

## *New director appointed to lead state Department of Agriculture*

Gov. Jay Inslee recently announced he is appointing Derek Sandison as director of the Washington State Department of Agriculture.

“Our Department of Agriculture helps support a multi-billion industry and works closely with growers, workers, tribes and communities around the state,” Inslee said. “Derek has a successful record of leading on incredibly complex and large-scale projects and brings a commitment to innovation, transparency and collaboration that is exactly what we need to maintain and grow Washington’s world-class agriculture industry.”



Sandison is familiar to many in the agriculture industry through his current work as director of the Wenatchee-based Office of Columbia River (OCR) in the Washington State Department of Ecology. As OCR director he oversees numerous water supply development projects and related efforts along the Columbia River Basin that are important to farmers and ranchers in the region. He was also a principal architect of the Yakima River Basin Integrated Water Resource Management Plan and has played a key role in other hallmark water supply projects such as the Odessa Ground Water Replacement Project.

Sandison has also been regional director for the Department of Ecology’s Central Region. Based out of Yakima, this region covers seven counties stretching from the Canadian border to Klickitat and Benton counties. Prior to working at Ecology, he co-founded a consulting firm and worked in water supply and waste programs at Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department.

As Director of the state Department of Agriculture, Sandison will oversee an agency with a budget of about \$158 million and a staff of 750 that can grow by 200 during the busy harvest season.

With a focus on supporting Washington’s robust and diverse agriculture industry, the agency has a broad range of responsibilities that include protecting plants and livestock from pests and disease, ensuring the movement of agriculture products, managing the use and registration of pesticides, and ensuring the safety of the state’s food supply.

Sandison will begin his new cabinet-level role effective June 15. For Washington Farm Bureau response, check out their press release here: [WFB applauds appointment of Derek Sandison as WSDA director](#) (WA State Farm Bureau)

## *Farm Service Agency Accepting Nominations for Local Committees*

Farmers and ranchers have an opportunity to influence federal farm programs with their local knowledge. The USDA Farm Service Agency is seeking nominations for farmers and ranchers willing to represent their peers on the agency’s county committees. All county FSA offices will accept nominations through August 3, 2015 for this fall’s elections.

FSA encourages all interested agricultural producers, including women and minority growers, to seek nomination. Eligible candidates must participate or cooperate in any Farm Service Agency program and be of legal voting age.

Each county committee draws its members from local administrative areas. Nominated by local farmers and ranchers, candidates must live in the county’s local administrative area they will represent and must be eligible to vote in the county election. Persons interested in nominating a candidate can contact their local FSA office or check the Farm Service Agency website <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/wa> to find out which local administrative areas are up for election.

Learn more about election dates and materials by going to: <http://goo.gl/ah3n2w>



**Stay in contact and sign up for the OFP-Newsletter!**

Email frequency is once a month

Sign up on the web at: <http://ofp.scc.wa.gov>

## Update: Water Availability Guidance for Counties Workgroup

Ecology is working collaboratively with county representatives and interested stakeholders to update the [1993 guidance document](#) on determining water availability for new buildings. This ad hoc workgroup is developing guidance to assist counties in implementing Growth Management Act (GMA) requirements related to protection of water resources:

- Clear, specific guidance regarding legal water availability for local governments to use when making land use decisions is important to Ecology.
- A guidance tool that both local government and Ecology staff can use to aid this decision-making process is necessary to fulfill the obligations of state and local government.

This group has been meeting as necessary to work on outcomes and goals of the Water Availability Guidance for Counties Workgroup available by going to: [Outcomes/Goals](#). Meeting notes and meeting agendas are available for download by going to: <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/wrac/rwss-wag.html>. The most recent meeting notes cover the April 2015 meeting and includes an update about a legal case in Whatcom County on water availability and comments on the second draft of the guidance document. The June 3 meeting will include a summary of the 3rd draft of the guidance document.

## Drought Watch 2015

[Snowpack statewide](#) is currently at about 9 percent of normal, less than ten percent lower than when the last statewide drought was declared in Washington in 2005.

