

Washington State Conservation Commission

FARMLAND PRESERVATION NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2017

[HTTP://OFP.SCC.WA.GOV/](http://ofp.scc.wa.gov/)



PCC Farmland Trust preserves Pierce County Farm

PCC Farmland Trust closes on largest farmland conservation project ever in Pierce County

Having lost 70% of its farmland since 1950, PCC Farmland Trust's protection of a 284-acre farm in Graham, Wash. is a huge win for Pierce County. Mountain View Dairy is 8 times larger than the average farm in the area, making it the largest farmland conservation project ever in the County. In addition to its incredible views of Mt. Rainier, Mountain View Dairy has some of the best remaining soils south of Puget Sound.



In order to keep pace with skyrocketing land prices and move quickly when farmers can't, the Trust deployed its innovative conservation strategy: Buy-Protect-Sell. To purchase Mountain View Dairy, the Trust secured \$2.8M through a combination of philanthropic gifts and a loan from The Conservation Fund.

Once the land is off the market, the Trust protects its agricultural value by selling a conservation easement. With its development potential removed, the land then becomes more affordable for farmers in the long run.

Read more at: <https://www.pccfarmlandtrust.org/mountain-view-dairy-conserved/>

Estate Planning: USDA Farm Transfer Information

USDA recently announced that beginning Jan. 9, 2017, their agency will offer an early termination opportunity for certain Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contracts, making it easier to transfer property to the next generation of farmers and ranchers, including family members. The land that is eligible for the early termination is among the least environmentally sensitive land enrolled in CRP.

This change to the CRP program is just one of many that USDA has implemented based on recommendations from the Land Tenure Advisory Subcommittee formed by Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack in 2015. The subcommittee was asked to identify ways the department could use or modify its programs, regulations, and practices to address the challenges of beginning farmers and ranchers in their access to land, capital and technical assistance.

Normally if a landowner terminates a CRP contract early, they are required to repay all previous payments plus interest. The new policy waives this repayment if the land is transferred to a beginning farmer or rancher through a sale or lease with an option to buy. With CRP enrollment close to the Congressionally-mandated cap of 24 million acres, the early termination will also allow USDA to enroll other land with higher conservation value elsewhere. **Learn more at:** <https://goo.gl/xtizLr>

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>

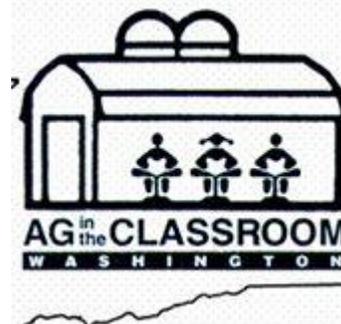
Attention Educators: Washington Ag in the Classroom

Teachers may be interested in the [Washington Ag in the Classroom](http://www.agclassroom.org/wa/pub/index.htm) program, which recently put out their fall magazine with activities, facts, and an accompanying Teacher's Guide at: <http://www.agclassroom.org/wa/pub/index.htm>.

Teachers can subscribe to Washington Ag in the Classroom there too. The publications are aligned to EALRS and Common Core State Standards.

The [WSDA Farm to School Toolkit Activities and Curriculum page](#) includes WA Ag in the Classroom and many other **free** lessons, teaching tools, books, activities, and more for all ages and Pre-K, Elementary to Middle School, and High School.

In addition, check out the newly added [FoodSpan](#) - A free, downloadable high school curriculum that highlights critical issues in the food system and empowers students to be food citizens. It's aligned to national education standards in science, social studies, health, and family and consumer sciences.



USDA Announces Farmer Fair Practices Rules to Protect Farmers

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA) recently announced updated regulations to protect the rights of farmers. The Farmer Fair Practices Rules target the most harmful practices hurting farmers and clearly outlines common sense protections to restore fairness and reduce the burden for farmers seeking justice under the Packers and Stockyards Act. This is the most recent action in the Obama's Administration's efforts to level the playing field for all Americans.

