



How Snohomish County's 10-Year Comprehensive Plan Update Affects Agriculture

A Special Focus on Farming Bulletin – April 2005

Over the past two years, Snohomish County has been working to update its Comprehensive Plan as required by Washington State's Growth Management Act (GMA). The County's "Comp Plan" forecasts growth in population and employment and speaks to its location for the next 20 years. It also strongly supports conservation of agriculture and forestry and their related industries.

Proposed Changes to County's Future Land-Use Map

The first key component of the updated plan is the Draft Future Land Use Map. This map shows where adjustments in current land-use boundaries and development patterns are being proposed to ensure that new residents and new development are distributed geographically in ways that meet the goals of the GMA and the community.

Very few of the proposed boundary changes will affect agricultural lands. The main recommendation is a change proposed near Snohomish, between SR9 and Harvey Airfield runway, north of Airport Way and south of the railway. The Update proposes the removal of approximately 53 acres from the Snohomish UGA; re-designate 45 acres from Urban Industrial/Airport Industry to Riverway Commercial Farmland. It also proposes redesignating 8 acres from Urban Horticulture to Riverway Commercial Farmland.

Farmland Conservation Incentives Included in General Policy Plan

A new subsection covering the Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) and Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) programs has been added to the General Policy Plan. The County has now established these as voluntary programs to provide farmers and other resource land owners the opportunity to realize the real estate value of their land while they continue to own and farm that land. TDR and PDR differ in how they provide funding for the compensation of landowners.

Proposed Changes to 'Agricultural Lands' Section of General Policy Plan

The County's General Policy Plan (GPP) provides decision-making guidance on land use, economic development, housing, population and employment growth, utilities, capital facilities, transportation, natural environment and rural and resource land uses depicted on the Future Land Use Map.

The GPP contains a section that specifically addresses Agricultural Lands. Input from participants at the November 2004 Focus on Farming Conference helped guide revisions and additions to this section. The objectives of the County Executive's 2005 Agriculture Action Plan are now incorporated into this section. Some of these policy provisions include:

1. Policy for buffering farmlands from adjacent residential development

New dwellings proposed on land adjacent to designated farmland shall be set back a minimum of 100 feet from the boundaries of the designated farmland, or as close to 100 feet as physical constraints allow. Or, the builder and farmer will sign a formal agreement regarding a mutually

acceptable setback. Within the 100' setback, the County will develop regulations that allow the landowner some flexibility for development so long as sufficient buffering is maintained to protect agricultural activities on the adjacent farmland.

2. Policy for protecting farmlands from drainage problems caused by upstream development

The County should adopt development regulations providing for stormwater control and the protection of water quality in order to decrease downstream impacts on commercial farmlands.

3. Policy for facilitating economic development opportunities for agriculture

The County will promote business opportunities and expansion for farmers; including supporting work programs to preserve and promote local agriculture, agri-tourism, specialty and niche agriculture.

4. Policy for improving safety and mobility of farm vehicles and livestock on public roads.

The County shall consider grade separations, frontage roads, or other methods to safely move vehicles and livestock when new or improved roads are proposed in designated farmlands or on roads that receive substantial farm vehicle traffic.

To read the entire Agricultural Lands section, please see the 10 Year Update of the Comprehensive Plan, released on April 8, 2005. The document is available on the PDS website at www.co.snohomish.wa.us/pds/10YearUpdate.htm in local libraries throughout Snohomish County and in the County's Long Range Planning Office in the Administration Building.

Opportunities for Public Comment

The County will offer additional opportunities for comments on the Comprehensive Plan during the spring and summer of 2005. If you wish to be included on a mailing list please contact [Ryan Hembree](#), Senior Planner, at (425) 388-3311, extension 2267. For more detailed information, maps, timelines and other specifics to the Comprehensive Plan Update please see the project website at www.co.snohomish.wa.us/pds/10YearUpdate.htm.