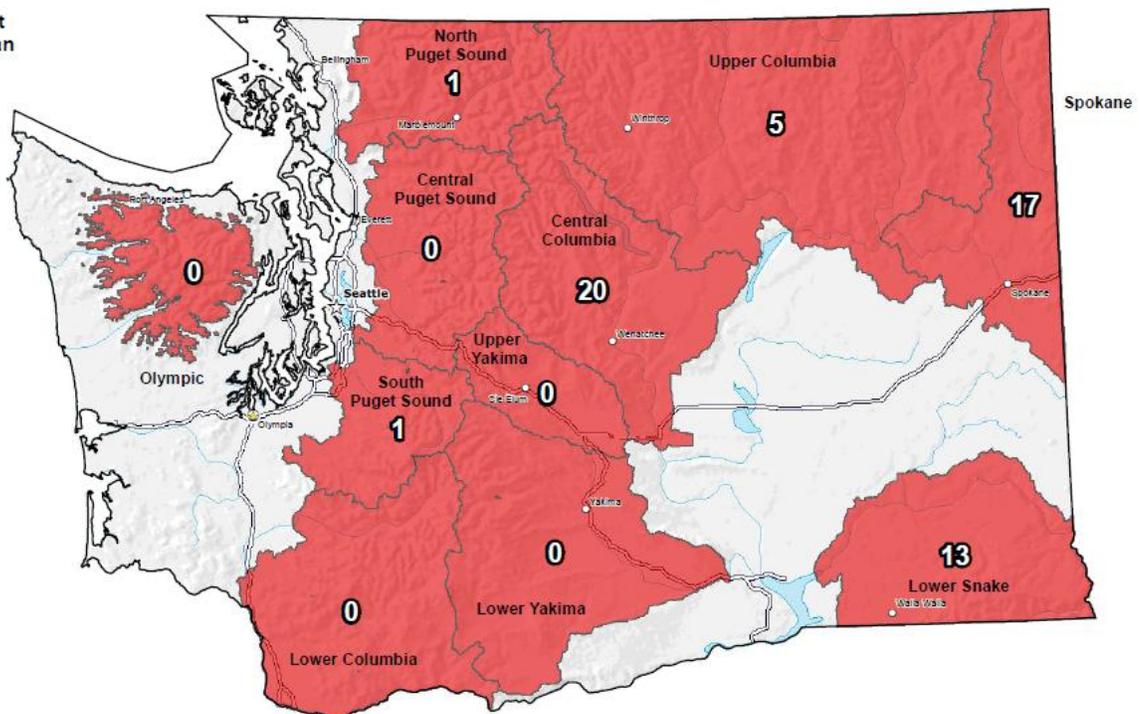
Washington SNOTEL Current Snow Water Equivalent (SWE) % of Normal

Jun 02, 2015

Current Snow Water Equivalent (SWE) Basin-wide Percent of 1981-2010 Median



\* Data unavailable at time of posting or measurement is not representative at this time of year



Provisional Data  
Subject to Revision



The snow water equivalent percent of normal represents the current snow water equivalent found at selected SNOTEL sites in or near the basin compared to the average value for those sites on this day. Data based on the first reading of the day (typically 00:00).



Prepared by:  
USDA/NRCS National Water and Climate Center  
Portland, Oregon  
<http://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov>

## ***Free Webinar: Local Food Procurement 101: Policies and Programs***

June 17, 2015 11am - 12pm - [Register here](#).

Food procurement— how and from whom food is purchased – matters when it comes to ensuring the health and well-being for millions of families, workers, and consumers. Local Food Procurement improves access to healthy food and also creates good, quality jobs resulting in significant benefits to workers including increased wealth, quality of life, and purchasing power for food, shelter, and healthcare.

Please join PolicyLink for a webinar featuring key policy advocates and leaders in the field. Speakers will address how these efforts can be expanded and replicated. Speakers will include:

- Allison Hagey, Associate Director, PolicyLink (moderator)
- Navina Khanna, Fellow, Movement Strategy Center
- Alexa Delwiche, Managing Director, LA Food Policy Council
- Joann Lo, Co-Director, Food Chain Workers Alliance



## ***USDA Begins Issuing Grass Fed Lamb and Goat Market Report***

USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service began releasing a new National Monthly Grass Fed Lamb and Goat Meat Report on May 13, 2015. With this market report, USDA aims to assist farmers and ranchers who are considering converting and those already producing grass-fed lamb and goat products. In addition to market commentary, the new report includes prices for wholesale grass-fed lamb and direct-to-consumer grass-fed lamb and goat.

It is estimated that half a million sheep each year are channeled into the nontraditional marketplace – such as ethnic and direct-to-consumer markets. Often these nontraditional markets offer premiums to farmers and ranchers over traditional marketing channels. Small to mid-sized producers and farmers, in particular, often use direct-to-consumer markets to get better prices for their products, while creating their own niche in the marketplace.