The proposed rule regarding unfair practices would clarify what GIPSA views as practices that clearly violate the Act and would establish criteria to protect the legal rights of farmers. The third proposal would establish criteria that GIPSA would consider in determining whether a live poultry dealer has engaged in a pattern or practice to use a poultry grower ranking system unfairly.

As an example of retaliatory practices, if a chicken grower attempts to organize other chicken growers to bargain for better pay or publicly expresses unhappiness with the way they are treated by a processor, processors could require growers to make investments that are not economically justifiable for the grower, or can terminate contracts with little notice. And because in contract growing, the processors own the birds and provide inputs like feed, they can choose to provide poultry growers with bad feed or sickly birds that have a higher mortality rate, which cuts deeply into a grower's opportunity to earn income on those birds.

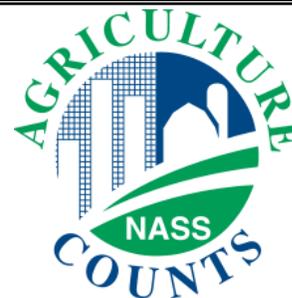
Copies of the Farmer Fair Practices Rules (as transmitted to the Federal Register) can be viewed on the [GIPSA website](#). This link will be updated once the rules officially publish in the Federal Register.

New NASS Statistics: 2014 and 2015 Organic Certifier Data

USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) has released the results of its 2014 and 2015 Organic Certifier Survey. NASS collected data on acreage and livestock from USDA-accredited organic certifying agents in the United States. The report shows that nationally, there were 14,861 certified organic crop operations in 2015, with a total of more than 5.3 million acres. Meanwhile, there were 2,001 certified livestock operations that year, with more than 22.3 million animals (of which 20.8 million were chickens).

Washington state ranked 6th in number of operations (726) on 95,282 acres of cropland and pasture/rangeland. This ranked 17th nationally. Nearly 80% of that acreage is for crops. This ranks Washington 7th highest with cropland as a total of all organic acreage.

View the report with national data by going to: <https://goo.gl/jNQ9op>



FREE Workshop: Managing Natural Risk for Small Farms and Ranches

FREE Workshop: Managing Natural Risk for Small Farms and Ranches in the Intermountain West

Date: January 20 in Spokane.

Location: Enduris Training Facility—1610 Technology Boulevard - Spokane, WA

See the flier for details: <http://tinyurl.com/natural-risk>

“Managing Natural Risk” focuses on the physical and management changes that small farmers and ranchers can undertake to help their land become more resilient to change and reduce the impacts of natural disasters like wild-fire and drought. Understanding vulnerabilities and corresponding improvements will help operators with affordable solutions and put them on a path to long-term success in increasing resilience.

National Water Quality Initiative Invests in High-Priority Watersheds

USDA recently announced an investment of more than \$33 million in 197 high-priority watersheds across the country to help landowners improve water quality through the Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI). Two watersheds in Washington are eligible. These are Fishtrap Creek and Wisner Lake Creek - Nooksack River - both located in Whatcom County.

The NWQI helps farmers and ranchers implement voluntary conservation practices, such as nutrient management, cover crops, conservation cropping systems, filter strips, terraces and buffers, which protect and improve water quality where it is needed most. Conservation practices enhance agricultural productivity and profitability while also improving water quality by enhancing soil health and optimizing the use of agricultural inputs.

Learn more at: <https://goo.gl/qgvKl8>

U.S. House Ag Committee report on the SNAP program

The House Ag Committee held 16 full committee hearings on the SNAP program in the last two years and a few more in the Nutrition Subcommittee. The Republican Committee leadership has presented their findings in [this report](#) (PDF).

The report is full of good information, testimony from excellent groups and it may provide a clue to the SNAP policy issues the leadership is likely to tackle in the next farm bill including broad based categorical eligibility, some state options and work requirements. The list of policies that are state options can be helpful to state food policy councils. Keep an eye on House and Senate Committees' websites to see if your members of Congress are on either committee.

