

Farmland Preservation

FACT SHEET

Who may Apply?

- Cities
- Counties
- Nonprofit nature conservancy corporations or associations
- Washington Conservation Commission

Eligible Farmland

- Irrigated or dry cropland, pasture, and, range lands
- Must meet definition in Revised Code of Washington 84.34.020(2)

Types of Projects Funded

- Acquisition of easements or leases
- Combination acquisition and restoration or enhancement

Funding

The grants are funded by the Legislature in the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program through the sale of general obligation bonds.

Leveraging State Dollars

Except for the Conservation Commission, grant recipients must provide at least 50 percent in matching resources.

Recreation and Conservation Office

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Supporting Working Farms

Washington's economy relies heavily on farming. The state's \$49 billion food and agriculture industry employs about 160,000 people and contributes 13 percent to the state's economy. More than \$15 billion in food and agricultural products were exported through Washington ports in 2013, the third largest total in the United States.¹



Skagit County used a \$168,000 farmland preservation grant to conserve 60 acres of the Hedlin Farm, a internationally important farm for its winter feeding areas for snow geese and swans.

Farming on the Decline

Since the 1980s, the number of Washington farms has increased by 3 percent but farms are getting smaller and more land is being taken out of farming. Washington lost nearly 2 million acres of farmland between 1982 and 2012, a 10 percent drop.²

Competition for land, controlling run-off, drought, and farm labor shortages are common challenges to farmers.

Purpose: Keeping Land as Farms

To address the decline, the Legislature in 2005 created the Farmland Preservation Category in the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program. In this program, grants are awarded to conserve working farms. The goal is to protect the land so that it is available in the future for farming and ranching.

Grants must be used to buy voluntary land preservation agreements, also called agricultural conservation easements, which prevent the land from being developed for non-agricultural purposes. Portions of grants also may be used to enhance the production of preserved farmland through the restoration or enhancement of ecological functions.

Ensuring Only the Best Projects are Funded

The grant process is open and competitive. The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board accepts applications in even-numbered years. The board's farmland advisory committee, which is made of up of experts in agriculture, scores the projects based on criteria established by the board and submits a ranked list to the board for consideration. The board submits a prioritized list of projects to the Governor and Legislature for funding. They may remove projects from the list but not reorder the list.

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INVESTING IN WASHINGTON'S GREAT OUTDOORS

Grant Recipients (2006-2015)

Blue Mountain Land Trust
Capitol Land Trust
Clallam County
Columbia Land Trust
Island County
Jefferson County
Jefferson Land Trust
King County
Kittitas County
Okanogan County
Okanogan Land Trust
Palouse Land Trust
PCC Farmland Trust
Pierce County
San Juan County Land Bank
Sequim
Skagit County
Snohomish County
Thurston County
Washington State
Conservation Commission
Whatcom County
Whidbey Camano Land Trust

¹ Washington Department of Agriculture, "Agriculture: A Cornerstone of Washington's Economy," <http://agr.wa.gov/AgInWA/>, accessed on December 29, 2015.

²U.S. Department of Agriculture, Census of Agriculture, "2012 Census Volume 1, Chapter 1: State Level Data, Table 1: Historical Highlights: 2012 and Earlier Census Years," www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2012/Full_Report/Volume_1,_Chapter_1_State_Level/Washington/st53_1_001_001.pdf, accessed on December 29, 2015.



Pierce County received a \$640,000 farmland preservation grant to buy voluntary land preservation agreements that allowed three farmers to buy a portion of an historic dairy near Orting Valley Farms and establish working farms.



Okanogan County received a \$616,050 farmland preservation grant to conserve a fifth-generation ranch of 1,000 acres east of Oroville.