While there is an increase demand for these types of products, there is little public data available to farmers and ranchers. With this new market report and improved access to information, USDA aims to assist farmers and ranchers who are considering converting to grass fed operations and those who are already producing grass fed lamb and goat products.

In addition to market commentary, the new report will include prices for both wholesale grass fed lamb and direct-to-consumer grass fed lamb and goat. This monthly report will bring market clarity and exposure to assist the grass fed industry in marketing their products.

Check out the report by going to: <http://goo.gl/0hvvCD> - look under Other for the National Grass Fed Lamb and Goat Meat Report.

## ***Vineyard natural habitats assist with butterfly comeback***

Washington State University researchers found that vineyards that create nearby natural habitats have three times the number of butterfly species and four times more butterflies than conventional vineyards. Growers planted native sage-steppe shrubbery in and around their vineyards in an effort to attract beneficial insects to prey on pests. As a side benefit, these vineyards are seeing increases in butterfly species and numbers.

WSU researchers recorded 29 separate species in “habitat-enhanced” vineyards, compared to nine species in conventional vineyards. In terms of raw numbers, they counted on average 20 butterflies in habitat-enhanced vineyards compared to five in conventional areas.

Read the full story by going to:

<http://goo.gl/0FpLhv>



Native plants grown alongside a Walla Walla vineyard attract and sustain butterflies as well as natural enemies of pests.

## ***NASS Crop Progress and Condition - Week ending May 31***

### **Dry Weather Conditions Prevailed in Washington**

In **western Washington**, dry weather and warm temperatures continued, reports indicated drier than expected for this time of the year. Farmers began to irrigate due to dry conditions. Conditions allowed for some early season haying to continue. Strawberry harvest was underway and available at local farmers' markets. Blueberries and raspberries were ripe while blackberries were in full bloom. Dairy farmers started on a second cutting of grass for silage.

**Central Washington** received spotty precipitation throughout the district. Irrigation water for most water districts continued to be critical; producers were being selective as to which crops were being watered. Dryland conditions improved due to recent rains and cooperative temperatures. Areas in the district that did not receive timely rains are exhibiting crop stress. First cutting of alfalfa was in full swing and cattle were being moved on to summer pastures. Early cherry harvest continued throughout the district. Grapes were in full bloom stage with ideal growing conditions. Producers were keeping up with fungicide spraying program in peaches, nectarines, cherries and grapes. The first signs of Spotted Wing Drosophila were seen near dumpsters near producing orchards in Klickitat County. Asparagus harvest began to wind down while early cherry varieties and apricot harvest began in Yakima County. Vegetable field crews were in the fields weeding while orchard crews were thinning apples, peaches and nectarines. Hops were growing fast and were between 3 to 9 feet up the trellises.

In **east central Washington** some rain was received. Reports continue to indicate more rain is needed due to drought like conditions throughout the district. Producers were spraying when weather permitted. Asotin County reported that some springs have begun to dry up. Wet warm weather has benefited crop and pasture conditions substantially. No reports were received of crop damage or cattle loss due to weather conditions.

## ***One of the Best Fields for New College Graduates? Agriculture***

*Nearly 60,000 High-Skilled Agriculture Job Openings Expected Annually in U.S., Yet Only 35,000 Graduates Available to Fill Them*

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack recently announced a new report showing tremendous demand for recent college graduates with a degree in agricultural programs with an estimated 57,900 high-skilled job openings annually in the food, agriculture, renewable natural resources, and environment fields in the United States. According to an employment outlook report released today by USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) and Purdue University, there is an average of 35,400 new U.S. graduates with a bachelor's degree or higher in agriculture related fields, 22,500 short of the jobs available annually.

### **Other [highlights of the report](#) include:**

- While most employers prefer to hire graduates of food, agriculture, renewable natural resources, and environment programs, graduates from these programs only fill about 60 percent of the expected annual openings. Even as enrollments in these programs increase and the job market becomes somewhat more competitive, good employment opportunities for the next five years are expected.
- Growth in job opportunities will be uneven. Employers in some areas will struggle to find enough graduates to fill jobs. In a few areas, employers will find an oversupply of job seekers.
- Expect to see a strong employment market for e-commerce managers and marketing agents, ecosystem managers, agricultural science and business educators, crop advisors, and pest control specialists.
- Job opportunities in STEM areas are expected to grow. Expect the strongest job market for plant scientists, food scientists, sustainable biomaterials specialists, water resources scientists and engineers, precision agriculture specialists, and veterinarians.



