

Stakeholder Workgroup Meeting

Thurston County Long-Term Agriculture Project



Monday, October 10th, 2022
6:00 – 8:00 pm
Held by Zoom

In Attendance:

Ashley Arai, Thurston County	Joy Nguyen
Maya Teeple, Thurston County	Loretta Seppanen
Charlotte Persons	Michael Ambrogi
Dani Madrone	Ryan Deskins
Glenn Schorno	Samuel Payne
Jeff Van Lierop	Vivian Thompson
Jessie Simmons	
John Countryman	

Key Themes

- Expressed concerns around developing options for expanding long-term agriculture zoning without direct compensation to farmers affected under zoning change (past and future)
 - o Property rights is important
 - o Eminent domain concerns
 - o Affects landowner's ability to monetize farm
- Discussed having any options be contingent on a compensation program
- Should approach holistically, as opposed to just siting lands
- Concerns expressed over profitability of farming – what improvements can be made to farm and make a profit – simplify and streamline regulations? Regulations are difficult to follow.
- Agreed to the Ground Rules for using Zoom as the meeting platform and working together as a group
- Agreed to the Consent/Compromise decision-making process
- Reviewed and discussed updates to the work plan

Action Items

- Rework meeting plan to set aside additional time for a discussion about compensation program updates and funding for land use and zoning changes
- Research history of LTA zoning and enrollment in TDR
- Participants may fill out the [survey](#) or email Ashley to request day-of meeting reminders by text message

Parking Lot

- Water Rights and their impacts on farming (may be touched during soils criteria conversation)
- Developing markets to support agriculture producers
- Simplifying and streamlining regulations

Meeting Schedule (Tentative)

Help us schedule our next 3 meetings:

<https://doodle.com/meeting/participate/id/aAPlgWpe>

1	Oct. 10	(Held) Intro, roles, scope
2	Oct. 24-27	Review history, state law, other protection tools, county criteria
3	Nov. 8-14	Review soils, priority 1 criteria
4	Dec. 5-8	Review priority 2 & 3 criteria
Break to Develop Maps		
5	Late January	Review maps, refine criteria, discuss funding and compensation programs
6	Late February	Review maps & policies, discuss funding and compensation programs, parking lot items
7	Late March	Workshop with broader community

Stakeholder Workgroup Meeting

Thurston County Long-Term Agriculture Project

Monday, October 27th, 2022

5:00 – 7:00 pm

Held by Zoom



In Attendance:

Ashley Arai, Thurston County	Jim Gibson
Maya Teeple, Thurston County	Ashley Larson
Charlotte Persons	Joy Nguyen
Dani Madrone	Loretta Seppanen
Glenn Schorno	Michael Ambrogi
Jeff Van Lierop	Ryan Deskins
Jessie Simmons	Samuel Payne
Joe Hanna	Vivian Thomsen
John Countryman	

Key Themes

- Reviewed and discussed updates to the work plan-- uncomfortable with discussing criteria updates *before* compensation programs. Reiterated any options should be contingent on direct compensation to farmers (past and future)
- Updates underway to state law to recognize soils of statewide significance as part of minimum guidelines for designating agricultural lands
- Interest in discussing farm-specific development regulations and zoning standards along with designation criteria – may need to adjust work plan to accommodate; currently space in Meeting 6
- Protecting agricultural land from development seems like a worthy goal if there's a way to make it feel good for farmers
- Explore ways to designate smaller farms w/out allowing larger farms to be divided into smaller parcels
- Concerns about using % of lands as comparative measure & considering parcels w/ 'predominantly' prime farmland soils
- Consider allowing voluntary opt-ins to agricultural zoning

Action Items

- Research TDR registry, PDR 2011 Code Update, Pre-1992 Ag Zoning Efforts, and 2009 Working Lands Strategic Plan
- Ensure work plan includes time for discussing farm-specific development regulations
- Develop language to distinguish minimum parcel size for ag designation from allowable zoning density
- Check-in with Vivian regarding the comments she was unable to share due to a poor connection
- Prepare glossary of acronyms and terms
- Update work plan to review block size criteria in Meeting 3; UGA and parcel size in Meeting 4

Parking Lot

- Water Rights and their impacts on farming (discuss as part of soils criteria conversation in Meeting 3)
- Developing markets to support agriculture producers
- Simplifying and streamlining regulations for farms
- Conservation Futures (discuss as part of compensation programs in Meeting 5 & 6)
- Investigate compensation options beyond programs listed in Meeting 2 (discuss as part of compensation programs in Meetings 5 & 6)

Stakeholder Workgroup Meeting

Thurston County Long-Term Agriculture Project



Meeting Schedule (Tentative)

