

1. Overview

Community of Interest Name

State the name that is or will be associated with your Community of Interest.

Agriculture Community of Interest

Focus Area and Scope

Clearly describe the area of interest that will be the focus of the COI's activities. Include background information and if appropriate a historical perspective that describes the issue's importance in the watershed.

The Agriculture Community of Interest (Ag COI) is a community-based collaboration actively focused on supporting an economically-viable and environmentally-sustainable agricultural community in the Puyallup Watershed and greater Pierce County.

The Puyallup Watershed and Pierce County as a whole have a proud farming heritage dating back to the 1880s. Dairying, berry growing, hop farming, and bulb production thrived on what grew to more than 160,000 acres of productive farmland at the peak of the industry in the 1940s and 1950s. Today, after decades of suburban sprawl and rural development, there are less than 50,000 acres of usable farmland remaining in the county. The land that is commercially farmed is owned or leased by diversified, small- to mid-sized operations producing vegetables, fruits, eggs, meats, nursery products, and more. The economic viability of small- to mid-size farms is challenged by access to affordable and stable farmland, changing regional and global markets, cumbersome regulations, and an aging farmer population who often lack successors. The basis for farming is farmland and its conversion to non-farm use could spell the end of local farming. As viable farmland is valued for its residential and commercial development potential, the cost of farmland inflates, putting it beyond the reach of the next farmers looking to expand their operations or to those looking to start a farm business. There is a tipping point when so few farms in operation spells the end of the whole lot of them as the infrastructure and markets necessary for their business operation look elsewhere. The Ag COI is working to keep agriculture in the Puyallup watershed ahead of that tipping point in order to maintain the environmental, social, and economic benefits farming can provide to our community.

The opportunities rest in the natural resources at hand and in the community of people, including farmers, who want to work together to address this concern. The presence of prime agricultural soils, agricultural water rights, and close proximity to markets present great opportunity to the Puyallup Watershed's small- and mid-size farm producers. Numerous organizations throughout the watershed, county, and Puget Sound region are working to provide support and tools for farmers to increase profitability and affordably

transfer farmland and farm businesses to a next generation of farmers.

Ongoing Efforts

Describe ongoing work, plans, programs or other activities relevant to your area of interest.

Programs from public agencies, such as Pierce County, Pierce Conservation District and Washington State University, City of Orting, and private organizations, such as Forterra, Farm Bureau, PCC Farmland Trust, and Tahoma Audubon, and local farmers have been actively working to build stronger coordination amongst stakeholders who participate in efforts supporting or affecting agriculture. Recent successful efforts include: 1) passing Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) legislation in Tacoma and in Pierce County and completed the first TDR transaction in the county (transferring 70 development rights from farmland), 2) securing \$2.238 million in Pierce County Conservation Futures funds, \$480,000 of Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program funds, a \$525,000 in Floodplains by Design grant, and \$800,000 of USDA fund for conservation of five farm properties, 3) conducting GIS analysis of farmed and farmable lands across Pierce County, aiding in the development of a farmland conservation strategy, and 4) in-depth analysis of current land use policies in the county, their impact on farmland, and what policy alternatives exist that could be incorporated into the County's Comprehensive Plan to ensure the sustainability of farms and farming in the county. In addition, the Pierce County Farm Program has worked to address local barriers to agriculture like regulations, permitting, and lack of marketing of local products. The Pierce Conservation District continued to advise farmland owners on best practices to promote clean water and soil management. Forterra has conserved several farms in the watershed over past 25 years and has engaged farmers, businesses, and other stakeholders on agricultural infrastructure in Pierce County. PCC Farmland Trust conserved 317 acres of former farmland and returned it to working, sustainable food farming. PCC Farmland Trust also engaged an agriculture economist to interview ag producers and complete a study on the farm economy in the Puyallup Valley.

The Ag COI has roots in the Pierce County Agriculture Roundtable, a forum for coordinating many ongoing efforts in the Puyallup Watershed and Pierce County as a whole. The Pierce County Agriculture Roundtable first met in 2012 in order to work more collaboratively to not only protect the county's dwindling base of farmland, but also to ensure the viability of the agricultural economy in the county. Since the Roundtable first met, it has successfully advocated for re-instating two positions which are essential to farmers – a WSU agricultural extension agent for the County and an agriculture supporter within County government.

In 2013, the Agricultural Roundtable identified several core areas to focus energy: to protect farmland; to support farmers; to increase agricultural infrastructure and agricultural economic viability; and to better tell the story of agriculture and benefits throughout Pierce County. A theme running across all four of these core areas is to increase the ecological and economic benefits of farming. Towards the end of 2013, the Roundtable began work creating a Community of Interest as part of the Puyallup Watershed Initiative.

The Roundtable's ongoing work is focused on developing farmland data, analyzing it for best farmland opportunities and developing a farmland conservation strategy focused on high-value – agricultural as well as ecological – farm properties. The GIS database and analysis of farmed and farmable lands is in place; the shared strategy is nearly complete as well. Other ongoing work regards local policies as they relate to farming. The Roundtable conducted research on existing agriculture regulations and incentives to farm in Pierce County and other Puget Sound counties. This inventory will guide future work of the Agricultural Roundtable to speak with government and farmers about promising ideas for changing and amending existing permitting and land use regulations.

All of the Ag COI partners listed below under Partnership are involved in ongoing efforts throughout the Watershed and County.

Vision

Craft a vision statement that defines what you hope to achieve over the next 20 years relative to your area of interest.

The Ag COI envisions a future in which healthy, safe, secure, and sustainable food production is inextricably linked to the economy and to the quality of life of the local community; farming is plentiful and profitable, and high quality, healthy foods are widely available at affordable prices to consumers; people are employed as farm workers and farmers and in support jobs related to the agricultural economy; profitable farming is performed in sync with the environment and with best management practices in mind so as to not harm other natural resources in the process; people are well-educated about how to eat healthier and the benefits of buying locally for public health, environmental protection, and the local economy; farmers are able to partner with each other and with support agencies to produce jobs, food, goods, and protection of the environment at the same time through innovation, a spirit of partnership, incentives and proper alignment of the regulatory environment; extensive communication and collaboration among government, farmers, universities, and other stakeholders assures that infrastructure is in place that supports a viable agricultural economy; farmland protection is widely understood to be everyone's responsibility; farmland is available at a scale that can support a local farming economy and it is protected in perpetuity; farmers have access to the tools they need to be profitable and to have the option to transfer farmland to a next generation; and funding is adequate to support this vision and the agricultural needs of farmers and consumers.

Partnership

Identify key members of the COI and describe their anticipated roles. What capacity, skill, or expertise do you expect each member to bring? Are there partners you would like to involve,

but haven't yet? Are there gaps in the COI's capacity or expertise? Formal partnership agreements are strongly encouraged if appropriate.

A key partnership for the Ag COI is the Pierce County Agriculture Roundtable. The COI has roots in the Roundtable, with some new participants and a goal to grow and broaden. Both the Roundtable and the COI will continue to move forward together to address issues facing agriculture. There is consistency in the goals and approach of the Roundtable and COI, and the geographic scope overlaps. The COI will continue to share many participants with the Roundtable, but with a goal to expand membership. The Roundtable will continue to focus on agriculture issues in Pierce County as a whole, while the COI will focus on the Puyallup Watershed. The Roundtable will act as a participant in the COI and also as a potential forum for advancing the work of the COI and for collaborating on COI activities.