Check out the report by going to: <http://www.purdue.edu/usda/employment>

## *In Short*

### **Tree Fruit Pest and Beneficial Insect Search Tool Online**

A new search engine for tree fruit diseases, insect and mite pests, and beneficials is now online at the Michigan State University Integrated Pest Management website. Searches can be conducted by name or category. The search engine currently covers tree fruit crops and expansion to other crops is planned for the future. Check it out by going to:

<http://www.ipm.msu.edu/search>

### **Diverse Soil Communities Can Help Offset Impacts of Global Warming**

In [a study published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences](#), an international team of researchers showed that a healthy and diverse soil community can buffer natural ecosystems against the damaging impacts of global warming. This study showed that in healthy soils with a diversity of small soil animals, the animals fed on microorganisms, helping control the potential for increased carbon emissions from decomposition and limiting feedback effects. <http://goo.gl/YvaYg1>

### **Farmers Market Pricing Study Shows Competitive Prices**

A comparison in West Central Minnesota found that farmers market prices during peak growing season were highly competitive with regional grocery store prices. The study will help vendors and farmers market organizers with pricing strategies. Information on how market vendors can apply the study findings is contained in the final report, available online in PDF.

**Download the PDF here:**

<http://goo.gl/q9iYxv>

## *High tunnels can bring benefits to farmers and schools*

High tunnels—also known as hoop houses or passive solar greenhouses—are an increasingly common feature on farms through the Upper Midwest, where their use provides valuable extension to the region’s short growing season. Local food markets—including farm to school—stand to benefit from the increased availability of fruits and vegetables throughout the year produced by the increased use of high tunnels. Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy’s new report, [Extending the Growing Season: High Tunnels Use and Farm to School in the Upper Midwest](#), explores this relationship further. By looking at best practices in high tunnel use and Farm to School activities, the report identifies innovative approaches with the potential for linking the two practices more effectively. Such innovative ideas drive recommendations for more comprehensive support for increased on-farm implementation of high tunnels and for farm to school activities throughout the Upper Midwest.



Read more here: <http://goo.gl/PKFfdc>

## *FSA Offers Online Hay and Grazing Acres Locator Tool*

For many years, FSA has offered the Hay Net website [www.fsa.usda.gov/haynet](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/haynet) as a resource for agricultural producers to list information concerning the need for hay or the availability of hay.

Now, in response to requests from livestock producers and landowners, FSA has expanded the site to include the option to list a need for grazing acres or to list acres available for grazing.

If, due to extenuating circumstances, producers are in need of hay and/or grazing acres to support livestock, please use Hay Net to post an advertisement seeking these resources. Likewise, landowners who have hay and/or grazing acres available for livestock producers should post a Hay Net advertisement as well.

Hay Net is brought to you by FSA as a public service. The sole purpose of this online resource is to provide a site for the exchange of information. FSA does not endorse, guarantee, or otherwise

make representations of any kind regarding any user of this site and FSA is not responsible for defining the terms of grazing agreements or lease contracts. For more information about Hay Net and other FSA services and programs, please contact your local FSA office.

## *In Short*

### USDA Grant Application Deadlines

National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition has [compiled a list of upcoming deadlines for federal food and farm grant applications and grant assistance workshops](#). If you farm or work with farmers, consult the list below and share it with those you know.

Be sure to check out their [Grassroots Guide to Federal Farm and Food Programs](#) for more information on how to apply and examples of projects and activities funded through each program.

<http://goo.gl/wfmRxw>

### Grant: \$30 Million Available for Food Entrepreneurs and Agricultural Producers to Develop New Products

USDA recently announced it is making \$30 million available to farmers, ranchers and food entrepreneurs to develop new product lines.

Funding will be made available through the Value-Added Producer Grant (VAPG) program.

**Details here:** <http://goo.gl/E2mGIh>

### New Version of Farmers' Guide to Value-Added Producer Grant Funding Available

The National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition has released an updated version of its Farmers' Guide to **Value-Added Producer Grant Funding**. The guide includes changes to the program from the 2014 Farm Bill. The guide also provides clear information on the program's application requirements, including a step-by-step description of the application and ranking processes.

