



# King County Farmland Lease Program



King County Ag Commission  
February 10, 2022

## History of KC Farm Lease Program

### Sammamish Farm became home of Indochinese Farm Project

- Initiated in 1982
- Hmong and Mien immigrants
- KC provided land
- WSU provided technical assistance
- PPM supported marketing and sales
- Initially 6 families...today more than 70



Xoy Chang, Sammamish River Farm



## Key Lessons Learned from Indochinese Farm Project



Immigrants and refugees often have extensive farm experience and can find successful niche in KC farming landscape



Technical and financial support is needed to help farmers get operations started



Sustained commitment to support farmers is necessary as new challenges continually arise



## History of KC Farm Lease Program

### 2016 Agriculture Commission Program Review

- **Limit County acquisition of farmland**
- **Provide beginning and BIPOC farmers with term-limited access to affordable farmland**
- **Maintain farmland potential on lands acquired for other purposes (e.g., river/riparian restoration)**



# History of KC Farm Lease Program: 2019 I/R Assessment



higher  
Priority  
lower

- Enhance access to farmland
- Improve access to capital
- Improve technical training
- Ensure access to irrigation water
- Provide business education
- Develop strategic plan
- Expand market access
- Strengthen/expand partnerships
- Engage additional communities
- Provide cultural sensitivity training
- Establish measures of success

## Access to Farmland

- Purchasing/leasing farmland
  - increase understanding of land tenure options
- Land Linking Services
  - Working Farmland Partnership
- Land owned and managed by King County
  - Re-focus King County land leasing program
  - Identify new properties that could support I/R farmers



