

San Juan County Conservation Land Bank Agriculture: Overview, Objectives, and Policy



Approved by SJCLB Commission April 15, 2022

PURPOSE

This document is intended as an overview of the San Juan County Conservation Land Bank's (Land Bank) role in agricultural land conservation, and to further define goals, objectives, and policy. It shall be utilized to guide acquisition, management, and stewardship.

OUTLINE

• Introduction	2
• Summary of Key Agricultural Conservation Goals	3
• Agricultural Compatibility with other Core Values	3
• Farmland Conservation Approaches	4
• Management and Stewardship of Farmed Preserves	6
• Farmland and Climate Change	8
• Agricultural Water Resources	9
• Agricultural Infrastructure	9
• Agricultural Leasing	11
• Monitoring	12
• Community and Communication	13
• Conclusion	14
• Supporting Documents and Resources	16
• Appendices	
A. Land Bank Farmland Conservation Easements	17
B. Land Bank Farmland Fee-owned Acquisitions	18
C. Land Bank Farmland Background	19
D. Land Bank Farmland Lease Status	21
E. SJC Lease Code	22
F. Regenerative Farming Definition	23
G. Map of Land Bank Conserved Farmland Conservation Easements and Preserves	24

INTRODUCTION

At its inception, the Land Bank recognized the importance of agriculture in the County and included the protection of agricultural lands as a core value within its broad organizational mandate: ***To preserve in perpetuity areas in San Juan County that have environmental, agricultural, aesthetic, cultural, scientific, historic, scenic, or low-intensity recreational value, and to protect existing and future sources of potable water.*** To date, the Land Bank has protected these conservation values on over 2,800 acres by way of conservation easements and over 5,000 acres through fee title acquisition.

As a San Juan County entity, the Land Bank aligns with San Juan County codes, policy, and goals. This includes the following vision statement found in the San Juan County Comprehensive Plan: *“Agriculture - The San Juan Islands have a rich agricultural heritage that remains culturally and economically significant. We invest resources to ensure that agricultural lands are preserved and to maintain and enhance agricultural viability. We encourage regenerative practices and recognize the integral role that agriculture plays in the stewardship of our soils and water resources. Agricultural activities are essential to the health and well-being of our community, contributing to the social, economic and environmental fabric of our islands.”*

The Land Bank’s activities are a direct response to the desire of San Juan County (SJC) voters to protect conservation values threatened by population growth and development. Since 1960’s there has been a significant reduction in farmland acreage in the County from approximately 45,000 acres to currently 18,000 acres today, primarily lost to conversion or development (2017 USDA Ag Census). Both new and established farmers face challenges in affording and accessing the land and equipment needed to succeed economically. With the goal of contributing to long-term agricultural viability and protection of open space in San Juan County, the Land Bank protects prime farmland and other significant agricultural areas.

The preferred mechanism for long term protection of agricultural resources is conservation easements on private land. Acquisition is considered in cases of exceptional properties that cannot be conserved through easement or have other significant conservation values and resources. The Land Bank’s primary role in both cases is to protect and steward the land and resources while also facilitating conservation-oriented and regenerative farming practices (Appendix G - Regenerative Farming Definition).

Land Bank staff do not engage directly in the business of agricultural production; farmland on preserves is maintained and improved through active agricultural use by way of leasing to local farmers and ranchers or related organizations. The Land Bank’s continued collaboration with agricultural agencies, stakeholders, landowners and the farming community is essential to maintaining viable agriculture in San Juan County.

SUMMARY OF KEY AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION GOALS

- Protect Agricultural Resource Lands as defined by the SJC Comprehensive Plan
- Protect natural resources and support their stewardship through active agricultural management
- Model agricultural best management practices
- Implement science-based strategy for monitoring agricultural management
- Implement agricultural climate resiliency and mitigation strategies
- Maintain open space and rural character
- Preserve agricultural water resources where appropriate and support sustainable use
- Support pathways for affordable, equitable and long-term access to farmland
- Provide compatible public access
- Collaborate with the local farming community and stakeholders to strengthen agricultural viability in SJC
- Support opportunities for agricultural research and community education

AGRICULTURAL COMPATIBILITY WITH OTHER CORE VALUES

Environmental - Agriculture alters the local environment to support desired crops and products. Management practices influence the impacts farming has on the ecology of surrounding lands. The Land Bank works with farmers to implement best management practices that maintain and improve agricultural resources on prime farmland while protecting and enhancing ecological resources.