**PDF here:** <http://goo.gl/7EZrxQ>

## *Grant Opportunity: Regional Center Grants to Enhance Food Safety*

The United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the USDA, National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) have joined in a collaborative partnership to administer and manage the National Training, Education, Extension, Outreach, and Technical Assistance Competitive Grants Program: Regional Center Grants to Enhance Food Safety.

This program is designed to develop and implement a comprehensive food safety training, education and technical assistance program for those affected by the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA). The intention of this program is to begin building an infrastructure that will support a national food safety training, education, extension, outreach, and technical assistance system and provide significant opportunities for funding through subcontracts and for partnerships with eligible stakeholder groups, including community-based and non-governmental organizations.

**Applications are due June 29 - more details by going to:** <http://goo.gl/gS4qUC>

## *WSU Study: Payment Options Increase Farmers Market Purchases*

Farmers' markets wanting to increase purchases by customers should consider accepting more than just cash or checks as payment, according to Washington State University researchers.

"Customers are willing to buy more if they have other payment options," said Karina Gallardo, a WSU associate professor and extension specialist in the School of Economic Sciences. "They may not necessarily pay more, but they'll buy more."

That's one of the results of a study recently published in the International Food and Agribusiness Management Review.

Gallardo and her colleagues worked with 12 farmers' markets around Washington, providing them with electronic payment machines that could accept credit or debit cards and electronic benefit transfer (EBT) cards.

They then surveyed 12 managers, 48 vendors and 96 customers from the markets.

The surveys showed that customers at farmers' markets care primarily about having local vendors and high-quality produce. The surveys didn't show that electronic payment options would draw in more people, but that running out of cash would limit purchases.

**Read more by going to:** <https://goo.gl/SqtQ1C>



## *In Short*

### May 2015 - Amber Waves magazine

*Amber Waves* presents the broad scope of USDA Economic Research Service research and analysis on the economics of food, farming, natural resources, and rural America. The May issue includes articles on glyphosate resistance, agricultural trade with China, craft beer production, fresh fruit's share of fruit availability, and how U.S. agricultural exports support jobs at home.

Check it out by going to:

<http://www.ers.usda.gov/amber-waves.aspx>

### Farm Service Agency Direct Farm Ownership Loan Program

Through the FSA [direct farm ownership program](#), eligible farmers and ranchers can borrow up to \$300,000 to buy farmland, construct or repair buildings, pay closing costs, or promote soil and water conservation. New farmers and ranchers, military veterans, and underserved farmers and ranchers are encouraged to apply. Contact your [local FSA office](#) to apply. **Applications must be approved by Sept 30, 2015, to take advantage of the funding available this fiscal year.**

### WSDA Organic Program Hiring an Organic Field Inspector, Eastern WA

Washington State Department of Agriculture's Organic Program is looking for a full-time inspector based in Eastern WA. This position conducts certification inspections to verify compliance with USDA National Organic Standards and export market requirements, facilitating the distribution of organic products. **Applications will be accepted until June 11th.**

Full details. <http://goo.gl/NQyqF4>

## *New research on livestock: Gas emissions & Noxious Weed Control*

### Determining Gas Emissions from Manure Sources

To reduce the environmental impacts of livestock production in the West and minimize greenhouse gas emissions, Pakorn Sutitarnnontr designed his graduate student project with the objectives to measure and develop understanding of animal manure-based gas emissions in development of site-specific best BMPs and improvement of current practices. [Read More...](#)



### Livestock as Tool for Noxious Weed Control

The high costs of noxious weed invasion, both environmental and economic, have been well documented. Jay Davison and colleagues designed a Western SARE Professional Development Program project Developing a Handbook for Utilizing Livestock as a Tool in Noxious Weed Control in Nine Western States (EW04-004) to summarize information concerning the use of livestock grazing to control important noxious weeds in nine western states. [Read More...](#)

## *U.S. House Ag Subcommittee holds hearing on financial health of farms*

The House Agriculture Committee's General Farm Commodities and Risk Management Subcommittee recently held a public hearing to review the financial health of farm country. With significantly lower commodity prices, net farm income has decreased substantially over the past two years. This impacts not only farmers and ranchers but also farm equipment dealers, agricultural input suppliers, main street businesses, and local lending institutions—essentially all of rural America. Members of the subcommittee heard from a panel of witnesses who highlighted the current conditions farmers and ranchers are facing as well as the importance of maintaining a strong farm safety net.

Written testimony from the hearing is available [here](#). Also included in that link is more information, including Subcommittee Chairman Crawford's opening statement. An [archived webcast](#) is also available.



