

**From:** Larry Schaffner  
**To:** Larry Schaffner  
**Bcc:** Britt Nederhood; Daniel Vlad; David Hartley; Edward O'Brien; Jake Wager; Nancy Winters; Phyllis Farrell; Zahid Chaudhry  
**Subject:** FW: Notes for upcoming SSWAB Meeting  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 15, 2023 8:46:00 AM

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SSWAB Member,

The information below was provided by Ashley Aria, the County's Agricultural Community Program Manager to help inform your discussion at tomorrow evening's meeting.

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**From:** Ashley Arai  
**Subject:** Notes for upcoming SSWAB Meeting

Here are a few notes for you to share with SSWAB regarding both the County's new Community Agriculture Program and more specifically, what we're doing as it relates to water quality:

#### Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) Monitoring

- County responsible for monitoring the impacts of agricultural uses on critical areas, at a watershed level
- Next 5-year monitoring report due July 2024 and will include:
  - Spatial extent of the intersect of Agricultural Uses and Critical Areas by watershed
  - Identification of any spatial and/or functional changes of critical areas within that intersect since the 2011 baseline
  - Identification of conservation practices implemented by watershed since the 2011 baseline
  - Analysis of long term trends in nitrates, coliform and pesticide levels in the areas of intersect (or downgrade from the monitoring site where applicable) since the 2011 baseline
- Early indicators point to a smaller intersect of agricultural uses and critical areas and a diminishing impact from agricultural uses on water quality at a watershed scale. If preliminary data tells us differently, then the VSP workgroup is charged with developing an adaptive management plan to ensure critical areas are being adequately protected from agricultural uses in the respective watershed.
- Preliminary reporting on our data analysis should be ready to share by late Summer.

#### Community Agriculture Program Overview:

- The program is housed in Thurston County's Community Planning division and augments WSU Extension's work providing technical assistance to farmers and keeping the Ag industry viable here in Thurston County.
- Program elements currently include:
  - Helping farmers navigate our complex permitting processes and identifying barriers that we may be able to remove.
  - Looking at ways we can protect farmland and support our farmers through innovative land use strategies

- Promoting and growing the land conservation tools we have available to us, such as Transfer or Purchase of Development Rights and the Open Space Program.
- And finally, supporting the work of our partners, whether that be economic development like Thurston and Pierce County's Livestock Processing Study or training for new farmers like WSU's Cultivating Success Program.

Project initiatives for the next two years:

- Create a conservation planning approach for new Agricultural uses
- Expand the Open Space program so more farms are eligible and update our Transfer Development Rights (TDR) and Purchase Development Rights (PDR) programs to be more effective tools in protecting farmland and supporting farmers
- Update Long-Term Agriculture zoning
- Refresh the Working Lands Strategic Plan so it reflects the latest data and community initiatives
- Develop permit toolkits and other handy resources for farmers to help demystify the development review process
- Complete second 5-year monitoring report for the Voluntary Stewardship Program.

**Ashley Arai** | Agriculture Community Program Manager  
Thurston County Community Planning & Economic Development  
Community Planning Division