Historical - The history of people managing the arable lands of San Juan County extends to thousands of years of Coast Salish stewardship, through the early subsistence farms of homesteaders, and to commercial and hobby operations that continue today. Visual and physical pieces of this legacy exist in cleared open space, infrastructure (buildings/structures, fences), agricultural artifacts (stone piles, ponds, ditching, equipment) and living relics (orchards, gardens, soils).

Scientific - Opportunities for agricultural and natural resource research abound on protected farmland. The Land Bank frequently partners with other agencies for research projects such as agricultural field trials and soil and water quality sampling.

Cultural - The lands and waters of San Juan County, including current agricultural lands, have been home to indigenous people since time immemorial. The Land Bank strives to provide land access opportunities to tribal stakeholders and welcomes lease and/or alternative land use proposals by indigenous people such as those that incorporate the use, protection, and/or enhancement of cultural resources.

Scenic - Views over pastoral landscapes are valued by residents and visitors. Active agricultural management maintains these cherished island scenes.

Low-impact recreation - There are often opportunities to incorporate public trails on Land Bank agricultural properties that do not adversely affect agricultural uses. Viewpoints, farm stands, and occasional farm tours in collaboration with farmers also provide opportunities for public access.

Potable water - Protection of potable water resources is a priority - for agricultural use, for the people, for wildlife, and for island ecosystems. Ensuring that agricultural use and practices are not detrimental to current and future water resources is paramount.

FARMLAND CONSERVATION APPROACHES

The Land Bank protects agricultural land in the County through the purchase of conservation easements (CEs) on private land and, occasionally, by purchasing properties (preserves) that are then leased to local farmers. To date, the Land Bank has secured conservation easements on over 1,300 acres (~50 percent of total Land Bank CE acreage) across 20 privately owned farms. In addition, the Land Bank owns 10 farmed preserves with a combined 727 acres (~15 percent of total Land Bank preserve acreage) zoned as Agricultural Resource Land (ARL) with approximately 500 acres under agricultural lease to private parties. Land Bank farmland ownership represents approximately five percent of the 13,900 acres of ARL in San Juan County (SJC Resource Lands Analysis 2017).

Conservation Easements - Conservation easements are the Land Bank's primary tool for farmland protection. Easements allow for the reduction of development potential and the protection of core values while keeping ownership and management in the private sector. Agricultural easements are intended to reduce a property's value and, therefore, to make it more accessible to incoming farmers. However, in areas with high real estate values even agricultural properties with easements remain out of reach for most farmers. This makes the need to explore and employ strategies for strengthening conservation easements to prioritize continued agricultural use even more pressing.

When crafting new farmland conservation easements, the Land Bank strives to protect core values while avoiding unnecessary restrictions that will negatively impact agricultural viability. Although protecting values such as riparian habitats, water quality and agricultural views, may conflict with some agricultural uses and practices, the Land Bank works with farmland owners to create easements that allow for flexibility and adaptability in agricultural management through time while also protecting stated conservation values.

Fee Title Acquisitions - The Land Bank considers acquiring farmland in special instances. Examples include properties that are the focus of strong public interest, properties with connectivity to other conserved lands or properties with diverse values. Properties may also be acquired outright and then resold with a conservation easement in place to protect key values.

Most Land Bank-owned farmland properties are larger parcels that have been historically used primarily for dryland farming activities such as livestock grazing, haying, and occasionally

grain/legume production. At the time of acquisition, infrastructure on many of these properties has consisted of livestock fencing in disrepair and basic stock watering facilities. The Land Bank has improved such infrastructure in many cases, but overall uses and level of infrastructure has changed little from prior ownership.

Coffelt Farm Preserve on Orcas Island, with its extensive agricultural and residential infrastructure, is currently the Land Bank's most complex farm property. Acquiring farm properties with significant infrastructure has proven challenging for the Land Bank, as managing and maintaining such infrastructure is costly and represents a departure from the primary mission of protecting and stewarding lands. Prior to considering additional fee title farmland acquisitions the Land Bank will evaluate potential long-term maintenance costs as well as the long-term viability of active agricultural use.

