



FACT SHEET

THE LAND BANK AND FARMLAND PROTECTION

1. The Land Bank Has Protected Over 2,000 acres of Farmland.

The Land Bank uses two conservation tools to protect farmland, conservation easements and acquisition. Currently the Land Bank holds conservation easements on over 1300 acres of privately owned farmland and owns over 700 acres of land zoned Agriculture Resource Land.

Farmland is under constant threat of development. The Land Bank aims to keep these important open space working lands intact and productive for current and future generations. Ownership of farmland by the Land Bank allows for long-term affordable access for farmers, whereas conservation easements limit development of the land for non-agricultural uses and leaves farm management to the owners.

2. Goals for Farmland Conservation Center on Protection of the Resource, Keeping Farmers on the Land, and Working to Improve Agricultural Systems.

Conserving open space is critical but ensuring that properties continue to be farmed is also one of our goals. To that end, our leases provide affordable and long-term access to farmland, and promote practices that maintain soil and water resources. Conservation easements give farmers the capital to keep their lands and continue to farm.

We also work with farmers and resource agencies to find ways to strengthen agricultural viability, including through active research and community education. One emerging theme is ensuring farmlands are better able to withstand an increasingly unpredictable climate.

3. Around 400 Acres of Land Bank Preserves are Leased to Farmers.

These include Coffelt Farm Preserve on Orcas, leased by Eric and Amy Lum, and King Sisters and Zylstra Lake Preserves on San Juan. An additional 100 acres are currently in the leasing process – which will bring the total to 500 acres of farmland across eight Preserves. We also continue to move toward longer term leases to allow farmers/ranchers to develop and invest in operations and promote stewardship of resources.

The Land Bank has an established policy on agricultural leasing and actively advertises the availability of suitable properties. If you are interested in leasing Land Bank farmland, please contact Agriculture Coordinator, Charlie Behnke charlieb@sjclandbank.org ; 360-830-7340.

4. Land Bank Agricultural Stewardship Goals for 2024.

- Leasing Beaverton Marsh Preserve (35 acres), and Frazer Homestead Preserve (40 acres), both on San Juan.
- Developing a pilot project to use basalt dust to absorb CO₂ and enrich the soil.
- Replacing needed infrastructure including over 5,000 feet of field fencing and installing solar water systems for livestock and/or irrigation.
- Enrolling leased properties in the County's Voluntary Stewardship Program
- Ongoing collaborations with Island Marbled Butterfly sites and pasture prairie trials

Where Can I Learn More about Land Bank Agricultural Efforts?

Get in touch with Agriculture Coordinator, Charlie Behnke charlieb@sjclandbank.org ; 360-830-7340 and/or see the Land Bank's ***Agriculture Overview, Goals, and Policy document.***

Map of Land Bank Conserved Farmland Conservation Easements and Preserves