Participants are listed below along with information on their capacities, skills, and expertise:

1. Pierce County Agriculture Roundtable
 - a. *Anticipated role(s):* The Ag COI has roots in PCAR. PCAR will continue to be a forum for collaboration and conversation about agriculture in the County as a whole.
 - b. *What capacity, skill, or expertise does this partner bring to the COI?:* PCAR has been working for two years to address agriculture issues in Pierce County. As a working coalition of organizations and individuals, Roundtable participants include: Pierce Conservation District, Pierce County, PCC Farmland Trust, Forterra, American Farmland Trust, Puyallup River Watershed Council, King-Pierce Farm Bureau, City of Orting, Orting Valley Farmers Market, Tahoma Audubon, Futurewise, Friends of Pierce County, Tacoma Farmers Markets, Pierce Tilth Producers, WSU Pierce County Extension, Cascade Harvest Coalition and several individual farmers.
2. Forterra
 - a. *Anticipated role(s):* Co-lead farmland conservation efforts in watershed; participate in development of county/municipal policy impacting land use and market-based conservation alternatives (e.g. transfer of development rights); partner in development of agricultural infrastructure in watershed
 - b. *What capacity, skill, or expertise does this partner bring to the COI?* Forterra has 25 years of experience in completing conservation transactions, developing policies that help to create a more sustainable region (e.g. TDR), enforcing conservation easements, and in stewarding parks and open space across the region. Within the context of PCAR, Forterra can utilize its experience and skills to help secure capital and operating support for the COI, implement projects and complete transactions, and provide the knowledge and leadership necessary to help advance policy proposals identified by the COI.

3. Pierce Conservation District

- a. *Anticipated role(s)*: provide staff support to the COI members, committees, and work groups for advancing its initiatives and coordinating efforts internally and externally; assist the COI with analysis and implementation of various strategies with small grants, leveraged resources, and staff support.
- b. *What capacity, skill or expertise does this partner bring to the COI?* Coordination of multi-stakeholder efforts to improve natural resource systems, project managers, soil and water quality technical expert, trusted relationships with other natural resource managers and landowners/growers, access to capital and grant fund sources, and finance and administrative staff support.

4. American Farmland Trust

- a. *Anticipated role(s)*: Participate in COI priority setting, decision-making, and implementation of work plan; participate in continued mapping work, analysis and development of regulatory, economic development, and incentive based strategies for protecting farmland and supporting farmers.
- b. *What capacity, skill, or expertise does this partner bring to the COI?* AFT has over 30 years of experience working to improve planning for agriculture and land use policy, promoting sound environmental practices on farms, increasing funding for farmland protection, and keeping farmers on the land. Within the context of the COI, AFT can utilize its expertise to help map farmland protection priorities, outreach to farmers, develop policy analysis, and provide lessons learned about what works in protecting farmland across the region and the county.

5. Futurewise

- a. *Anticipated role(s)*: Assist in farmland conservation efforts in the watershed and participate in the development of county and municipal policies and regulations to conserve working farms and enhance the county's agricultural industry.
- b. *What capacity, skill, or expertise does this partner bring to the COI?* Futurewise has 24 years of experience in developing and implementing policies to conserve working farms across Washington State and encouraging growth in our cities and towns. Working with the PCAR, Futurewise looks forward to using its expertise to help advance the adoption and effective implementation of the goals and policy proposals identified by the COI.

6. PCC Farmland Trust

- a. *Anticipated role(s)*: PCC Farmland Trust is committed to work with and alongside the Ag COI to conserve land of high agricultural value using fee simple acquisition or easement acquisition. Furthermore, PCC FT is committed to bringing new sustainable food farmers to affordably lease or own the conserved land. Equally, PCC FT is committed to improving the conserved properties so that natural resources are improved as are the conditions for farming. Because of PCC FT's commitment to the combination of land, farmers, and conservation practices, the Trust is keenly interested in

assisting the Ag COI partners to more effectively support the expansion of sustainable food producers and disadvantaged farmers.

- b. *What capacity, skill, or expertise does this partner bring to the COI?* PCC Farmland Trust brings proficiency and experience to apply in the Puyallup Watershed to: land and conservation easement acquisition, leasing farmland, stewarding working farmland, fundraising, and finance. Additionally, because PCC FT works across the state in many counties, swaps best practice ideas with farmland trusts across the country, and associates with many sustainable agriculture programs and organizations, the Trust brings perspective and trialed ideas to the Ag COI. The one agricultural community that is expanding in the Puyallup Watershed at this time is the organic, sustainable farm business group. PCC FT is closely associated with all those farmers inside and outside of the Puyallup Watershed.
7. Pierce Tilt Association
 - a. *Anticipated role(s):* Provide access to diverse farmers' and ranchers' perspectives on marketing, economic, regulatory, and infrastructural challenges; introduce new voices into the Community of Interest; and help institute a system for equipment sharing and cooperative purchases.
 - b. *What capacity, skill, or expertise does this partner bring to the COI?* Pierce Tilt Association is a very loose conglomeration of organic and sustainable independent farmers and ranchers. There is no institutional structure or activity, but instead the group represents decades of growing experience in the area with diverse revenue streams and sales venues.
 8. Pierce County
 - a. *Anticipated role(s):* provide staff expertise and resources to the Ag COI members including representation of: Pierce County Agriculture Liaison, TDR Administrator, GIS Analysts, Surface Water Management technicians, and Office of Sustainability; for purposes of advancing efforts by the COI to implement vision of a sustainable and economically viable agriculture community.
 - b. *What capacity, skill or expertise does this partner bring to the COI?* Governing local jurisdiction with regulatory and legislative authority. Responsible for updating the Comprehensive Plan and its policies and the implementation thereof.
 9. Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department
 - a. *Anticipated role(s):* Participate in PWI data and information workgroup, Agriculture and other COIs, as requested by COI members and staff.
 - i. Provide input on environmental and other health benefits.
 - ii. Connect initiative with other Health Department staff as needed, including with food safety, water, and septic system programs.
 - iii. Help promote and coordinate community engagement activities, such as Pierce County Environmental Health Indicators forum focusing on land in farms indicator.

- b. *What capacity, skill, or expertise does this partner bring to the COI?* Our Health Department has more than 100 years of experience working with residents, businesses, and other agencies on policies and programs that prevent diseases and promote health. We bring expertise in information gathering and sharing, community engagement, improving access to safe and healthy foods, improving built environments, and protecting natural resources.

10. Tahoma Audubon Society

- a. *Anticipated role(s):* Provide council and leadership on proposed policies to support a viable future for agriculture in the Puyallup Watershed and Pierce County. Lead effort to increase public awareness of locally grown food and of viability of agriculture in urbanized counties.
- b. *What capacity, skill or expertise does this partner bring to the COI?:* Audubon has been an advocate for farm preservation for 20 years. Working cooperatively with county staff and elected officials Audubon has played a key role in increasing Conservation Futures priority for Agriculture, preserved farm land from suburban sprawl during regular amendment of County's Growth Management Plan. Audubon staff has expertise with public relations and leadership experience in building alliances on controversial issues such as building highways through farmlands or wildlife areas and advocating increased public funding for open space and county park budgets.

11. Dick Carkner

- a. *Anticipated role(s):* Provide council on the relative merits of proposed policies to support a viable future for agriculture in the Puyallup Watershed and Pierce County.
- b. *What capacity, skill or expertise does this partner bring to the COI?:*
 - i. Helped organize the Ag Roundtable and established its first two objectives, which included re-establishing a WSU Extension position in agriculture and an agricultural advocacy position in Pierce County government;
 - ii. Organized and chaired the Pierce County Farm Advisory Commission for eight years;
 - iii. Thirty years of farming experience in the Puyallup Valley;
 - iv. WSU Professor Emeritus in Agricultural Economics;
 - v. Former Pierce County Planning Commissioner (Vice Chair); and
 - vi. Past Board Member of Tahoma Audubon.

12. Washington State University Pierce County Extension

- a. *Anticipated role(s):* provide outreach and informal education; technical production skills; and applied research related to farming and food systems

to multiple stakeholder groups, including farmers. WSU Extension has been in the community since 1916.

b. *What capacity, skill or expertise does this partner bring to the COI?*

Coordination of multi-stakeholder efforts to improve agricultural production systems; improve natural resource systems; agricultural, soil and water quality technical expert; trusted relationships with farmers, other agency managers, and landowners/growers. Collaborate with other WSU faculty in neighboring counties and the WSU Puyallup Research and Extension Center to provide additional expertise to Pierce County.