Assessment and Documentation of Baseline Conditions - When acquiring agricultural land, the Land Bank endeavors to focus on land that provides the greatest benefit to the community and the local economy while also protecting natural resources and providing ecosystem services. Following acquisition of a property that includes agricultural land, the Land Bank evaluates both agricultural and conservation values and works toward establishing goals for their protection. This process documents the following:

- Soil Types and Quality
- Water availability and quality
- Condition of surrounding natural areas
- Critical Areas (SJC CAO Chapter 18.35) and buffer boundaries
- Resource protection opportunities
- Viewsheds
- Community benefits
- History of use
- Connectivity to other farms or conserved lands
- Infrastructure inventory and condition

Easement and Fee Title Acquisition Objectives:

- ◆ Protect Agricultural Resource Lands (ARL zoning) for continued agricultural use and minimize non-agricultural development and uses. The Land Bank will also endeavor to engage the County Agricultural Resources Committee (ARC) to prioritize areas for agricultural conservation.
- ◆ Craft farmland conservation easements to prioritize the protection of agricultural values, viable operations, and natural resources with sufficient flexibility to allow for the dynamic nature of agriculture and to promote long-term agricultural viability.
- ◆ For both easement and acquisition of ARL designated farmland, agricultural use will be prioritized to ensure long-term viability, flexibility and function of continued agricultural activity. Additional encumbrances and restrictions to farm

infrastructure and type of agriculture will be minimized. The view shed and open space resource will be accessory values.

- ◆ Prior to fee title farmland acquisitions the Land Bank will evaluate long-term cost of maintenance and management, and the continued potential for active agricultural use.
- ◆ Prior to conveying conservation easements and/or accepting grant funding from other entities that will impose agricultural restrictions on Land Bank owned ARL, the Land Bank will engage the Agriculture Resource Committee and public for input.
- ◆ Encourage property owners with farmland conservation easements to lease to farmers when not in active use.
- ◆ Continue to develop and strengthen partnerships and collaborations that expand farmland conservation, connect farmers to farmland, and strengthen agricultural viability.

Additional Information

Appendix A: Current Land Bank farmland conservation easement holdings

Appendix B: Current Land Bank farmland fee-owned acquisitions

Appendix C: Land Bank Farmland Background

Appendix G: Map of Land Bank Conserved Farmland Conservation Easements and Preserves

MANAGEMENT AND STEWARDSHIP OF FARMED PRESERVES

The Land Bank acknowledges the many potential challenges and opportunities that working farmlands create and strives to foster agricultural uses and practices that benefit island communities, while protecting agricultural and natural resources and the diversity of species that depend on the farmland and inter-connected habitats.

The Land Bank creates a Stewardship and Management Plan (SMP) for each preserve. Through a combination of site assessments and community input, the Land Bank identifies core values and goals. These cores values and goals are described thoroughly in the SMP, which intended to be reviewed and updated every 10 years.

The Land Bank may acquire lands that have been farmed previously and may elect to discontinue agricultural use in specific areas. Such areas may consist of marginal farmland and/or have high ecological or other importance that are deemed to have higher value without agricultural use. In some cases, agricultural activities may be used as a management tool on lands not deemed to be agricultural, such as grazing or browsing for vegetation and weed control. In recognition of the controversial nature of such land-use decisions, the Land Bank will

engage with partners in assessing individual properties or portions of properties during planning phases.

It is a priority for the Land Bank to steward the prime agricultural soils on farmed Land Bank Preserves. On leased farmland the Land Bank and leasing farmer will collaborate on soil management with emphasis on conservation-oriented and regenerative practices. Lessees will generally be responsible for soil amendments to support their operation with potential incentives for additional contributions to soil health. The Land Bank may reinvest rental income into soils and may also invest in soils to assist in bringing neglected soils back to health for long-term benefits or for research trials.

The Land Bank is focused on establishing leases and relationships with compatible farmers to promote the maintenance and improvement of basic infrastructure (e.g., fencing, water systems, site access), to secure additional resources (e.g., SJICD and NRCS sponsored cost share projects or grants), to control invasive weeds, and to protect or improve natural resources. Such activities facilitate and support continued agricultural use and resource protection.