1	Oct. 10	(Held) Intro, roles, scope
2	Oct. 24-27	Review history, state law, other protection tools, county criteria
3	Nov. 14	Review soils, block size
4	Dec. 8	Review parcel size, UGA
Break to Develop Maps		
5	Late January	Review maps, refine criteria, discuss funding and compensation programs
6 - 7	Late February	Review maps, zoning & land use policies, discuss funding and compensation programs, parking lot items
8	Late March	Workshop with broader community

Glossary of Frequent Acronyms:

Ag – Agriculture

DOC – Department of Commerce

DOE – Department of Ecology

GMA – Growth Management Act, the state law that guides our long-term planning

LTA – Long-Term Agriculture (this refers to an area that is designated and is a zone as well)

NA – Nisqually Agriculture (zone for ag in Nisqually Valley)

NRCS – Natural Resources and Conservation Services

PDR – Purchase of Development Rights

RCW – Revised Code of Washington

TDR – Transfer of Development Rights

UGA – Urban Growth Area, unincorporated urban areas managed by the county that surround the cities of Lacey, Tumwater, Olympia, Yelm, Tenino, Rainier, and Grand Mound

USDA – United States Department of Agriculture

WAC – Washington Administrative Code

Stakeholder Workgroup Meeting

Thurston County Long-Term Agriculture Project



Monday, November 14th, 2022

5:00 – 7:00 pm

Held by Zoom

In Attendance:

Ashley Arai, Thurston County
 Maya Teeple, Thurston County
 Ashley Larson
 Charlotte Persons
 Dani Madrone
 Dan Penrose (TA)
 Jeff Van Lierop
 Jessie Simmons

Joe Hanna
 John Countryman
 Joy Nguyen
 Loretta Seppanen
 Samuel Payne
 Vivian Thompson

Key Themes

- Expressed concerns around developing options for expanding long-term agriculture zoning without direct compensation to farmers affected under zoning change (past and future)
 - o Property rights is important
 - o Eminent domain concerns
 - o Affects landowner's ability to monetize farm
- Discussed having options be contingent on a compensation program – County staff suggested thinking about criteria under 2 scenarios
 - o Scenario 1 – with current conservation incentive programs
 - o Scenario 2 – with expanded conservation incentive programs

Parking Lot

- Other tools to improve viability of agriculture
- Developing markets to support agriculture producers
- Simplifying and streamlining regulations
- Permitting difficulties

Action Items

- Send out email day of meeting with Zoom link
- Definitions of terms and “prime if drained”
- Soils Criteria Options to Map:
 - o Base Map – update soils information, including parcels with >50% prime soils (current criteria)
 - o Scenario 1 Map – Update soils information and include parcels using a double-threshold like Pierce County. Include parcels with >50% prime soils OR at least 10 acres of prime soils.
 - o Scenario 2 Map – Update soils information and include parcel if it includes any amount of prime soils.
- Block Size Options to Map:
 - o Base Map – show current criteria, mapping areas of 320 acres or 200 acres if “nearby” to another block.
 - o Scenario 1 Map – Update using Skagit County approach, including blocks of 160 acres or more
 - o Scenario 2 Map – Eliminate block size requirement.
- Mapping to occur after next discussion, will review maps in January.

Meeting Schedule (Tentative)

4	Dec. 8	UGA and Parcel Size
Break to Develop Maps		
5	Late January	Review maps, refine criteria, discuss funding and conservation incentive programs
6	Late February	Review maps & policies, discuss funding and conservation incentive programs, parking lot items
7	Late March	Workshop with broader community

Stakeholder Workgroup Meeting

Thurston County Long-Term Agriculture Project



Thursday, December 8th, 2022
5:00 – 7:00 pm
Held by Zoom

In Attendance:

Ashley Arai, Thurston County	Jessie Simmons
Maya Teeple, Thurston County	Joe Hanna
Ashley Larson	John Countryman
Charlotte Persons	Joy Nguyen
Dani Madrone	Leonard Bauer
Greg Schoenbachler	Loretta Seppanen
Jeff Van Lierop	Samuel Payne

Key Themes

- Discussed having options be contingent on a compensation program – County staff suggested thinking about criteria under 2 scenarios
 - o Scenario 1 –current conservation incentive programs
 - o Scenario 2 –expanded conservation incentive programs
- “Conservation incentive” is a broad term; there needs to be funding for development rights. The value of long-term agriculture is to the community.
- Parcel size for development will be addressed at a future meeting but came up in discussion. Some members felt parcel size for designation and development should match, whereas others felt parcel size for development should not drop below the current density of 1 house per 20 acres and may even need to be larger.
- Need to recognize diversity of farms and provide as much flexibility as possible to farmers to maintain economic viability
- Zoning may not be right solution to protect existing farms in UGA, may be counterproductive to on-going efforts by Olympia’s urban agriculture workgroup.