## Current KC Farmland Portfolio

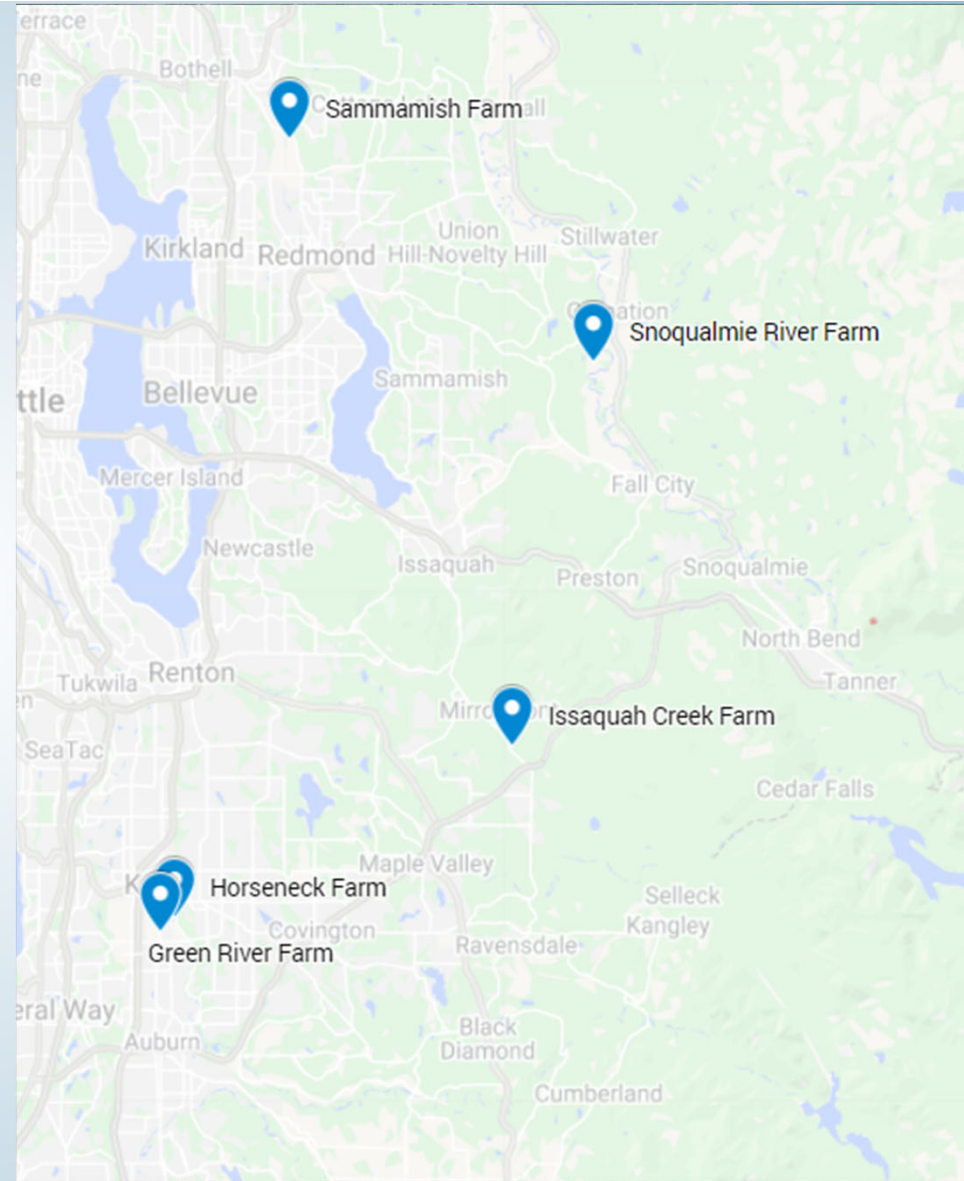
Farm Name	APD	Year Acquired	Why Acquired	Total Acres	Farmable Acres	Leased Acres
Sammamish River Farm	Sammamish	1982	Farming	18	17	17
Horseneck Farm	Lower Green	1984	Trail/Farming	39	26	26
Green River Farm	Lower Green	2000	Farming	26	20	20
Mt. Peak (2)	Enumclaw	2001	Farming	76	73	73
Aldair	Snoqualmie	2008	Revetment/Restoration	15	3	3
Tolt Pipeline	Snoqualmie	2017	Revetment/Restoration	54	26	0
Snoqualmie River Farm	Snoqualmie	2019	Farming/Restoration	67	26	26
Issaquah Creek Farm	N/A (RA5)	2019	Farming/Restoration	123	50	8
Hamakami Farm	Upper Green	2021	Revetment/Restoration	37	20	20
<b>Total</b>				<b>455</b>	<b>261</b>	<b>193</b>



## Core Farms

- **Sammamish Farm (5)**
- **Snoqualmie River Farm (SVT; 5)**
- **Issaquah Creek Farm (1)**
- **Horseneck Farm (5 orgs; 30/1)**
- **Green River Farm (10)**

*Approximately 50 farm businesses in 2022*





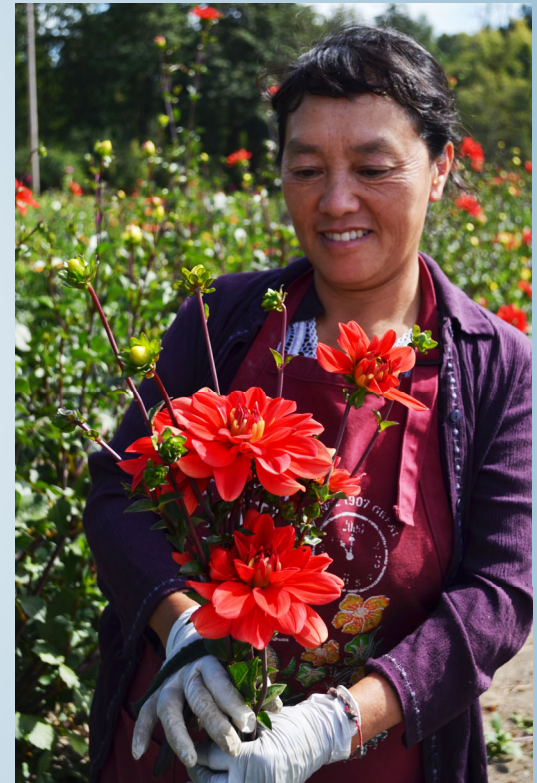


## Operating Principles Aligned with KC Initiatives

- Enhance opportunities for farmland access
- Provide sufficient infrastructure to support farm business development and expansion
- Serve socially disadvantaged & beginning farmers
- Demonstrate regenerative agriculture practices