Stewardship and Management Objectives:

- ◆ On ARL designated lands, develop Stewardship Management Plans (SMPs) that emphasize both agricultural and natural resource priorities.
- ◆ Document baseline conditions on all Land Bank farmland and, at a minimum, implement the Voluntary Stewardship Program agricultural best management practices needed to ensure protection of Critical Areas and other natural resources.
- ◆ Where existing agricultural uses conflict with protection of water resources or Washington State Priority Habitats and Species (PHS), the Land Bank will rely on the best available science and/or county, state or federal regulations to ensure their protection.
- ◆ Prioritize active agricultural management to maintain and improve ARL open space landscapes, and ensure water quality protection by implementing best management practices
- ◆ Collaborate with Land Bank farmer-lessees in adopting and implementing farm plans and science-based soil nutrient management strategies that model best agricultural management practices to build and sustain healthy soil, sequester carbon and conserve water.
- ◆ Participate and model recommended practices of the Voluntary Stewardship Program and utilize Cost Share funds to support farm lessees in meeting their stewardship and production goals.

- ◆ Maintain flexibility and adaptability in management.
- ◆ Control priority invasive weeds using practices described in the Land Bank Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Guidance 2021 document

FARMLAND AND CLIMATE CHANGE

The Land Bank is committed to advancing climate resiliency on its protected lands. As the climate continues to change, we must prepare for and adapt to unpredictable weather, drought, flooding, and increases in invasive species and disease. Working farmlands are ripe with opportunities and challenges related to addressing the effects of climate change. Managed carefully, these farmlands can be productive and significant carbon sinks while supporting a robust local food system.

Globally, agriculture is a leading producer of greenhouse gas emission, however agricultural systems, management practices, and technologies continue to develop and emerge with ongoing research into the carbon sequestration and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. Many local farmers are actively adapting and implementing climate beneficial practices to their operations, and they are eager to share successes and do more. Local agriculture also helps to reduce carbon emissions associated with food transportation and can increase food security during disruptions in global food supply and distribution

The Land Bank will continue to collaborate with the agricultural community, partners, and farm lessees to identify and support the implementation of regionally appropriate climate change mitigation and resiliency strategies. To date, efforts have included riparian buffer plantings, improved grazing and haying practices, improved manure management, and no-till pasture seeding. Management practices and efforts to consider in the future include agroforestry systems, building soil organic matter, carbon sequestering soil amendments (e.g., biochar, basalt), agri-voltaics (i.e., solar panels combined with agricultural systems), reducing use of combustion engines, and contributing to large-scale local compost production.

Climate Change Resiliency Objectives:

- ◆ Encourage, support, implement, and model practices on working farmland to sequester carbon and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. While supporting a robust local food system.
- ◆ Maintain flexibility to employ and model developing practices and strategies.
- ◆ Collaborate with partners and farm lessees to identify and support the implementation of regionally appropriate climate change mitigation and resiliency strategies.

- ◆ Reducing external supply-chain dependency while simultaneously increasing food security to reduce carbon footprint and decrease impacts from disruption of global production and distribution.

AGRICULTURAL WATER RESOURCES

Water resources in San Juan County are limited to groundwater, stream withdrawals and other surface water collected and stored in lakes, ponds, and tanks. All are entirely dependent on annual rainfall. With very little rainfall and frequent drought conditions during the primary growing season, irrigation water is an essential limiting resource for agricultural operations. In addition to critical ecological needs, there is growing competition for water resources among residential, commercial, and agricultural users.

To provide opportunities to include more irrigated crops on Land Bank preserves, it will be critical to engage stakeholders, carefully assess water availability and potential, and develop or expand water systems only where resources allow and can be sustainably and efficiently managed at appropriate scales. Necessary actions will include monitoring and periodically reassessing agricultural water usage to adapt to resource changes.

Water Resource Protection and Conservation Objectives:

- ◆ Protect existing agricultural water resources and water rights for farmed areas where appropriate.
- ◆ Develop and secure additional agricultural water rights for farmed areas where appropriate.
- ◆ Encourage and support water conservation through efficient and sustainable use of water resources.
- ◆ Protect natural stream flow.
- ◆ Continue to monitor and reassess agricultural water usage

AGRICULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Viable agricultural operations require some level of infrastructure. This can range from simple perimeter fencing at the low end to water systems, shelter, nutrient management structures, storage, processing, marketing, utilities, and housing in more intensive operations.