- Siting LTA lands in UGA should wait until after County has effective TDR program

Parking Lot

- Development size – to what minimum size can parcels be subdivide down to (e.g., how many houses per acres)
- Research tools for protecting ag lands in UGA, including Maine’s “Right to Garden” act and Overlays

Action Items

- Send out definition of prime farmland soils
- Further research what it means for land to be commercially sustainable; will look into state law language and case law
- UGA Options to Map:
 - o Base Map – only areas outside of UGAs (current criteria)
 - o Scenario 1 Map – only outside of UGAs (no change)
 - o Scenario 2 Map – only outside of UGAs (no change)
- Block Size Options to Map:
 - o Base Map – only includes parcels that meet other criteria and are ≥20 acres (current criteria)
 - o Scenario 1 Map – No change, ≥20 acres
 - o Scenario 2 Map – (Version A) 5 acres, (Version B) 10 acres
- Mapping to occur after next discussion, will review maps at January meeting.

Meeting Schedule (Tentative)

Break to Develop Maps		
5	Late January	Review maps, refine criteria, discuss funding & conservation incentive programs
6	Late February	Review maps & policies, discuss funding and conservation incentive programs, parking lot items
7	Late March	Workshop with broader community

Stakeholder Workgroup Meeting

Thurston County Long-Term Agriculture Project

Maps to be developed, based on stakeholder feedback of designation criteria for soils, block size, parcel size, and UGAs. These four criteria were reviewed by the stakeholder workgroup at the direction of the Board of County Commissioners. Other designation criteria are unchanged as they were not included by the BoCC as part of the scope for this workgroup's review. These include #3. Land capability and tax status; #6. Land use settlement patterns and their compatibility with agricultural practices; #7. Proximity of markets; and #9. Environmental considerations.

Drafts will be reviewed with the stakeholder group at the next meeting in late January.*

Baseline Map – maps current criteria using updated USDA soils information

- Update USDA soils information, including parcels with >50% prime soils
- Show current criteria, mapping areas of 320 acres or 200 acres if “nearby” to another block
- Only areas outside of UGAs
- Only includes parcels that meet other criteria and are ≥ 20 acres

Scenario 1 Map – assumes current operations and funding for conservation incentive programs (TDR, PDR, Open Space and Conservation Futures)

- Update USDA soils information and include parcels using a double threshold like Pierce County. Include parcels with >50% prime soils OR at least 10 acres of prime soils
- Update using Skagit County approach, including blocks of 160 acres or more
- Only areas outside of UGAs (no change), but investigate other tools to protect existing farms
- Only includes parcels that meet other criteria and are ≥ 20 acres (no change)

Scenario 2 Map – assumes effective updates and expanded funding for conservation incentive programs (TDR, PDR, Open Space, Conservation Futures)

- Update USDA soils information and include parcel if it includes any amount of prime soils
- Eliminate block size requirement
- Only areas outside of UGAs (no change), but investigate other tools to protect existing farms
- Only includes parcels that meet other criteria and are (version a) 5 acres, (version b) 10 acres

* Stakeholder Group requested that existing farms be shown on all maps



Stakeholder Workgroup Meeting

Thurston County Long-Term Agriculture Project



Tuesday, January 31st, 2023
5:00 – 7:00 pm

In Attendance:

Ashley Arai, Thurston County	Jessie Simmons
Maya Teeple, Thurston County	Joy Nguyen
Glenn Schorno	Loretta Seppanen
Greg Schoenbachler	Paul D'Angolo
Jeff Van Lierop	Samuel Payne
Ryan Deskins	

Key Themes

- Group noted they are uncomfortable with any options if there is not compensation to farmers for loss of development rights
- Flexibility is important for farmers
- Even if protected, lands can't be farmed now or in the future if there isn't water available
- Long-Term Agriculture protects land; it does not necessarily require farming to occur now or in the future
- The County is rapidly growing and needs to protect land for food, but also ensure there is land to support growth
- A lot of soils that are "prime" may not be prime at the site level – rocky, hard to farm, etc.

Parking Lot

- Water rights
- Conservation incentive programs and other tools that could provide funding to farmers

General Thoughts on Maps

- **Staff noted:** these are draft maps and there will be adjustments to mapping (take out places based on past appeals, review for consistency with other zones/uses, right of ways, and much more)
- Maps are disconnected from market and ag operations – soils are crop specific, not agriculture specific
- Uncomfortable keeping block size because it doesn't make sense
- General discussion about what is "enough"?
- Consider limiting zoning to only prime soils, or allowing increased flexibility on non-prime soils even if they fall into zoning
- Create a new map: drop block size, only include parcels with >75% prime soils (keep 20-acre minimum parcel size and other criteria)
- No agreement to remove any maps from future consideration