The Agriculture COI has identified several gaps in its expertise, and has begun reaching out to those groups to invite them to participate. Currently, the gaps include King County representation (either from public agency representatives or landowners), economic development professionals and policy makers, farmers markets, the Puyallup Tribe and Muckelshoot Tribe, and flood risk reduction staff at Pierce County. Several farmers are involved in the COI, but participation from additional farmers and from ranchers would also widen the expertise within the COI.

The COI will be working to include additional stakeholders throughout the watershed and beyond. The COI is seeking increased participation from farmers, watershed citizen groups, food buyers, market coordinators, tribal leaders, municipalities, and elected officials. The COI plans to explore different ways to structure meetings so that more participants can be involved. For example, the COI has discussed meeting in the evening, in rural areas, online, or by conference call. The COI has also discussed holding two to three large meetings a year with a broader community of farmers and other stakeholders to have substantive discussions about future work. The Ag COI believes in the importance of collaboration and partnership to make connections within the watershed, county, and region to support movement towards this vision.

2. Values

Values

Why is your focus area important to the watershed? What are the most important social and ecological values or benefits it provides?

The conditions specific to the Puyallup Watershed allow agriculture to play a truly unique role in the region's future. Our region has been shaped by agricultural activity for centuries, and unlike most of the places in our country where the same could be said, many of the local communities defined by their agricultural use remain so defined. We have a unique opportunity to preserve and promote an agricultural geography with deep historical roots that is near enough to a large population base to directly impact more households than most agricultural centers could dream of. The ways in which agriculture

beneficially interacts with these unique features of the area can be considered under four overlapping headings: benefits to various communities in the watershed, benefits to people at the individual level, measurable economic benefits, and measurable environmental benefits.

i) Agriculture's value to local communities

Many of the smaller communities in the area have built their identities around the agricultural products specific to them. For these communities, promoting agriculture's presence in the future will help preserve that sense of identity and civic pride. There are also ethnic communities that trace their connection to the area back through an agricultural narrative, so the promotion of agricultural interests also serves to promote the resiliency of the area's ethnic diversity. Because successful farms exhibit a special way in which private property can be put into productive use, one's proximity to farming can instill a respect for property and enterprise not possible in places without that kind of activity. A community's concerted effort to promote farming also bears the (sometimes literal) fruits of that labor, notably in the form of fresh and healthful local food found in farmers' markets. The agricultural calendar often influences the social calendar of these communities, and the seasonal festivals and traditions that contribute to community vitality depend on the prominence of farming activity. Finally, the attractiveness of a community that experiences these benefits encourages invested residents to stay, move, or work in the community.

ii) Agriculture's value to individuals and households

Diversified local agriculture provides the people in its vicinity with access to nutritious food and advice on its preparation. It offers unique recreational and educational opportunities, ranging in topics from home economics to biology and watercolor to geology. The physical nature of agricultural work encourages physical activity and exercise for those who partake either professionally or recreationally. Agriculture's dependence on open and rural space marks out the local terrain, connecting people to the space they call their own. Through its exposition and reliance on the growth of living things and the progression of the seasons, it also allows one to connect with the environment and develop a sense of the earth as a natural entity. Family traditions connected to these cycles depend on it. Finally, agriculture provides the opportunity to hand down a legacy, whether cultural, natural or commercial, for the generations that follow.

iii) Measurable economic benefits

One important but often overlooked feature of agriculture is that it provides opportunities for people without work experience to enter into their local economy as wage-earners. Farm management has the peculiar property of requiring both a cycle of unexperienced labor, which provides such opportunities, and also greatly valuing the accumulation of such experience. As a result, agriculture provides significant prospects for new workers to either break into the workforce in order to move on to other fields or advance in their current position. The hyper-local nature

of any agricultural business that stays within the watershed significantly increases the percentage of the money entering the region that stays in the region. Furthermore, the rise in popularity of agritourism is resulting in more money entering the region from neighboring areas, and this money is not spent exclusively at the farmsite. Lastly, agriculture depends on other sectors, services, and manufactured goods which locate themselves near agricultural markets.

iv) Measurable environmental benefits

Farming positively impacts many environmental issues facing the Puyallup Watershed. Well-managed agriculture provides floodwater storage and diminishes the seasonal surface water management needs of a community; water and soil can be conserved through responsible farming methods. Agriculture provides habitat for many native species (e.g. salmon, elk, migratory birds). Agriculture also sequesters carbon and improves overall air quality through the preservation of open, foliated spaces. Also, because agricultural professionals' livelihoods are uniquely tied to the quality of their land, there is a powerful bond of land stewardship that only agriculture can instill.

Current Conditions

What are the current conditions of the values you identified above? Are they in good condition or are they compromised or impaired?

Current conditions are described below grouped by the four categories of values:

Value to local communities

- Smaller communities are losing their distinction as the farmland that defined them is fragmented by development.
- The ethnic diversity of local farming families is shrinking.
- While a growing interest in farmers' markets has encouraged more communities to organize them and attendance seems to be improving, they often fail to offer much financial support to local farmers.
- The major agricultural products that played significant historical roles in defining the local communities and festivals are struggling to compete with development pressure.

Value to individuals and households

- Local food products currently make up a very small share of the produce consumed in the watershed.

- Education and agritourism opportunities exist in the area but lack prominence.
- The open scenery that frames one's daily activity is at risk.

Measurable economic benefits

- The number of farm jobs open to workers new to the workforce is shrinking.
- The amount of money spent by local residents at local farms is low.
- The region does not currently draw a seasonal tourist crowd from other parts of the state or country.
- Many of the businesses that support farming communities have left the area or are paring down their overhead and workforce.

Measurable environmental benefits

- Surface water management presents a challenge for the region.
- Soil conservation methods are not widely explored locally.
- The area boasts a large amount of wildlife habitat, but there are gaps that can be better coordinated in some areas.

Tracking Change

What characteristics or attributes could be measured for each of the values above to determine if conditions are changing over time?

In the first year of work, the Ag COI plans to compile baseline data for the following issues:

- the rate and types of farming enterprises most at risk for leaving the region,
- what kinds of farming is experiencing growth locally,
- how money at local farmer's markets is being spent,
- the scale and sorts of agritourism and educational opportunities in the watershed,
- some measure of the relationship between recreational infrastructure and farmland,
- the number of actual farm jobs in the watershed, and whether or not a seasonal labor shortage is experienced, and
- the way in which farmland impacts surface water through the seasons.

Many of these numbers have already been established through partnering organizations, and it is our goal in the first year to bring them together to establish a basis for tracking change throughout our activity.

Desired Impact

What impact would you like to have on the values described above over the next 10 years?

Desired impacts are listed below grouped by the four categories of values:

Local communities

- Preserve the large tracts of farmland that delineate the different communities of the watershed.
- Preserve and promote diversity in farmers and farming.
- Increase sales of local farm products in local farmer's markets.
- Keep local festivals and celebrations connected to the region's agricultural history.

For individuals and households

- Expose more households to more locally grown products.
- Increase the number of educational and recreational interactions of local residents and local farms.
- Keep the breathtaking sense of place in the watershed available for everyone.

Measurable economic benefits

- Promote more entry-level and advanced employment opportunities in the agricultural sector.
- Increase the number of out-of-area visitors to our farming communities.
- Help establish the infrastructure needed to keep farms and the businesses that supply them successful.
- Promote on-farm innovation.

Measurable environmental benefits

- Lower the surface water management needs by improving coordination with farmers.
- Improve the distribution of wildlife habitat adjacent to working farmland.

In bringing the current conditions of farmland's values to the watershed closer to these desired outcomes, we hope to indirectly influence our community in the following ways:

- Having better informed and educated consumers and farmers.
- Local food is available and affordable for the members of the community – and purchased and consumed by locals.
- Promoting innovation on all levels (including partnering for innovation).
- Incentivizing sustainable farming techniques.
- Facilitating ways for farmers to partner with each other.
- Balance economic viability and environmental priorities.
- Making it such that farmers and farm businesses are very profitable.
- Making it easier to transition farms and farmland from one generation to the next.
- Encouraging a regulatory system that is more responsive to farmers' needs.

Information Needs

What information is currently lacking to answer the above questions?

The COI has identified the following list of information that would be valuable to know. Some of the more important information needs in the short term are reflected in the activities in the Work Plan for the first year.

