

King Conservation District

2015 Program Focus Areas – FACT SHEET

Rural Sustainable Agriculture



Challenge: Farms can have key roles in solving regional and national natural resource concerns associated with water quality (Clean Water Act, 303d listings, TMDLs), salmon recovery (ESA listings and recovery plans), carbon sequestration to offset climate change impacts, and more. At current rates of funding, progress on solving these concerns is slower than desired.

Need: Precision targeting of technical support to address these concerns and technical assistance to remove barriers to farmer adoption of recommended best management practices (BMPs) through:

- *increased farmer awareness* of their potential role,
- *consistent access to technical support* to design and install best management practices, and
- *financial assistance* in some cases to offset high project costs, especially for BMPs with little to no farm return on investment.

The Problem

United States Dept. Of Agriculture statistics show that King County farmers produced \$120 million worth of Agricultural products in 2012. About \$90 million of that total are food products. The county ranks 18th in value of agricultural production of the state's 39 counties. King County consumers spend \$6 billion on food.

Farmers are the stewards of over 60,000 acres of farmed and farmable lands in King County. Enabling their stewardship of our shared water, soil, and habitat resources requires supporting those efforts in meaningful ways. Placing expensive regulatory burdens on farmers without committing the technical and financial resources to help land managers implement

“The agricultural lands within the region are among the most productive in the state, and the loss of good quality farmland has implications for air quality, water quality and quantity, and the region’s self-sufficiency.”
-*The Puget Sound Regional Council*

environmental practices runs the very real risk of losing that farmland to bankruptcy, abandonment, or development.

Conservation Districts play an important role in mitigating the effects of our changing climate. For example an acre of pasture can sequester an average of 280 tons of CO2 annually. Using sustainable techniques such as those provided by the King Conservation District, this sequestration can be increased by over 2.5 tons/ acre annually. This means that over 90,000 additional tons of CO2 can be sequestered on the county's 20,000 acres of pastureland annually

The Future

King Conservation District proposes to increase its support of rural farmers through both increasing the number of plans to self-selected clients as well as expand current pilot efforts on sub-basin targeting to improve water, soil, and habitat quality in watersheds that exhibit poor benchmarks.

Current Program Outcomes	Proposed Additional Program Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serving 150 farming customers (90% result in site visits to assess natural resource concerns and solutions) • Delivering 67 farm plans for 1000+ acres (20% regulatory referral; 25% Current Use/ PBRS referral; 55% stewardship only) • Following up on 160 plans to document implementation, which includes support navigating County, State, and Federal permitting systems • Providing technical support to dairy operators and the Washington State Dairy Association (WSDA) in association with WSDA nutrient management compliance inspections. About 15 inspections per year • Assisting 30 farms with manure spreader loan program annually, promoting the beneficial use of manure as a fertilizer at agronomic rates, minimizing water quality impacts of stock piling manure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a multi-year plan to deploy targeted farm planning services approach county wide to targeted natural resource concern areas . eg - Targeting water quality impaired sub-basins with significant commercial farming land use • Targeting 1 natural resource concern area for outreach each 2 years, ensuring a comprehensive approach to conservation • Serving 50 farming customers in targeted natural resource areas (90% result in site visits to assess natural resource concerns and solutions) annually • Delivering 20 farm plans in targeted natural resource areas annually
5.36 FTE \$571,885	6.96 FTE PROPOSED TOTAL: \$725,814

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Deirdre Grace, Community Relations Manager
King Conservation District
Deirdre.grace@kingcd.org
425-282-1902