Action Items

- New Map: parcels with >75% prime soils, 20-acre minimum parcel size, no block size requirement, outside UGAs
- Look into policies that allow for flexibility on non-prime soils
- Look into Agricultural Protection Overlay on prime soils that may not be designated LTA with this update
- Share copy of ag census data that Loretta mentioned with rest of the group
- Provide a presentation on development code
- Next meeting(s): new map, chapter language and policies, minimum parcel size for development in development code, conservation incentive programs summary, concept for agriculture protection overlay

Stakeholder Workgroup Meeting

Thurston County Long-Term Agriculture Project



Wednesday, February 8th, 2023
5:00 – 7:00 pm

In Attendance:

Ashley Arai, Thurston County	Dani Madrone
Maya Teeple, Thurston County	Joy Nguyen
Glenn Schorno	Loretta Seppanen
John Countryman	Paul D'Angolo
Jeff Van Lierop	Samuel Payne

Key Themes

- Group noted they are uncomfortable with any options if there is not compensation to farmers for loss of development rights (past and future)
- Flexibility is important for farmers – list of accessory uses for long-term agriculture (LTA) feels punitive and should be updated to support long-term agricultural viability
- Long-Term Agriculture protects land; it does not necessarily require farming to occur now or in the future
- Agriculture policies in Comp Plan should reflect the breadth and diversity of soil types in the County
- Process for opting into LTA zoning should be clear
- Policy references to settlement patterns and the need for natural/man-made separation from UGA should be removed
- 'Matched' parcel sizes for designation and development feels more equitable and doesn't preclude larger farms from operating; any changes made now should be applied to current LTA
- 'Unmatched' parcel sizes for designation and development would further fragment farmland and recognizes diversity of farming in the county. Other counties have different agriculture designations with different minimums to help address this.

General Thoughts on Maps

- **Staff noted:** these are draft maps and there will be adjustments to mapping; common themes shared by the group will be provided alongside maps (see reverse)
- General support for new Scenario 3 map—discussion about adding small block size (40-100 acres) and lower parcel size (10-15 acres)
- Consider limiting zoning to only prime soils, or allowing increased flexibility on non-prime soils even if they fall into zoning
- No agreement on a set of criteria to move forward or from future consideration and no agreement on maps to eliminate or move forward
 - o Some members note Maps 2A and 2B aren't realistic or feasible—look at other zoning tools to protect additional farmland

Action Items

- Look into policies that allow for flexibility on non-prime soils
- Look into Agricultural Protection Overlay on prime soils that may not be designated LTA with this update
- Next meeting(s): reflect themes heard from group, conservation incentive programs summary, concept for agriculture protection overlay

Parking Lot

- Water rights
- Conservation incentive programs and other tools that could provide funding to farmers
- Allowed uses in LTA zoning

Stakeholder Workgroup Meeting

Thurston County Long-Term Agriculture Project



Friday, February 24th, 2023
5:00 – 7:00 pm

In Attendance:

Ashley Arai, Thurston County	Greg Schoenbachler
Maya Teeple, Thurston County	Jessie Simmons
Jeff Van Lierop	Loretta Seppanen
Dani Madrone	Paul D'Angolo
Joy Nguyen	Samuel Payne

Key Themes

- Group is comfortable with key themes from stakeholder review process moving forward
 - o Block size – need to include the explanation around why block size is important to the designation criteria if it is ultimately included
- Two sides on development standards – make this clear that they are positions and not options
 - o Speaks volumes that there are two sides
 - o If changes are made, they should apply to current LTA properties as well
 - o Recent farm purchases at market value in RRR 1/5 – if changed to LTA with less development potential, could impact value
 - o Not all farmers want to develop their land; sometimes land is used as leverage for loans and other financing tools
 - o More flexibility is important to farmers within LTA areas
- Agriculture Protection Overlay
 - o Mixed feelings about cluster development; there are pros and cons. Pros: housing, protection of large tracts of land. Con is housing, loss of rural character, could result in water impacting ag lands and nuisance claims

- o What does it look like done well, versus done poorly. (Clark County noted as it's used there and causes fragmentation).
- o First right of refusal discussed; some suggest this as a tool before allowing development, others say government has no place to require this and it should be between the landowner and land trust
- o Consider how tool could play into affordable housing

Action Items

- Communicate what the USDA definition of prime farmland soils is moving forward
- Clarify slide that talks about development standards to show there were two positions, not two options
- Update language around applying to have land included as LTA
- Allowed activities on LTA land – review and consider updates to uses on prime/non-prime soils
- As part of this update, ensure a prime soils map is available on the GeoData webviewer
- Group members can stay in the loop by signing up for the [project webmailer](#).

Parking Lot

- Water rights
- Conservation incentive programs and other tools that could provide funding to farmers
- What have other counties that have recently added agriculture zoning done for compensating lost development rights? (Whatcom, Pierce, Snohomish mentioned)