- The number of jobs in the watershed related to agriculture, whether private, retail, suppliers, etc.;
- Packaging and processing infrastructure history – openings and closings;
- How to define agricultural lands;
- Data on acreage in production per product;
- Census information for farmlands;
- Cultural history information;
- Infrastructure needs for farm business viability;
- Climate change information, including opportunities, threats, impacts to flooding regimes, and sea level rise;
- Information on water rights;
- Current and projected market trends;
- How to farm best with a lot of water;
- Best methods to promote agriculture;
- Best methods to promote food production;
- Funding needs for Surface Water Management to manage their lands to minimize impacts to neighboring agriculture lands;
- What motivates “eaters” to support local agriculture;
- Infrastructure (processing and distribution) issues;
- Holistic information on price and value differences;

- Defined economic benefits for local agriculture (potential information sources: Farmers' Market Association, Bureau of Labor, WSU Study/Ag Census, etc.);
- Understanding of existing land base and its fragmentation;
- A comprehensive listing of all local, state, and Federal regulations and permits required for agriculture (potential information sources: new state regulations, Dept. of Ag);
- How current zoning overlays with the GIS work done by PCAR, including:
 - Incentives
 - Coordination with farmers
 - What worked elsewhere – other counties' programs that were successful and are applicable to the Puyallup watershed;
- Good funding strategies from other counties that can help pay for infrastructure opportunities;
- Examples of successful generational transition (potential information sources: Land Trust, WSC Incubator Farms); and
- Information on barriers to changing consumer behavior and public investment.

3. Theory of Change

The Watershed

Describe your understanding of the problems in the watershed relative to your area of interest. Clearly state your beliefs and theories about the root causes of the problems you identify.

Marketing:

- Market for local foods: Grocery store shoppers represent the growth in the market for local farm products to keep the farming sector viable. Shoppers look at the cost of organic food and locally grown products and, without a reason to buy locally, they choose the lower price. Until shoppers understand the political and social advantages of protecting farmland and maintaining viable farms, price will be the guiding principal in their food selection.
- Marketing for farm products: There are local marketing strategies available in other counties which can boost farm profitability, but the local farmers generally don't have the marketing skills or capacity to develop these markets without the aid of a cooperative or other programs.

Flooding and water rights:

- Drainage & flooding: Heavy spring rains and flooded fields limit the acreage and the time left in summer and fall to plant and grow crops in the Puyallup watershed. County services to drain fields is key to making flooded lands profitable for local agriculture. Local farmers have not organized to compete with other interest groups to demand this essential county service. County zoning which would prevent development of parking lots or other uses which flood fields is also key to addressing this problem.
- Water rights & irrigation: Farmers' viability is threatened due to limited access to water. The Fred Meyer Distribution center in Puyallup pumps flood water off of their parking lots into the Puyallup River. If this warehouse facility was not located in the headwaters of a creek, this water would stay in the groundwater and keep the creek flowing into late August to irrigate crops in the Fife Area. Drought in July and August makes some irrigation necessary in our county. Without water, the crop season is limited. In addition, Pierce County water rights are only about 40 percent mapped, creating additional confusion for use of wells and irrigation. Water rights need to be clearly defined.

Land use patterns, regulations, and infrastructure:

- Fragmentation – Average farm size in Pierce County has declined since 1950 and is less than other Puget Sound counties (such as Skagit and Whatcom counties). The lack of infrastructure, connectivity between scattered land parcels, or sufficient land to farm adds to the challenge for farmers.
- Farmland conservation: Programs to fund ag conservation are limited and there are no dedicated funds to buy development rights or purchase farm land. Although agricultural lands have a priority over other open space projects, farmland still must compete for limited Conservation Futures funds.
- Habitat restoration has historically had more funding. Salmon recovery and flood control programs have taken priority over agriculture conservation, which has resulted in the loss of some farmland.
- Regulations: Local state and Federal regulations give priority to more intense property development as it pays higher taxes to local governments. Stronger regulations create problems for traditional farming methods. Farm costs often need to increase to meet new requirements for food safety and food processing.
- Land use rules for building barns and for agritourism limit farmers' use of their lands. County floodplain projects also impact farm lands by creating stormwater projects in previously productive fields.
- Land values & development rights: In urban counties, farmland is too expensive for farmers to buy. Farmland prices and taxes are based on their highest and best use. There is a strong financial incentive to convert farmlands for highest and best use, and it is too easy to do. Land protection regulations are too easy to change and

incentive programs have not yet gained enough traction to adequately address the disparity in land values.

- **Transfer of farmland to next generation:** Approximately 78 percent of the farms in Pierce County will be sold in the next 10 years. The older generation of farmers has not cultivated family members to continue farming, and may want to sell their land for their retirement. New farmers, if they can afford the land, lack the training and the community support (feed stores, tractor dealers, etc.) to make their farms prosper.
- **Economic benefit vs. environmental concerns:** The high cost of environmental regulations in urban counties reduces the profitability of farming when land costs are so high. This is one factor that leads to land conversion and the resulting environmental degradation.

Your Role

What can you and others do to improve the situation and achieve your vision over the next 20 years? Describe your current understanding of what specific actions can be taken to address the problems above. Clearly state your beliefs and theories about how these actions will result in your desired impacts.

The Pierce County Agriculture Roundtable was formed in 2012 under two primary theories 1) that many groups were doing important work on agriculture issues throughout the County, but that efforts were not as impactful as they could be due to lack of coordination and lack of institutional support (through positions such as the WSU Extension Agent and the Agricultural Liaison within Pierce County) and 2) many stakeholders have spent significant time over the years developing the 2006 Agriculture Strategic Plan with concrete recommendations, but there was no on-going coalition set-up to advance these recommendations to better support the agricultural economy and conserve agricultural lands along with all the other benefits associated with this success. The Puyallup Watershed Agriculture COI carries forward these same theories for our role. We plan to improve communications, look to each group to contribute their expertise, prioritize the problems we can solve together, and play to the strength in each organization to solve these problems. We will also bring additional resources to bear to ensure that results are greater than the sum of their parts – over the next year and the next ten years, more resources are needed to ensure that the coordination and collaboration is effective. We are focused on implementation of key strategies that have been addressed through numerous planning processes and adaptive management and constant improvement as the context we are operating in constantly evolves. At the same time, we will broaden our membership to incorporate the views, priorities, expertise, and capacities of others. Strategies 1 through 6 described in this document and included in the Work Plan relate to existing priorities and actions being developed by groups throughout the watershed. The Ag COI

Work Plan coordinates these efforts and adds the missing pieces and resources to leverage everyone's existing work.

4. Challenges and Opportunities

Challenges

What challenges will you face as you attempt to achieve your vision and desired impact? How will you address these challenges?

The Agriculture COI will face the following challenges while attempting to achieve its vision:

- Combinations of regulations (ESA and Clean Water Act) make it difficult to address drainage issues;
- Pierce County Surface Water Management (SWM) owns land in floodplains, but doesn't have funds to manage the land properly and has different priorities than the ag community;
- Urban people are generally supportive but not well connected to ag issues;
- Food safety regulations can be a barrier to selling farm projects;
- What the community wants can be different from what the farmers want;
- Farmers will continue to age and lands will continue to be sold for non-farm use;
- Helpful changes to local and regional planning, regulations, and restrictions will be slower than pace of development and loss of farmers and farmland;
- Support may ebb and flow, hindering important efforts;
- Systems of distribution are located far and wide and are not necessarily local. Retailers and consumers may not be willing to pay the price for local products;
- Seasonality;
- Water rights are increasingly difficult to find; and
- People aren't buying enough to keep farmers markets and coops sustainable.

The Agriculture COI will address these challenges through the strategies, objectives, and activities described in this document and in the Work Plan. Difficulties with support, systems of distribution, lack of connection to farming, and keeping farmers markets sustainable will be addressed through outreach and education. Many of the activities address difficulties with regulations by participating in planning processes and by working together collaboratively to identify opportunities for regulatory improvement and monetary and permitting incentives. In general, the collaboration and outreach elements included in each strategy and activity will address many of the challenges listed in this section.

