

Section 4: Evaluation Process

This section covers the following:

- ✓ How project evaluation works
- ✓ Evaluation criteria

How Project Evaluation Works

The evaluation process begins when the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board adopts the evaluation process⁶¹ and evaluation criteria during public meetings.

The RCO director appoints people to serve on an advisory committee to evaluate each grant proposal. In recruiting members for the committee, RCO seeks to appoint people who possess a statewide perspective and are recognized for their experiences and knowledge of farming and ranching in Washington. The director may appoint *ex officio* members to the advisory committee to provide additional representation and expertise. Visit RCO's website for [membership and other details](#).

An applicant prepares written responses to address the evaluation criteria. Advisory committee members individually review the written responses, graphics included in the applications, and summary application materials, and score the projects. Scoring is confidential.

Letters and other documented expressions of project support provided to RCO by the technical completion deadline will be provided to the advisory committee as part of the evaluation materials packet. An applicant also should summarize this support when responding to evaluation question 9.

⁶¹Washington Administrative Code 286-13-020

At the same time, RCO staff score the objective sections of the application, such as the amount of matching share an applicant is providing. Staff scores are based on information submitted by the applicant.

The advisory committee and staff scores are combined for an application’s total evaluation score. The resulting ranked list is the basis for funding recommendations that the RCO director submits to the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board, which makes the final decision about funding in public meetings.⁶² The public is given an opportunity to comment on the grant proposals before the board makes its decision.

Farmland Preservation Evaluation Criteria

Evaluation Criteria Summary

Criteria	Evaluation Element	Possible Points
Scored by the Advisory Committee		
1	Viability of the Site	16 points
2	Threat to the Land	10 points
3	Access to Markets	4 points
4	On-site Infrastructure	4 points
5	Building Envelope	4 points
6	Farmland Stewardship	6 points
7	Stewardship Practices	2 points
8	Benefits to the Community	6 points
9	Community Support	2 points
Scored by RCO Staff		
10	Match	2 points
11	Easement Duration	0 points
Total Possible Points		56

⁶²Washington Administrative Code 286-13-050

Farmland Preservation Category Detailed Scoring Criteria

1. Viability of the Site. What is the viability of the site for agricultural production?⁶³ Viability of the site includes the following:

- Soil types
- Suitability for producing different types or varieties of crops
- Water availability

▲ Point Range: zero to sixteen points. Evaluators score points based on the viability of the site for agricultural production.

When considering the viability of the site as cropland and pastureland, consider whether the site has suitable soils and enough water to produce a variety of crops. The applicant should provide information about the types of crops that could be grown on the site now and in the future and the potential bushel yield.

When considering the viability of the site as rangeland, consider whether the site has suitable soils and enough water to produce stock. The applicant should provide a specific number of animals that the land could produce such as animal management units (AMUs) or the carrying capacity.

2. Threat to the Land. What is the likelihood the land will not stay in agricultural use if it is not protected?⁶⁴

▲ Point Range: zero to ten points. Evaluators score points based on the severity of the threat that the property will be converted to some use other than agriculture within the next five years.

zero points Low likelihood it will be converted to another use

One to five points Medium likelihood it will be converted to another use

Six to ten points High likelihood it will be converted to another use

⁶³The viability of the site for continued agricultural production, including, but not limited to, soil types, suitability for producing different types or varieties of crops, and water availability. (Revised Code of Washington 79A.15.130(10)(h))

⁶⁴The likelihood of the conversion of the site to nonagricultural or more highly developed usage. (Revised Code of Washington 79A.15.130(10)(c))

3. Access to Markets. How is the land’s agricultural productivity supported by access to markets?⁶⁵

Available markets may include formal private markets, commodity exchanges and auctions, and public markets.

▲ Point Range: zero to four points

Zero points	There are little to no market opportunities that support agricultural productivity of the land.
One to two points	There are adequate market opportunities that support agricultural productivity of the land.
Three to four points	There are superior market opportunities that support agricultural productivity of the land.

4. On-site Infrastructure. How well is the land’s agricultural productivity supported by on-site production and support facilities such as barns, irrigation systems, crop processing and storage facilities, wells, houses, livestock sheds, and other farming infrastructure?⁶⁶

▲ Point Range: zero to four points. Evaluators score points based on how well the land’s agricultural productivity is supported.

Zero points	There are no on-site production and support facilities, even though they are needed, to support the agricultural productivity of the land.
One to two points	The agricultural productivity of the land is supported by production and support facilities off-site.
Three to four points	There are on-site production and support facilities to support the agricultural productivity of the land.