## Current Leasing Program Guidelines

- **Lease at market rates**
  - Determined via a market rate survey
  - 2021: \$450/\$350/\$80
  - Previously: \$250/\$150/\$50
- Available plots offered to individuals who have shared plots on same farm
- Significant land offering via RFP process
- Initial 1-year lease followed by 5-year lease
- Extensions possible, but the hope is many farmers will move onto larger leases/buy their own farms





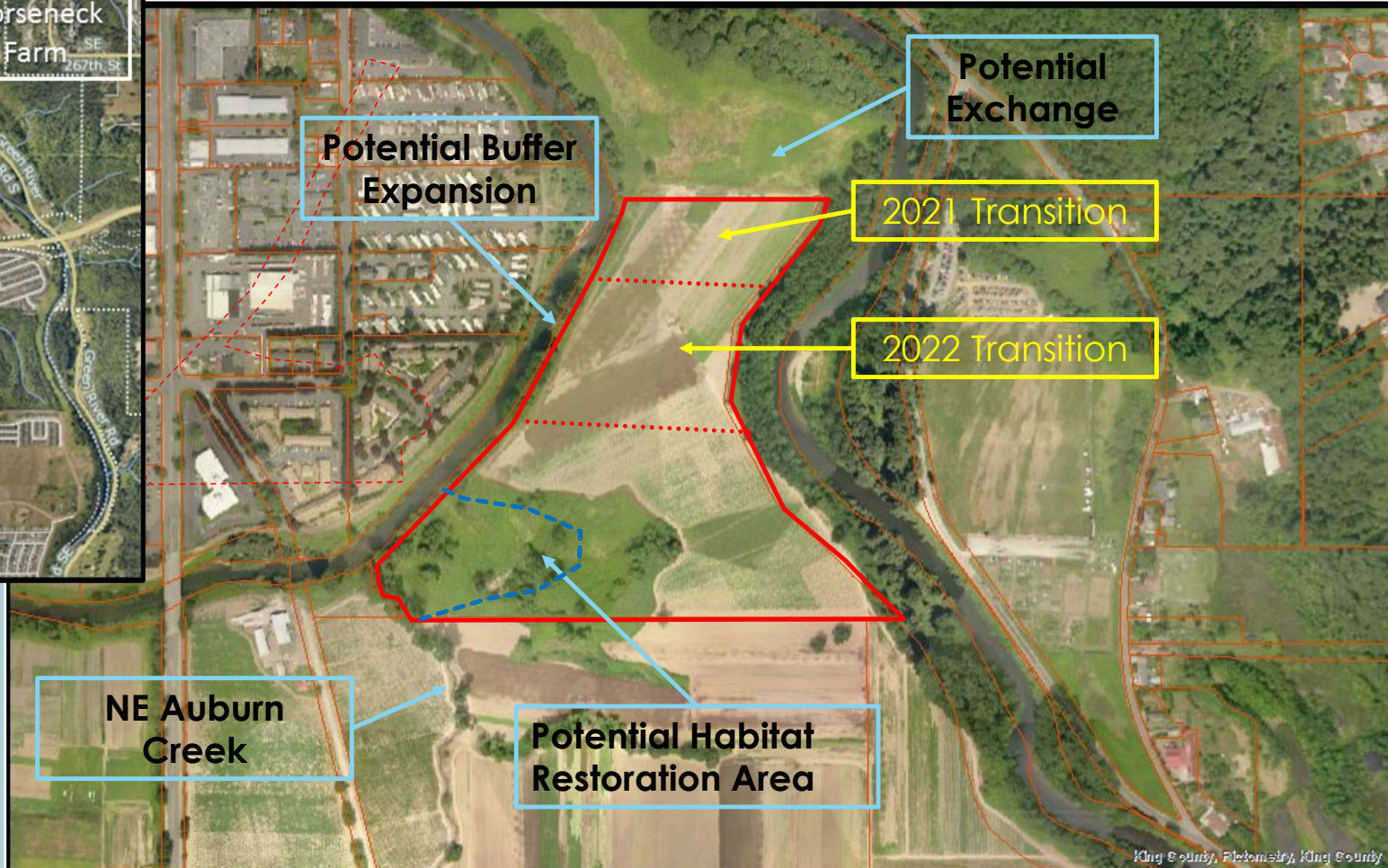


## Collaborations

- Expands who we can serve
- Provide culturally and linguistically appropriate support
- Shared site improvements
- Technical and business support
- In 2022 working with:
  - King Conservation District
  - Black Farmers Collective
  - SnoValley Tilth
  - Wakulima USA
  - Living Well Kent
  - International Rescue Committee
  - Highline College



# Horseneck Farm







## Horseneck Farm 2021: initial 5 transition acres

Organization	# of Farms	Acres	Countries Represented
Living Well Kent	8	1.5	Somalia, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Iran, and Mexico
International Rescue Committee	7	2	Bhutan, Burundi, Congo, Laos, and Nepal
Wakulima USA	1	1	Kenya (multiple farmers)
Elk Run Farm	1	0.5	USA (grow exclusively for south King County food banks)





## Horseneck Farm 2022: RFP second phase of transition

- RFP widely distributed
- 5-8 acres available
- Up to 5 acres/organization; 2 acres for individual farm business
- Preference given to non-profit/community-based organizations
- Detailed proposal instructions
- 4 internal, 4 external reviewers
- 5 proposals received





## **Horseneck Farm 2022: RFP second phase of transition**

### **2022 Horseneck Farm New Leaseholders:**

- **Living Well Kent**
- **Wakulima USA**
- **International Rescue Committee  
New Roots Program**