Opportunities

What opportunities (ongoing activities, funding programs, etc.) can be leveraged to contribute to the success of your efforts? How will you take advantage of these opportunities?

The agriculture COI has identified the following opportunities:

- More people want to farm;
- Existing county, WSU, and PCD programs help focus on the ag industry, regulations, and marketing;
- There are opportunities to build regional transfer of development rights tools;
- Greater development of innovative funding can provide current and new farmers with financing for capital and land purchase;
- More people want local products;
- There are innovative new products and markets being developed;
- Small-scale diversified farms are increasing;
- State, County, and local dollars are funding land conservation;
- USDA grants are available for capacity building, marketing, and development; and
- Non-profit partners are working with private business and government.

The strategies and activities developed by the COI are designed to take advantage of these opportunities. For example, strategy 6, to foster a new generation of farmers, will take advantage of the opportunities presented by more people wanting to farm. Strategy 4 (marketing) will help tap into the opportunities presented by the potential consumer base desiring local products. Strategy 5 (preserving farm land) will help leverage existing funding. Participation in the ongoing Comprehensive Plan process is also an opportunity to weigh in on regulations. The Agriculture COI will take advantage of these opportunities by collaborating with the organizations already doing work on agriculture in the watershed, many of which are participants in the COI.

5. Strategies

Describe the strategies (sets of activities) that you will carry-out over the next 10 years to achieve your desired impact. Explain the roles that different partners will take. Be sure to address the challenges and opportunities identified above, and explain how other ongoing work in the watershed may support or conflict with your efforts.

The following table lists the seven strategies identified in this document, the values they address, and the desired impacts they will bring about.

Strategies	Values Addressed	Desired Impacts
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<p>Strategy 1: Develop agricultural infrastructure</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Measurable Economic Benefits ● All other values through support of agriculture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Local food is available and affordable for the members of the community – and purchased and consumed by locals ● Farmers and farm businesses are very profitable ● Innovation (including partnering for innovation) ● Farmers are partners with each other
<p>Strategy 2: Improve regulations and incentives to make farming more profitable and support local agricultural businesses</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Measurable Economic Benefits ● All other values through support of agriculture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Regulatory system that is responsive to farmers' needs ● Farmers and farm businesses are very profitable ● Economic viability and environmental priorities are balanced ● Sustainable farming is the norm – and there are incentives for this
<p>Strategy 3: Balance social, economic and environmental benefits on agricultural land</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Measurable Environmental Benefits ● All other values 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Economic viability and environmental priorities are balanced ● Sustainable farming is the norm – and there are incentives for this ● Having informed and educated consumers and farmers

<p>Strategy 4: Develop marketing for local agriculture products and farms</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Value to Local Communities ● Value to Individuals and Households ● Measurable Economic Benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Local food is available and affordable for the members of the community – and purchased and consumed by locals ● Farmers and farm businesses are very profitable ● Having informed and educated consumers and farmers ● Community pride, festivals, public engagement
<p>Strategy 5: Protect farmland for agricultural use</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Measurable Environmental Benefits ● Value to Local Communities ● Value to Individuals and Households 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Conserve/assemble existing farmland base (big blocks of connected, working farmland) ● Having informed and educated consumers and farmers
<p>Strategy 6: Foster a next generation of farmers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Measurable Economic Benefits ● All other values through support of agriculture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Easy to transition farms and farmland from one generation to the next (vs. selling farm for retirement) ● Having informed and educated consumers and farmers
<p>Strategy 7: Maintain and expand conversations and collaboration around agriculture issues in the Puyallup Watershed and Pierce County.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● All values 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● All impacts ● Sustainable farming is the norm – and there are incentives for this ● Innovation (including partnering for innovation) ● Having informed and educated consumers and farmers ● Farmers are partners with each other ● Community pride, festivals, public engagement

Strategy 1: Develop agricultural infrastructure

Within the Puyallup Watershed, many growers face challenges in how they process, store, transport, and add value to products. Agricultural infrastructure refers to the labor, processing, and transportation/distribution systems that allow products to move from the farm to market.

As the overall number and size of farms has decreased in the past 60 years, local facilities have either closed or do not exist to properly serve smaller, more diversified farms. Examples of the loss of infrastructure in the watershed and greater Pierce and King Counties include the reduction in local farm equipment and feed suppliers, the limited availability of local meat and vegetable processing facilities, and the lack of central coordinated distribution centers serving small- to mid-size growers. There have been some recent agriculture infrastructure development projects, such as the creation of the USDA Mobile Meat Processing Unit. One private farm business is working to aggregate products from several neighboring farms to sell to a specific retailer or market channel.

The Agriculture COI has identified the importance of working together with local and regional partners and farmers to bring coordination and funding to the watershed to assist in identifying and implementing needed agricultural infrastructure. On a broad level, these activities could include developing facilities with cold storage, commercial kitchens, value-added processing facilities (for activities such as canning, freezing, and cooking), assisting in developing small-scale farm product distribution networks or attracting farm equipment and feed suppliers to the area.

Desired Impact:

- Access to and affordability of local farm products,
- Farmers and businesses are profitable,
- Appreciation of the products that are available by the season and appreciation that the products are local, and
- Farmers are partners with each other.

The Role of This Group in Making Change Happen:

- Help scope needs assessment,
- Ensure coordination and partnerships with other groups and producers,
- Draw on our own resources and relationships,
- Facilitate, align, coordinate, oversee and lead the effort,
- Implement together what others cannot implement alone, and
- Determine a backup plan in the case that the Washington State University (WSU) Extension is unable to conduct a needs assessment.

Risks and Uncertainties:

- In the past there have been barriers for producers using currently available infrastructure, including cost of use, location, and communication;

- Changes in or lack of consistency of markets for local products due to weather, natural disaster, food borne illness, business consolidation, cost of production, labor shortage, etc.; and
- WSU Extension could become unable to provide expertise or capacity to undertake the needs assessment

Objectives and Activities:

Objective 1.1: Learn more about the gaps in the Pierce agricultural economy for current farm producers, large and small, and from there see what gaps the COI can help fill.

Activity 1.1.1: Conduct an infrastructure needs assessment similar to the one that was produced in Thurston County, led by the WSU Extension office there.

Activity 1.1.2: Conduct an inventory of properties where agricultural infrastructure could be built (such as properties zoned rural, commercial or brownfields).

Objective 1.2: Learn more about the business risks faced by Pierce County farm producers at various stages of their business lifecycles and consider measures that the COI can address to stabilize farm producer businesses in Pierce County.

Activity 1.2.1: Conduct producer interviews; gain direct information from farm producers and those working closely with producers about their challenges and what can be done to expand their opportunities

Objective 1.3: Support existing farmers and attract additional farmers to be thriving and prosperous businesses.

Activity 1.3.1: Test the viability of developing a food hub or similar institution for Pierce County/South Sound.

Strategy 2: Improve regulations and incentives to make farming more profitable and support local agricultural businesses

Agricultural businesses, like any business, are regulated and must procure appropriate permits from various agencies to conduct business. At times, depending on the product or activity, agricultural business owners are required to obtain half a dozen or more permits from half a dozen or more regulatory agencies. This often causes confusion, fatigue, barriers to entry, time delay, and/or added costs to start or maintain these businesses. Regulations are imperative for food safety, environmental protection, and public safety, but

there are opportunities for streamlining and reducing duplication while still ensuring compliance. Just as important as regulatory review and streamlining are financial and regulatory incentives to make farming more viable and profitable and to encourage new and existing farm businesses and compliance with regulations.

Short-term opportunities exist to create more incentives for farm businesses such as opening up farm-to-institution markets, streamlining permitting for necessary agricultural structures, and providing added incentives (such as rate reductions) from the stormwater utility to acknowledge the importance of working farms in the stormwater system, among others.

The Agriculture COI has identified the need for partners, producers, and stakeholders to work together collaboratively to identify opportunities for both regulatory improvement and monetary and permitting incentives that could be implemented by local and state agencies to ensure more profitable farms and demonstrate strong support for these businesses. The COI also has identified the need to provide oversight to ensure implementation of these concepts and to facilitate continued feedback and improvement over time.