2016 Columbia River Basin Long-Term Water Supply and Demand Forecast

Every five years, The Office of Columbia River submits an updated long-term water supply and demand forecast to the Legislature. The 2016 Forecast will help OCR strategically fund water supply projects by improving understanding of where additional water supply is most critically needed, now and in the future. The Forecast provides a generalized, system-wide assessment of how future environmental and economic conditions are likely to change water supply and demand by the 2030s, and is evaluated at three geographic tiers: the entire Columbia River basin, Eastern Washington's watersheds, and Washington's Columbia River mainstem.

Using state of the art modeling techniques and economic scenarios, the forecast analyzes the impacts of climate change, regional and global economic conditions and state level water management actions on surface water supplies and irrigation demands across the Columbia River Basin.

<https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/publications/SummaryPages/1612001.html>

Opportunities

Rural Energy Program grants/loans available for farmers

Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) grants and loans are now available for farmers.

Deadline is January 31st 2017

This resource can be used for renewable energy generation or energy efficient equipment.

What does this program do?

Provides guaranteed loan financing and grant funding to agricultural producers and rural small businesses to purchase or install renewable energy systems or make energy efficiency improvements.

Current fact sheet/overview here:
<https://goo.gl/E8etSP>

Cascadian Farm—Hiring a farmer—Rockport, WA

Cascadian Farm is recruiting for a talented farmer to take over farming operations at our home farm in Rockport, WA.

This is the perfect opportunity for someone who is passionate about organic farming, advancing the organic industry, and consumer education.

The full job description and application instructions are available at:
<http://tinyurl.com/CascadianFarmer>

New Cost-Share Opportunities Available for Organic Producers and Handlers

USDA recently announced that starting March 20, 2017, organic producers and handlers will be able to apply at Farm Service Agency (FSA) offices for Federal reimbursement to assist with the cost of receiving and maintaining organic or transitional certification.

Once certified, producers and handlers are eligible to receive reimbursement for up to 75% of certification costs each year up to a maximum of \$750 per certification scope—crops, livestock, wild crops, and handling.

Learn more: <https://goo.gl/mmPkts>

Agriculture Safety Day in Yakima or Wenatchee

Registration is now open for Agriculture Safety Day(s). New in 2017, there are 2 locations to choose from, either Yakima or Wenatchee! Agriculture Safety Day is an annual training event that offers safety and health training to workers, supervisors, and managers of all levels in the agriculture industry.

Click [WENATCHEE](#) to attend **February 1, 2017** at the Wenatchee Convention Center. Click [YAKIMA](#) to attend **February 22, 2017** at the Yakima Convention Center.

2015 Local Food Marketing Practices Survey

The 2015 Local Food Marketing Practices Survey is the first-ever survey conducted by USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service to produce benchmark data about local food marketing practices. This special study provides data on the marketing of locally and regionally produced agricultural food products, as directed under the 2014 Farm Bill.

[2015 Local Foods Marketing Practices \(PDF\)](#)

In 2015, Washington farmers produced and sold \$150 million of edible food commodities directly to consumers, retailers, institutions, and a variety of local food intermediaries such as distributors and wholesalers that market and sell locally branded products which ranked 14th out of all States, accounting for 2 percent of all direct farm sales nationally.

Fresh food sales constituted 56 percent, or \$84.6 million of total Washington direct farm sales. Value-added sales, such as bottled milk, cheese, meat, jam, etc., accounted for the other 44 percent, or \$65.3 million of total Washington direct farm sales. Direct-to-consumer sales, including farmer's markets, CSAs, and roadside stands, amounted to \$71.2 million. Forty percent of Washington farmers involved in direct sales were female, compared to 38 percent nationally. Forty-one percent of Washington farms with direct sales were new to the business, having operated less than 5 years, versus 24 percent nationally.

