST:**

WSU Jefferson County Extension is requesting \$25,000 from the Office of Farmland Preservation to produce and Agricultural Strategic Plan for Jefferson County. These funds would be used for the following:

QUARTER	TASK	FUNDS	DELIVERABLE
1 <sup>ST</sup> <i>June to Sept. 2010</i>	• Compile economic data from current sources	\$2000 <i>Consultant fee</i>	Economic analysis of local agriculture
	• Create and update maps	\$5000 <i>Consultant fee</i>	Maps
	• Project Management and Planning	\$3200	
2 <sup>ND</sup> <i>Sept to Dec. 2010</i>	• Conduct outreach to key stakeholders;	\$2200	Public notices, Posters, Advertising
	• Plan and promote Strategy Meetings	\$1000 <i>Room rental</i> \$1000 <i>Printing</i>	
	• Facilitate first 2 Strategy Meetings; compile findings	\$2000- <i>Coordination</i> \$100- <i>Printing</i>	Strategy Meeting Reports
3 <sup>RD</sup> <i>Jan. to March 2011</i>	• Facilitate 3 Strategy Meetings; compile findings	\$3200- <i>Coordination</i> \$100- <i>Printing</i>	Strategy Meeting Reports
4 <sup>TH</sup> <i>March to June 2011</i>	• Compile and draft Strategic Plan • Conduct Review and Comment meeting	\$4200 \$1000 <i>Printing and postage</i>	Strategic Plan for Agriculture in Jefferson County