Desired Impact:

- Consistent, sustained funding and capacity to help farmers navigate regulations;
- A regulatory system that is responsive to farmers' needs;
- A preserved and assembled land base for connected working farmland areas in the watershed;
- Balanced economic and environment priorities to sustain profitability; and
- Local food available, affordable, and purchased locally in stores and weekly community markets.

The role of this group in making change happen:

- Organize programs to educate new elected officials about the importance of local farming, contribution of local rural jobs and economy, and
- Facilitate a better understanding among farmers of opportunities for regulatory reform to improve the Pierce County Comprehensive Plan, modernize land use regulations, and promote incentives for farmers.

Risks and Uncertainties:

- WSDA/PCHD interpretation of food safety regulations is too strict or too lax in defining regulations,
- The difficulty of maintaining farm interests as a priority among decision-makers and

- community leaders, and
- Uncertainty around food safety regulations from the Federal government.

Resource needs:

- Find out how to make incentive programs operative for farmers in this area.

Objectives and Activities:

Objective 2.1: Continue to improve coordination of the various offices in the county, state and federal government to produce more seamless and beneficial practices for farm businesses.

Activity 2.1.1: Inventory current regulations & incentives (at all jurisdictional levels) applicable to agriculture in the County; including health, food safety, environmental, and labor.

Activity 2.1.2: Offer detailed recommendations for process improvements identified in analysis performed, and offer additional recommendations for incentives for farm businesses.

Activity 2.1.3: Continue outreach to producers to gain their insight and ideas for on-going improvement and support of their farm businesses.

Objective 2.2: Maintain adequate agricultural business support in Pierce County.

Activity 2.2.1: Actively support budgets to maintain WSU Agent, Pierce County Ag Liaison and Pierce Conservation District rate system.

Activity 2.2.2: Consider new incentives and make policy or procedural recommendations where appropriate.

Objective 2.3: Work with other COIs to consider long-term supports for land use changes and public funding that benefit the watershed and its communities including working agriculture, working forests, just and healthy food, biodiversity, water quality and salmon communities of interest.

Activity 2.3.1: Initiate cross COI communication, sharing and leveraging opportunities.

Strategy 3: Balance social, economic and environmental benefits on agricultural land

Agriculture as it exists in the Puyallup Watershed, mostly proximate to urban growth areas, offers the community more than local farm products. Farms so close to neighborhoods provide a window for many urban, suburban and rural people to how agriculture works. In that way they serve an especially effective community education function. An autumn

tradition for many Pierce County families, schools, and youth groups is to visit or help out at a local farm, often harvesting, selling, or volunteering to install native plant hedgerows and in each case learning more about how farming works. Each farm is also a well-stewarded piece of land, often sheltering a stretch of unfarmable wetlands, wooded slope, or riverbank and therefore also sheltering important habitat. Farms are a form of open space amongst nearby developed properties and act as a sponge and filter for the same surface water that is a problem for developed property. Though not a park for public recreation, farms do offer a visual oasis, stretches of unpaved soil to filter water, and plenty of botanical growth. Working land offers economic benefits too. Puyallup Watershed farm businesses are locally and family owned, typically employing local residents and buying what they need for their businesses as locally as possible. They are a treasured part of the larger community because farms so often provide such a diverse set of benefits.

Desired Impact:

- Sustainable farming is the norm, and
- Economic viability and environmental priorities are balanced.

The role of this group in making change happen:

- Leadership and networking, and
- Focusing human and capital resources to address pollution problems in the most important strategic areas as opposed to spread thin across the entire watershed all at the same time.

Risks and Uncertainties

- Competitive nature of funding,
- Limited resources,
- Landowners not cooperating or wanting to change their practices, and
- Influence of NOAA buffer issue and requirements for funding sources, requiring too large of buffers and thus causing some landowners to not participate at all in implementing better practices

Objectives and Activities:

Objective 3.1: Develop visions around farms, fish, and floods to hold all three equal and protect farmland while improving habitat and flood protection.

Activity 3.1.1: Meet with tribal leadership of the Puyallup and Muckleshoot Indian Tribes to build a long-term working relationship and identify common natural resource protection goal and priority actions.

Activity 3.1.2: Champion agricultural land protection and further stakeholder coordination in the Puyallup Floodplains by Design application to the Department of Ecology as a means to protect more farmland, monitor water quality efforts and strengthen resources for producers farming in more wet, flooded conditions.

Objective 3.2: Work with farmers in priority areas to adopt water quality and habitat enhancement practices while ensuring businesses remain viable.

Activity 3.2.1: Connect with the Water Quality and Salmon COIs or other entities (such as Surface Water Management) to consider working together on this objective.

Activity 3.2.2: Identify highest priority waterways and riparian areas to begin individual landowner outreach and offering of incentives and solutions to improve land management practices, natural resource protection and water quality improvement.

Activity 3.2.3: Focus cost-share investment and other technical assistance to place best management practices on high priority streams identified.

Activity 3.2.4: Consider with regulatory and non-regulatory authorities, practices in place that have worked to promote best water quality practices on farms and those that have not.

Activity 3.2.5: Develop cross-COI, cross-government implementation plan with a numerical goal for implementation of water quality best management practices on Pierce County farms.

Activity 3.2.6: Determine how agricultural practices can enhance other environmental benefits (such as air quality and soil quality) and whether additional best management practices specific to these environmental benefits are needed.

Activity 3.2.7: Put together a library of best management practices information for use by farmers.

Strategy 4: Develop marketing for local agricultural products and farms

Puyallup Watershed farms currently produce a wide array of products, from horticulture to Christmas trees and rhubarb to lettuce. Puyallup Watershed farms also provide value-added products such as frozen rhubarb or bagged, washed lettuce. All the products grown now have an outlet, a buyer. Some are marketed directly through mechanisms such as Community Sponsored Agriculture (CSA), farmers markets, or on farm stores.

When farms expand to a larger scale of production but still are mid-size in volume, they benefit from specialized wholesale buyers who appreciate local produce. Pierce County used to have more of these specialized wholesale buyers and processors for value-added product, back when the county had larger overall production. When overall farm production grows, farmers will need sales through direct-marketing. Direct marketing

sales volume depends on expanding the consumer interest in local product. Wholesale and processor rebuilding will likely stem from farms producing similar products working together to develop the kind of wholesaler they need, possibly as a farmer coop. The COI, anticipating that increase in agricultural production, would like to help develop the marketing, distribution, and processing avenues where needed and just ahead of when they are needed.

Desired Impact:

- Brand recognition,
- Community pride and festivals,
- Public engagement,
- Public health campaigns,
- Farmers and farms business are very profitable, and
- Having informed and educated consumers and farmers.

The role of this group in making change happen:

- Coordinate with staff person and other organizations working on marketing, and
- Coordinate with the County and Cascade Harvest.

Risks and Uncertainties:

- Funding,
- Keeping a web page updated,
- One organization funded for keeping up-to-date,
- B&B in Ag lands put in Comprehensive Plan, and
- Risk of developing brands too quickly or too many different brands – that may confuse consumers. Takes a professional business approach.

Objectives and Activities:

Objective 4.1: Promote buy local campaign to encourage more farm product sales

Activity 4.1.1: Develop a marketing plan that focuses on local food and centers on broad use of a brand, whether newly created or utilize existing (Puget Sound Fresh) brand.

Activity 4.1.2: Expand agritourism and produce HarvestFest consistently

Activity 4.1.3: Support a Farm Forum in February 2015 to bring together producers to network, build community, and gain insight in advancing various marketing strategies (such as farm to institution, a food hub, and agritourism).

Activity 4.1.4: Assist current farmers markets to build customers.

Activity 4.1.5: Initiate cross-COI communication with the Just and Healthy Foods COI.