Education Opportunities

Agriculture Technology Conference - February 21-22 2017

Northwest Farm Credit Services presents an exciting opportunity to connect with agricultural technology at this upcoming conference in Spokane Convention Center.

Ag businesses that make informed, strategic decisions about technology investments will outperform their competitors.

Learn about emerging technologies that will change the face of agriculture and discover how you can apply these in your business.

Agenda and registration details at:

<https://goo.gl/znz1Qj>

2016 Washington Small Fruit Conference Presentations

Presentations from the recent Washington Small Fruit Conference are now available.

You can find these files here:

<https://goo.gl/hOYLRZ>

View the state of blueberries, small fruit research needs, market development, disease management, and much more.



Access to Capital for New and Beginning Farmers and Food Businesses—January 24, 2017 Anacortes, WA

Farm businesses need access to capital whether it's a new business start-up, a business expansion, purchasing land or new equipment, or building inventories to support a market expansion. All Beginning Farmers and Food Businesses are invited.... with a special focus on lenders and institutions offering services to U.S. Veterans, limited-resource and minority farmers, and food business owners.

Come and meet representatives of lending programs and financial institutions that provide loans from less than \$5,000 to more than \$300,000.

Complete details at:

<https://goo.gl/xFxsL>



START A FOOD TRUCK BIZ
FUNDAMENTALS

Learn the Basics
Hear from the Health Department
Tour a Successful Mobile Food Trailer

JANUARY 11TH, 2017
6PM - 8PM
LACEY, WA

REGISTER AT SPSCC.EDU/CCE

360.464.6049

business concepts
financing
operations

In Short

Water Mitigation: Skagit Basin Groundwater Feasibility study

The Washington Department of Ecology recently released **Feasibility Study to Mitigate Groundwater Impacts through Storage in Skagit Basin**, fulfilling the requirements of [Engrossed Senate Bill 6589](#), passed by the 2016 Legislature. That bill directed Ecology to conduct a study to examine the feasibility of using “effectively sized water storage to recharge the Skagit river basin when needed to meet minimum instream flows and provide non-interruptible water resources to users of permit exempt wells within the Skagit river basin.”

Link to the Report: <https://goo.gl/jh7mcD>

Job Opportunity:

Washington Young Farmers Coalition—Coordinator

The Washington Young Farmers Coalition is seeking a part time coordinator.

Position would begin in Spring 2017 at 5-10 hours a week.

Closing date January 31

The position will work under the supervision of the WAYFC organizers to build capacity for and strengthen the Coalition.

Full details at: <https://goo.gl/PFDHEB>

Research Report Shows Rotational Grazing Supports Bird Habitat

Practical Farmers of Iowa reported on research conducted on bird populations on rotationally grazed pastures and a nearby prairie conservation area in Iowa.

The study demonstrated that wild bird populations can thrive in properly managed working landscapes. Total numbers of birds and numbers of species were both higher on the grazed land.

You can read the full report here: [Monitoring Birds in Rotationally Grazed Pasture](#)

In Short

Job Opening:

Tumwater Farmers Market recruiting a market manager

Interested in building community through food? Passionate about local agriculture and supporting small local businesses? Then you could be the next Market Manager for the Tumwater Town Center Farmers Market!

A position description is now posted on their website at <http://tumwaterfarmersmarket.org/>

Applications are accepted until January 15, 2017.

2016 Washington Annual Statistics Bulletin now available

Washington NASS recently published the 2016 Annual Statistics Bulletin.

The Washington Annual Statistics Bulletin is a historical two year series for all major crops, livestock and related data. It also includes county data, farm labor, grazing fees, land values, and more.

This publication is issued annually each fall.