# WASHINGTON STATE CONSERVATION COMMISSION

## Mark Your Calendars

### GMA Rule Update Public Hearings

The WA State Dept. of Commerce is seeking comments on proposed amendments to rules guiding implementation of the Growth Management Act.

They have filed new chapters to implement Commerce's role in the Voluntary Stewardship Program (July 8) and Voluntary Reversion (July 23) for counties seeking reversion to partially planning status.

Full details: <http://goo.gl/4VkrDW>

### Thursday, June 18: [Soil Science for Farmers](#), Chimacum, WA

Chimacum Grange, 9572 Rhody Drive in the morning, & at Finnrivier Cidery in the afternoon, 10 AM-4 PM, \$25 registration required.

Topics include soil fertility, soil texture by hand, on-farm soil quality, soil sampling, soil test results and web soil surveys. Participants encouraged to bring soil samples or soil test results from their farm. [Click here to register.](#)

### June 15 – Sustainable Farmstead Goat Dairy – Mystery Bay Farm, Nordland, WA (Limit 15 registrants)

The farmers of the WSDA certified Grade A dairy will provide details about making their farmstead goat cheese and yogurt.

To learn more and register visit <http://tilthproducers.org/programs/farm-walk/upcoming-farm-walks/> or call their office at 206-632-7506

### 2015-2016 WA Fair Dates

Come participate and enjoy one of the many local fairs happening across Washington this summer. Fairs are a great place to see the next generation of farmers, and maybe pick up some tips!

For a full list of dates and locations, please go to:

[http://www.wastatefairs.com/index\\_files/Fair\\_Dates.htm](http://www.wastatefairs.com/index_files/Fair_Dates.htm)

### Webinar: Northwest Farm Credit Services: Risk Management 101 - The Basics - June 12, 12 pm

Dr. Dave Kohl shares his insights on the fundamentals of Risk Management planning and strategies. Key Topics:

- How to identify and prioritize risk
- Beyond calls and puts - addressing internal risks
- Developing a comprehensive risk management strategy

Register [here](#) for Webinar

### Water Law in Washington Seminar July 27 & 28 - Seattle, WA

Law Seminars International presents the 24th annual comprehensive conference on water law in Washington. This seminar will cover new case law, legislation and policies for the water rights landscape, and other timely water issues.

Learn more by going to:

<http://goo.gl/kDiXhS>

### Summer Vineyard Management July 18, 2015; 10:00am-1:00pm

Careful attention is crucial to getting a good harvest of high quality wine grapes. Learn the principles of canopy and crop load management; how to manipulate shoots to maximize quality; when to cluster thin; the use of micro-nutrient sprays to enhance yield and quality. Netting machine demo! Bring hand pruners, gloves, and a brown bag lunch. **To register online, visit [VineyardCare.BrownPaperTickets.com](http://VineyardCare.BrownPaperTickets.com)**

### Attention Forest Owners - Forest Owners Field Days - June and July across Washington

Join WSU Extension Forestry for upcoming Forest Owners Field Days occurring throughout the summer in various locations in Washington. Field days will occur in Kittitas, King, Pacific, Skagit and San Juan Counties.

For full list of dates and times, go to:

<http://forestry.wsu.edu/>

### Farm Workshop: Planning the Future of Your Farm - Olympia, WA

Come learn about estate and business planning basics for farmers and ranchers. Workshop will include a planning professional speaking about strategies and options to consider as you plan the future of your farm. Bring your questions and your appetite!

June 23, 12pm - 2pm - [Eastside Urban Farm & Garden](#). Sign up with Sarah Moorehead (360) 754 - 3588 x136 or [smoorehead@thurstoncd.com](mailto:smoorehead@thurstoncd.com)

“OUR MISSION IS TO PROMOTE THE VITALITY OF FARMING, FARMERS, AND RANCHERS BY ENSURING THAT WE WILL CONTINUE TO HAVE PRODUCTIVE AGRICULTURAL LANDS IN WASHINGTON STATE. WE WILL ACHIEVE THIS THROUGH POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GOVERNOR, THE LEGISLATURE, THE OFFICE OF FARMLAND PRESERVATION AND OTHERS AND BY ENLISTING PUBLIC SUPPORT. PROGRAMS WILL BE VOLUNTARY, RECOGNIZE LOCAL PRIORITIES, AND PROVIDE FOR ECONOMIC INCENTIVES.”