Strategy 5: Protect farmland for agricultural use

The most basic resource of all farming is land. Different kinds of farm production require different kinds of farmland, but all farming needs open and undeveloped land. Some kinds of farming thrive where there is a vast expanse of open, unirrigated grassland. The Puyallup Watershed offers the opposite kind of land: prime soils with attached water rights. These valuable natural resources are lost when the land is paved. Recovering and improving the agricultural sector of the Pierce County economy requires a many-layered approach as described in other strategies. However, the foundation is access to suitable, affordable, accessible farmland. The Agriculture Community of Interest is interested in a land protection strategy which saves valuable farmland for future generations while keeping it in agricultural production for the current generation of farmers, whether new or experienced farmers.

Desired Impact:

- Preserve/assemble existing farmland base (big blocks of connected, working farmland); and
- Having informed and educated consumers and farmers.

The role of this group in making change happen:

- Lead bond effort, and
- Pursue voluntary strategy transactions.

Risks and Uncertainties:

- Speed of retirement of local farmers,
- Increasing development pressure,
- Public support for additional funding, public lands, and
- Decline of funding for conservation.

Objectives and Activities:

Objective 5.1: Conserve as much existing, quality farmland as possible so that it can remain or become working farms, focusing on the most threatened farmland.

Activity 5.1.1: Implement a coordinated and shared conservation strategy.

Activity 5.1.2: Develop a plan with a defined acreage goal for protecting farmland.

Objective 5.2: Create more opportunities for current farmland to transition to the next generation of farm businesses.

Activity 5.2.1: Expand the tools in use by conservation stakeholders to help with that transition.

Activity 5.2.2: Promote long-term leasing and conservation tools which maintain farmland availability and affordability now and into the future.

Objective 5.3: Expand funding available for farmland conservation (fee and easement).

Activity 5.3.1: Review public and private funding options.

Objective 5.4: Actively engage in stakeholder conversations to substantively bolster the protections for agricultural businesses, land and increased, meaningful incentives.

Activity 5.4.1: Engage community stakeholders about the Pierce County Comprehensive Plan process as it pertains to agricultural land.

Activity 5.4.2: Provide information and comparative analyses to the county and other jurisdiction staff and elected officials so that they can make informed decisions about policies that affect farm producers.

Activity 5.4.3: Provide detailed recommendations to county staff, elected officials and community stakeholders to ensure clarity on priority actions to protect agricultural land and business.

Strategy 6: Foster a next generation of farmers

New farming enterprises will undoubtedly play a significant role in the vitality of our region's agricultural community. Farms in their early stages face particular economic and marketing challenges that can be lightened with even a small degree of coordination and cooperation. Strategy 6 is geared to help attain our desired outcomes by making our watershed as welcome a location for new farming ventures as possible. The Agriculture COI will work closely with the Pierce Tilth Association to determine what challenges new farmers in the area face and how local farming resources can be directed to alleviate those challenges.

Initial ideas include formalizing the loose equipment cooperatives that exist, exploring the notion of shared intern position for smaller farms, and facilitating the grouping of freight orders into more economical units.

Desired Impact:

- Increased coordination and cooperation between growers;
- More independent farms begin operating in the area;
- Farm equipment and supplies are more readily available locally;
- The Puyallup River Watershed continues improving its reputation as an agricultural center; and
- Local farmers markets boast more products grown within the watershed.

The role of this group in making change happen:

- Providing administrative support for farmers to make cooperative purchases and arrangements;
- Bringing local farmer organizations and agricultural resources together to organize such cooperatives; and
- Offering institutional stability for these services.

Risks and Uncertainties:

- Farmer's schedules make complicated coordination difficult; and
- Diverse farms may have too diverse of needs to cooperate effectively.

Objectives and Activities:

Objective 6.1: Increase the number of farm production businesses in Pierce County.

Activity 6.1.1: Expand entrepreneurial and production supports for farm businesses tailored to each stage of farm business development, from start-ups to expanding to retiring.

Activity 6.1.2: Promote Pierce County as a favorable place to start a farm business.

Activity 6.1.3: Consider the various internship, incubator and advanced education pathways available in Pierce County for new farmers. Develop a next step for the COI to encourage new farm businesses.

Activity 6.1.4: Expand entrepreneurial and production supports for farm business owners who are traditionally under-represented farmland or farm business owners.

Strategy 7: Maintain and expand conversations and collaboration around agriculture issues in the Puyallup Watershed and Pierce County.

Carrying out the work of the Community of Interest relies on the dedicated coordination of an individual in addition to the sustained, active participation of everyone willingly participating in the community of interest. Without central coordination it is far too easy to get stuck in the old ways of doing business due to financially strapped, overworked staff members simply not having the time to coordinate efforts in a more strategic, collaborative way. To sustain this work in the watershed, the COI envisions a coordinator working to coordinate the Community of Interest Work Plan, provide leadership to advance priority strategies with participants, help the coalition and individual members leverage resources to advance the objectives and activities, and provide outreach to potential participants.

Appendix A includes a job description that shows, in more detail, what the Ag COI envisions as the role of the staff coordinator.

This additional capacity is absolutely necessary to ensure coordination and support of a diverse, active, and complicated community of interest. Without it, not only will success be extremely gradual, but we risk losing the ability of the COI to have the capacity to convene at all.

The COI has also identified the need to grow through continued outreach. Outreach will be carried out by all through COI participants through their regular programs and through the activities identified in the Work Plan, but the coordinator will also be responsible for outreach.

The COI has also expressed an interest in continuing the work of the Agriculture Roundtable alongside the COI, with a county-wide focus. Continuing the work and momentum of the Roundtable is important to achieving the COI's vision and is included as an objective under this strategy.

Desired Impact:

- Highly coordinated and synergistic effort to implement the objectives and activities identified in this proposal and implement the conclusions and findings identified in the 2006 Pierce County Agricultural Strategic Plan; and
- Proper support for all members of the COI so that efforts are properly coordinated, information is free flowing and ability to participate is inclusive and clearly understood by all and progress/successes are clearly communicated and celebrated.

The role of this group in making change happen:

- The COI is the central place where coordination, information sharing and agreements on priorities and use of resources are made in a collaborative, inclusive way.

Risks and Uncertainties

- May be more difficult than we think to keep the initiative going over time; and
- Members of the COI lose interest if they don't see progress being made quickly enough or if their organization's priorities change or if funding is not secured.

Objective 7.1: Carry forward the Work Plan of the Agriculture Community of Interest while increasing participation in the COI.

Activity 7.1.1: Hire a full-time staff person to coordinate the Community of Interest Work Plan, provide leadership to advance priority strategies with participants, help the coalition and individual members leverage resources to advance the objectives and activities, and provide outreach to potential participants

Activity 7.1.2: Form a Steering Committee to support the staff coordinator in moving forward the work of the COI

Objective 7.2: Continue the work of the Agriculture Roundtable and its committees

Activity 7.2.1: Maintain the Agriculture Roundtable as a forum to address agriculture issues on a county-wide basis

6. Evaluation, Adaptive Management & Learning

Tracking Change

What characteristics or attributes will you use to determine if conditions are changing in the watershed relative to your area of interest? Explain if you plan to use existing data sources or if you will be collecting your own data.

Many of the activities and efforts that the Agriculture COI will pursue in its first year of work relate to assessing needs and identifying quantifiable targets. The results of these first-year work items will be benchmarks that can be used in the future to track change and measure progress. The Agriculture COI will also use existing data from participants such as Pierce County, the Pierce Conservation District, the WSU Extension, and others to track change. The Agriculture COI will share data and coordinate with the Just and Healthy Foods COI and the Environmental Education COI to track change.

Evaluating Success

How will you determine if your strategies are implemented well and if they are helping you reach your desired impact?

The staff coordinator will meet regularly with COI participants to discuss the progress of the activities included in the Work Plan. The COI will synthesize the lessons learned from the various activities, determine how much progress has been made, and develop future plans. COI participants will use measurable benchmarks to determine whether objectives are being met. The staff coordinator will communicate with new participants for feedback on ongoing efforts, and the COI will explore new methods of meeting with the broader community group to hold substantive discussions about progress on the Work Plan. The COI has discussed meeting in the evening, in rural areas, online, or by conference call. The COI has also discussed holding two to three large meetings a year with a broader community of farmers and other stakeholders to have substantive discussions about future work.