The following link directs to the current and past bulletins:

<https://goo.gl/8VFPGT>

Ecology issues fines to food related industries

A Whatcom County berry grower illegally watered raspberries and failed to submit required water use records, negatively impacting legal water users and flows in the Nooksack River basin. The first penalty is \$90,000 for illegally irrigating a 220-acre raspberry farm. The second is a \$12,000 penalty for not submitting water use records for a 120-acre blueberry farm. ([Dec 27 news release](#))

In a separate action, Nature’s Path Foods, USA, Inc., [faces a \\$22,000 penalty](#) for discharging acidic wastewater to the city of Blaine’s sewer treatment system.

WASHINGTON STATE CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Mark Your Calendars

<p>4th Annual San Juan Islands Agricultural Summit—Feb 10-12</p> <p>Where: Orcas Island, WA</p> <p>Join fellow farmers, regional experts, local food and farm advocates for 3 days of education, inspiration and camaraderie.</p> <p>More information can be found at: http://sjcarc.org/events/summit/</p>	<p>Country Living Expo and Cattlemen's Winterschool - January 28</p> <p>At the Country Living Expo and Cattlemen's Winterschool, you can attend classes on a multitude of topics, network with other small farmers, enjoy a prime rib lunch and visit with local agricultural businesses.</p> <p>2017 Class Descriptions (PDF)</p> <p>Register: http://extension.wsu.edu/skagit/countrylivingexpo/</p>	<p>WSU - Better Process Control School February 2017 - Kent, WA</p> <p>4 day Full Course—Feb 7-10 2 day Acidified Foods—Feb 7-8</p> <p>For more information and online registration please visit: http://foodprocessing.wsu.edu/extension/training/bpcs/</p> <p>Better Process Control Schools provide practical applications of principles set forth in the regulations and satisfy the training requirements of both FDA and USDA</p>
<p>Law CLE: Agriculture Law February 16 & 17—Wenatchee</p> <p>There are unique regulations and legal issues faced by companies in the agriculture industry. Anyone involved in the agribusiness, be it growers, ranchers, distributors, service providers, or legal representatives, need to be up to speed on the latest issues to achieve their goals.</p> <p>Agenda and details at: https://goo.gl/aF7omb</p>	<p>FREE Workshop: Managing Natural Risk for Small Farms and Ranches—Jan 20—Spokane</p> <p>Details: http://tinyurl.com/natural-risk</p> <p>“Managing Natural Risk” focuses on the physical and management changes that small farmers and ranchers can undertake to help their land become more resilient to change and reduce the impacts of natural disasters like wildfire and drought.</p>	<p>2017 Washington State Farmers Market Association's (WSFMA) annual conference—Feb 2-4</p> <p>The 2017 WSFMA Conference brings together over 250 farmers market organizers, farmers, state agencies and partner organizations to share their passion for Washington farms, food access and farmers markets.</p> <p>Join them in February at the amazing waterfront Semiahmoo Resort in Blaine, WA.</p> <p>Details: https://goo.gl/V8JlmG</p>
<p>Northwest Washington Farm-to-Table Trade Meeting—Feb 21</p> <p>What: 2017 NW WA Farm-to-Table Trade Meeting</p> <p>When: Tuesday, February 21, 2017, 8:30am-5pm</p> <p>Where: Bellingham Technical College</p> <p>Registration and Details: www.sustainableconnections.org</p> <p>Price: Early bird - Sustainable Connections members \$39, non-members \$49</p>	<p>2017 WSU Creamery Events Registration Open</p> <p>Basic - Plus Cheese Making Short Course—Feb. 7-9, 2017 - Mount Vernon</p> <p>31st Advanced Cheese Making Short Course—March 7-9, 2017 Pullman</p> <p>Pasteurization Workshop—April 19-20, 2017 - Pullman</p> <p>For more information and registration please visit: https://goo.gl/pb5EuT</p>	<p>Organicology—February 2-4, 2017—Portland, Oregon</p> <p>With intensive training sessions, workshops, world-class keynote speakers, and networking, Organicology brings stakeholder groups to the table to develop skills and gain exposure to the challenges and accomplishments of those in other areas of the trade and movement.</p> <p>http://www.organicology.org/</p>

“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.”