- **Eagle Nest**
- **Sunrise Farm**



## Farmland Leasing Program Operations

- **0.8 FTE Farm Manager (Bee)**
- **0.4 FTE Leasing Program Manager (Melissa)**
- **\$50,000 per year for farmland management**
- **No truck, no trailer, no tractor, etc.**



# KC Farmland Infrastructure Improvements

 Completed 2015-19





















 Completed 2020-21

 CECP

Funded for 2022-23



Needs funding

Farm Name	Field Access Road Improvement	Improved Security	Irrigation Water	Potable Water	Structure Upgrades	Wash/Pack Station	Wildlife Fencing
Sammamish River Farm					CECP		
Horseneck Farm					CECP	CECP	CECP
Green River Farm				CECP	CECP	CECP	
Snoqualmie River Farm	CECP				CECP		CECP
Issaquah Creek Farm					CECP		CECP

CECP = Climate Equity Capital Pool; KC bond funds awarded for 2022-2023



## 2022 Program Priorities

- Implement infrastructure improvements
- Acquire additional South KC farm (CFT equity grant)
- Secure additional operating funds and reclassify Farm Manager position to full-time, permanent
- Deepen relationships with NGOs, service districts to provide greater technical support to tenant farmers
- Surplus Mt. Peak properties



# Commission input

- Anybody have designs for pole barns that have been approved by DLS-PD?
- Any experience with alternative energy sources for irrigation pumps?
- Do you have experience with unique crops, markets, production techniques (e.g. irrigation on smaller plots). Would you be interested in hosting field trips, serving as an informal mentor?



# Commission input

- What do you think about our proposal to place term limits on leases & work with farmers when it is time for them to transition off of County land?
- Should we allow livestock on KC-owned farmland?
- How do we bound the level of support KC staff provides to individual farmers?