Adaptive Management

How do you plan to use what you learn from the above evaluation questions to adjust and refine elements of your strategic plan and annual work plan?

The work of the Agriculture COI is designed to be an iterative process that will develop over time. As discussed above, many of the activities in the Work Plan for the first year involve needs assessments and gathering of information. When these early activities are complete, the COI participants will determine the next steps needed to meet the objectives. Participants will share information from the various activities and from other efforts in the watershed at COI meetings as well as at Agricultural Roundtable meetings, and this information will inform the Work Plan for future years.

Learning

What do you think other COIs in the Puyallup Watershed will be able to learn from your work? What do you think groups in other watersheds can learn? How will you share your successes and insights with others?

Many of the Agriculture COI activities in the Work Plan relate to either sharing of information, education, or both, whether it's ensuring that agencies and jurisdictions understand the needs and value of agriculture when making plans or helping farmers learn best management practices that protect water quality while ensuring that farms remain viable businesses. For example, Strategy 4, which involves marketing local agricultural products, is designed to communicate the value of local agriculture to the broader community. Additionally, the COI has chosen to include an outreach component as part of each strategy and objective and has committed to using outreach to grow the COI and evaluate progress on the Work Plan. Since many of the participants in the COI participate in the Agricultural Roundtable, which focuses on the county as a whole, this learning will be spread to other watersheds in the county.

Required Resources

What capacity and resources are needed for evaluation, adaptive management and learning? What sources other than TRFF funds will be leveraged for these purposes?

Many of the funding requests in the Work Plan for the activities feed into the need for adaptive management and learning as described above. Resources from the participant organizations to attend COI meetings and participate in committees will be leveraged as part of the processes described in this section. Some participants may require funding to fully participate in activities and committees. Much of the work participants are already doing through other funding sources will contribute to the overall base of knowledge that

the COI and others in the watershed will learn from and that will be the basis of adaptive management.

7. Annual Work Plan for Year 1

Activities

Using the strategies described above, develop a year one-work plan that includes specific activities you expect to complete during the coming year. Describe who will take the lead on each activity and how partners will work together to ensure successful implementation.

See attached Work Plan

Budget

Develop a detailed budget, including how much is being requested and which organizations/entities will receive a portion of the funding.

See attached Work Plan

Other Funding Sources

Provide detailed information regarding any existing plans to raise funds for this project beyond the request to TRFF. Specifically call out what organizations you have approached/plan on approaching as well as the dollar amount. Example: \$20,000 grant for 24 months from XYZ Foundation. If no fundraising plan has been drafted, please provide an explanation.

In addition to dedicating staff time and resources from all current organizations and individuals to work collaboratively on elements of the strategies identified in this proposal, COI is actively applying the following resources to leverage TRFF funding to advance the objectives identified in this proposal:

- \$45 million request to the Department of Ecology through their Floodplains by Design grant program to implement fish and farm friendly flood control infrastructure, work with farmers to better understand how and what to farm in flooded areas, create new and protect more farmland in the face of flood control structures being developed over existing farmland, and advance coordination of water quality, salmon, and landscape monitoring to better understand if these efforts are in fact improvement the environmental health of the watershed.

- Millions each year from State Recreation and Conservation Office, NRCS and Pierce County Conservation Futures programs to conserve working farmland in perpetuity.

Appendix A: Job Description for Staff Coordinator

Pierce County Conservation District Job Description for *Agriculture Community of Interest Coordinator*

Nature and Purpose of this Position:

The position of Agriculture Community of Interest Coordinator exists to coordinate and provide staff support to the Puyallup Watershed Agriculture Community of Interest (COI) and to lead and assist in implementation of the Community of Interest's Work Plan. The Community of Interest is part of the grant-funded Puyallup Watershed Initiative and includes a broad range of participants, including independent farmers and food producers, government groups (including Pierce County and the Pierce Conservation District), and nonprofits (including Forterra, PCC Farmland Trust, Tahoma Audubon, American Farmland Trust, and others). The Agriculture Community of Interest Coordinator will be housed at the Pierce Conservation District but will be responsible for providing staff support to the Community of Interest as a whole in completing the work in the Community of Interest's first-year Work Plan and beyond.

Duties:

The primary responsibility of Agriculture Assistance Coordinator is to coordinate and provide staff support to the Puyallup Watershed Agriculture Community of Interest and to lead and assist in implementation of the Community of Interest's Work Plan. Duties include the following:

- A. Staff meetings of the Agriculture Community of Interest and the Pierce County Agriculture Roundtable, including helping to collaboratively set meeting agendas, sending meeting reminders, capturing notes, and following up on items as needed.
- B. Lead outreach efforts of the Community of Interest to foster substantive conversations with farmers and other stakeholders and to grow the membership and active involvement of the Community of Interest.
- C. Serve as key point-of-contact for advancing initiatives of the Community of Interest, including tracking and ensuring progress, clearly identifying next steps and responsible parties, and facilitating/supporting members as they advance their action steps.
- D. Staff the work groups of the COI and Roundtable, including helping to collaboratively set the agendas, identifying areas of potential conflict and working with the facilitator and members to resolve them, sending meeting reminders, bringing knowledge of work plans and synergies

from other work groups and outside stakeholders, and capturing notes/follow up actions in a clear system that can be tracked.

- E. Serve as lead contact to other active COIs to determine synergies and opportunities for collaboration.
- F. Serve as primary liaison to the County Agriculture Business Coordinator, WSU Agriculture Agent, PCD Farm Planners, and other professional staff in the Agriculture support landscape.
- G. Assist in grant writing and fundraising for initiatives of the Community of Interest and local agricultural community as needed.
- H. Lead the effort, in collaboration with all COI members, to prepare the second-year Work Plan of the Community of Interest.
- I. Serve as the key point of contact to the Bonneville Environmental Foundation, The Russell Family Foundation and other supporters/funders of the COI.

Skills and Knowledge

The person in this position must have a bachelor's degree with academic training and/or experience in facilitation, project management, agriculture, natural resource protection, business or related fields. Significant job experience may be accepted in lieu of degree. At least one year of experience in similar working environment.

- A. Ability to conduct outreach to potential agriculture community of interest participants, including farmers, ranchers, public employees, nonprofit organizations, trade organizations, and others.
- B. Proficiency in written and oral communication techniques to address groups, to prepare and explain plans, prepare informational articles, and to prepare reports.
- C. Experience in facilitating diverse coalitions and achieving results to advance economic improvement and/or natural resource protection.
- D. Experience with the many challenges and opportunities facing agricultural producers to be both economically viable and compliant with environmental laws and the pressures facing agricultural producers in an urbanizing county.
- E. Ability to work closely with others in a public office environment.
- F. Ability to organize and plan own schedule of activities related to work plan goals approved by the Supervisor.
- G. Ability to maintain accurate records regarding time-keeping, authorized expenses, achievements of the COI, and reporting requirements to participants and funders.
- H. Service oriented attitude and constructive problem solving skills.

- I. Advanced computer software skills. Ability to use Microsoft Word, Access, Excel, and MS Publisher in an efficient and effective manner to write reports, keep track of work progress, and prepare educational and informational materials.

Salary and Schedule:

This is a full-time position consisting of 40 hours/week. Position will require some work on Saturdays or after regularly scheduled work hours. Starting pay for this position is \$4,491-\$5,607 /month, depending on qualifications. Benefits include retirement, medical/dental/vision, as well as accrued paid sick leave, annual leave, and 10 paid holidays.

To Apply:

Please submit a cover letter describing the experience and skills you would bring to this position (not to exceed one page, single spaced), resume (maximum two pages), and three academic or job related references to the Pierce Conservation District. Applications must be received by July 25, 2014. If hand delivered, applications must be received at the Pierce Conservation District office no later than 4:00 p.m., July 25, 2014. Mailing and physical addresses are listed below.

Contact Information:

Rene' Skaggs, Farm Planning and Agricultural Assistance Program Director
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Physical Address:

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Puyallup, WA 98371

Mailing Address:

Pierce Conservation District
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