

Farmland Preservation

FACT SHEET

Recreation and Conservation Office

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Who Can Apply?

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

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 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.

Supporting Working Farms

Washington's economy relies heavily on farming. The state's \$40 billion food and agriculture industry employs about 160,000 people and contributes 12 percent to the state's economy.

Nearly \$13 billion in food and agricultural products were exported through Washington ports in 2010, the third largest total in the United States.



Jefferson County used a \$203,500 farmland preservation grant to buy a voluntary land preservation agreement on the 33-acre Finnriver organic farm, which includes crops for farmer's market as well as an artisan cidery.

Farming on the Decline

Since 1950, the number of Washington farms has decreased by more than 50 percent while the acres of farmland has dropped by 17 percent.

Competition for land, increasing regulations, and loss of water rights and farm labor are common challenges to farmers.

Keeping Land as Farms

To address the decline, the Legislature in 2005 created farmland preservation grants, which are awarded to preserve working farms. The goal is to protect the land so that it is available into the future for farming and ranching.

Grants must be used to buy development rights through voluntary land preservation agreements, also called agricultural conservation easements. Portions of grants 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 farmland preservation grants are part of the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, a statewide grant program with a focus on conserving wild lands and developing recreational opportunities.

The grant process is open and competitive. The Recreation and Conservation Funding Board accepts applications every two years, in even-numbered years.

The board's citizen committee, which is made of up 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.

Farmland Preservation Fact Sheet

INVESTING IN WASHINGTON'S GREAT OUTDOORS

Grant Recipients (2006-2011)

Clallam County
Columbia Land Trust
Island County
Jefferson County
King County
Kittitas County
Okanogan County
Okanogan Land Trust
Pierce County
San Juan County Land
Bank
Sequim
Skagit County
Snohomish County
Thurston County
Whatcom County



Pierce County received a \$640,00 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 buy a voluntary land preservation agreement to preserve a fifth-generation ranch of 1,000 acres east of Oroville.

