



## Farm & Forest Practices

### Objective:

Encourage sustainable agriculture and forestry

### Strategy:

Provide incentives, technical assistance, and streamlined permitting to support sustainable farm and forestry practices

### Why is this strategy important?

In order to protect and sustain forest and farmland, King County needs to provide timely and predictable land use decisions and responsive technical assistance to ensure effective land stewardship.

Efficient and low cost permitting services for farming and forestry assists landowners in investing in their farm and forestry infrastructure, completing environmental enhancements or expanding operations to take advantage of new markets, such as value-added processing and eco-tourism.

In developing Farm Plans and Forest Plans, landowners map out a strategy for improving practices to protect water quality, fish, and other natural resources on their land. Many farms are adjacent to fish-bearing rivers or streams. Though highly modified, these farm acres are not paved. Many farmlands retain ecological functions and some are seen as having potential for enhancement of fish habitat, wetland mitigation, and space for free meandering of streams and rivers. By focusing on small-lot private forests and excluding the commercial timberlands of the Forest Production District, this strategy addresses forest health and sustainable forest management issues in a large part of rural King County. Much of the lowland forest in King County is in rural lots of five to twenty acres. Many include a residence. Sustainable management of these forest resources is very important for surface water management, carbon sequestration, wildlife habitat and aesthetics, as well as a source for future wood products.

### How is our performance?

Agricultural permitting time has changed from an average of 43 calendar days in 2011 to 35 calendar days in 2012. Over 1,600 farmers have worked with the King Conservation District to develop farm management plans covering over 43,000 acres. King County provides technical assistance to farmers to help farmers implement the plans and improve practices to protect water quality, fish, and other natural resources. By adopting livestock best management practices and planting buffers along streams and rivers farmers can minimize the effects of farm operations on fish and water quality.

The owners of more than 1,004 properties covering 15,500 acres have had Forest Stewardship Plans approved by the county and have used the technical assistance services of the King County Foresters. Staff Foresters provide assistance with planning to meet individual forestry goals including:

growing a healthy forest, timber enhancement, improvement of wildlife habitat, and protection of water resources. Eighty-nine percent of landowners who have completed the county's forest stewardship planning, training and technical assistance program reported that they have implemented new stewardship practices as a result of the program.

## **What can you do?**

- Support local farm preservation efforts and consider enrolling in the Farmland Preservation Program
- Develop a forest stewardship plan for your forested property
- Consider enrolling protecting your forested land through a property tax reduction or transfer of development rights program
- If you own land that is not being farmed, consider enrolling it the FarmLink Program
- If you live in the rural zone (RA), consider Rural stewardship planning
- Farm Planning is a good option if you are primarily farming or managing livestock on your property
- Visit Forestry CPR to learn about forestry climate preparedness and response

## **Moving forward**

King County will continue to encourage stewardship and conservation on privately-owned lands through effective program delivery and strategic use of funds to protect environmental quality for future generations.

## **Related Links**

**[Agriculture Program](#)**

**[Forestry Program](#)**

**[Current Use Taxation Program](#)**

**[Department of Permitting and Environmental Review](#)**

**[Forestry CPR website](#)**

## **Technical Notes**

- Data Sources: King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks & Department of Permitting and Environmental Review
- Methods for Analysis: Total non-duplicated privately-owned forest acres and number of properties in the Rural zone and Agricultural Production Districts with forest plans and technical assistance visits. Excludes the Forest Production District. (2011 data)
- DPER data based on permit processing time for agricultural structures and activities in Clock-on Days, as of 9/25/2012Production District. (2011 data)