⁶⁵Farm-to-market access. (Revised Code of Washington 79A.15.130(10)(h)(iv))

⁶⁶The viability of the site for continued agricultural production, including, but not limited to, on-site production and support facilities such as barns, irrigation systems, crop processing and storage facilities, wells, housing, livestock sheds, and other farming infrastructure. (Revised Code of Washington 79A.15.130(10)(h))

5. Building Envelope. How much of the property is included in the building envelope?

▲ Point Range: zero to four points

Zero points The size of the building envelope is not appropriate for the size of the farm.

One to four points The size of the building envelope is appropriate for the size of the farm.

6. Farmland Stewardship. What stewardship practices are in place to benefit fish and other wildlife habitat?

The focus of the stewardship practices is on providing habitat for salmon, fish, migratory birds, other wildlife species, and endangered, threatened, or sensitive species.⁶⁷

Types of stewardship practices must include practices from a recognized program or published guidelines. Following are examples:

- Habitat land is set aside that meets minimum guidelines for endangered species recovery as described by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration or the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The land set aside may not exceed the maximum thresholds set in the Open Space Tax Act.
- Enrollment in one or more conservation incentive programs through the Natural Resources Conservation Service.
- Participation in the voluntary stewardship program administered by the Washington State Conservation Commission.
- Participation in Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's habitat programs.
- Participation in habitat improvements funded by the Salmon Recovery Funding Board.
- Agreements or voluntary commitments made to support habitat for specific species.

⁶⁷Benefits to salmonids (Revised Code of Washington 79A.15.130(10)(e), benefits to other fish and wildlife habitat (Revised Code of Washington 79A.15.130(10)(f), integration with recovery efforts for endangered, threatened, or sensitive species (Revised Code of Washington 79A.15.130(10)(g), and migratory bird habitat and forage area (Revised Code of Washington 79A.15.130(10)(i)(v).

▲ Point Range: zero to six points

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|---------------------|---|
| Zero points | There are no specific stewardship practices in place. |
| One to three points | There are one or more stewardship practices planned for the future. |
| Four to six points | There are one or more stewardship practices in place. |

7. Stewardship Practices. What stewardship practices (described in question 6) will be included in the terms of the conservation easement as required stewardship practices for the duration of the easement?

▲ Point Range: zero to two points

8. Benefits to the Community. How will protecting the land for agricultural purposes provide other benefits to the community? Do the community and area Native American tribes support the project?⁶⁸

Benefits to the community include the following:

- The project is identified as a recommendation in one of the following:
 - Coordinated, region-wide prioritization effort
 - Critical pathways analysis
 - Habitat conservation plan
 - Limiting factors analysis
 - Watershed plan⁶⁹
- The project is consistent with one of the following:
 - Local land-use plan
 - Regional or statewide recreational or resource plan⁷⁰
- The project assists in the implementation of one of the following:
 - A local shoreline master plan updated according to Revised Code of Washington 90.58.080

⁶⁸Revised Code of Washington 79A.15.130(10)(a)

⁶⁹Revised Code of Washington 79A.15.130(10)(b)

⁷⁰Revised Code of Washington 79A.15.130(10)(d)

- o A local comprehensive plan updated according to Revised Code of Washington 36.70A.130⁷¹
 - The project provides protection of a view or an aquifer recharge.⁷²
 - The project will provide occasional collection of stormwater runoff.⁷³
 - The project will create agricultural jobs.⁷⁴
 - The project will provide some educational opportunities.⁷⁵
 - The project is identified in an annual or long-range plan of the local conservation district.
- ▲ Point Range: zero to six points
- Zero to three points The project will provide few additional benefits to the community.
- Four to six points The project will provide many additional benefits to the community.

9. Community Support. Are there one or more letters in the application that demonstrate community support for the project?

- ▲ Point Range: zero or two points
- Zero points There are no letters of support in the application.
- Two points There are one or more letters of support in the application that demonstrate community support for the project.

10. Match (Applicant does not answer this question). Is the applicant providing additional match above the minimum requirement?

- ▲ Point Range: zero or two points
- Zero points The applicant is not providing additional match above the minimum requirements.

⁷¹Revised Code of Washington 79A.15.130(10)(d)
⁷²Revised Code of Washington 79A.15.130(10)(i)(ii)
⁷³Revised Code of Washington 79A.15.130(10)(i)(iii)
⁷⁴Revised Code of Washington 79A.15.130(10)(i)(iv)
⁷⁵Revised Code of Washington 79A.15.130(10)(i)(vi)

Two points The applicant is providing 5 percent or more additional match above the minimum requirements

11. Easement Duration (applicant does not answer). What is the duration of the conservation easement?

▲ Point Range: -ten or zero points

Zero points The duration of the conservation easement is forever.

Minus ten points The duration of the conservation easement is not forever.