Among the Land Bank preserves with agricultural uses, only Coffelt Farm Preserve includes the infrastructure to support a year-round diversified farming operation. All others are currently utilized as satellite farmland for operations with primary farmstead infrastructure elsewhere.

The Land Bank's ability to develop more infrastructure on its farmed lands is limited by the mandate, organizational capacity and, in some cases, land use restrictions. Infrastructure investments are generally focused on maintaining active agricultural use and implementing resource protections recommended and supported by the San Juan Islands Conservation District (e.g., fencing, water systems, and heavy-use area protections).

To participate in the development or acquisition of complex farm properties and operations the Land Bank would require one or more partners. Such partnerships would enable the Land Bank to focus on natural resources protection and stewardship, while partnering entities could focus on infrastructure, equipment, housing opportunities, and agriculture program development.

Existing Farm Infrastructure – When a property is acquired with existing farm infrastructure, the Land Bank will determine the required level of investment for maintenance, repair, and/or replacement based on assessment of the following criteria:

- Condition
- Importance to farm operations
- Supports agricultural viability
- Supports natural resource protection
- Historic quality/ character
- Community benefit
- Cost to repair or replace

Residential Structures – Access to affordable housing is currently a major issue in San Juan County. According to the Washington Center for Real Estate Research Housing Affordability Index, housing in San Juan County is the least affordable in Washington. Housing for new farmers has been identified as a primary limiting factor to agricultural viability in SJC. Although the Land Bank mandate does not support the development of housing, there may be opportunities for partnerships and collaborations to develop farmer housing on farmed Land Bank preserves if not inconsistent with Stewardship Management Plan objectives, SJC land use rules, third party conservation easements, or other legal restrictions.

Agricultural Infrastructure Objectives:

- ◆ Invest in critical infrastructure on agricultural lands to facilitate agricultural best management practices and support agricultural viability. Utilize Cost Share funds when possible.
- ◆ The Land Bank's infrastructure investments will focus first on maintaining agricultural viability and protecting natural resources.
- ◆ Maintain existing housings on an acquired farm property, if assessment deems structurally sound and habitable, with Land Bank funds and with priority as farmer

housing or other farm use. Rent will be based on fair market value with the possible adjustment to the rate based on the lessee's contribution to qualified maintenance.

- ◆ Seek partnerships to develop agricultural infrastructure improvements to support agricultural viability and resource protection.
- ◆ Where appropriate, consider developing dedicated farmer housing with partner organizations.

AGRICULTURAL LEASING

In the case of fee-owned agricultural lands, the Land Bank strives to keep prime farmland in active agricultural use by leasing to farmers. Short-term Lease Agreements (<2 years) are used in various circumstances, such as during an assessment period for establishing long-term management objectives, for trial periods, and/or when agriculture is not the primary goal for a property. Long-term Lease Agreements are used on preserves with dedicated agricultural areas. The stability of a long-term lease provides security to the lessee, aiming to promote heightened stewardship of the land and resources and the ability to invest in necessary equipment and infrastructure to support operations.

Any Lease Agreement over two years requires an open public process as outlined in the SJC Code (Appendix E). The Land Bank publishes a Request for Proposals (RFP) to solicit lease proposals. The RFP will clearly outline the lease opportunity including history of use, lease boundaries, natural resource information (soil, water, plants), available infrastructure, restricted uses and environmental resource goals, and include an overview of lease selection and scoring criteria. Site visits are required by all applicants.

Leasing processes will be an open and transparent and without prejudice, and appropriate time will be provided for proposal development. In cases where a new lessee will replace a previous lessee, sufficient notice and time will be provided for transitions.

Agricultural Leasing Objectives:

- ◆ Lease conserved farmland for food production.
- ◆ Prioritize long-term versus short-term farm leases.
- ◆ Prioritize farm operations with strong community and/or environmental benefits and seek opportunities to incentivize actions with these benefits? .

- ◆ Mitigate unfair advantage in the local agricultural economy and community by establishing a fair market rental rate.
- ◆ Adjustments of such rates will be considered based on other contributions of lessee to the agriculture conservation goals of the Land Bank, or of the lessee's contribution to *eligible maintenance and/or community benefits. (*Minor works exempt from the County Contract bidding process.)
- ◆ Requests for Lease Proposals should identify agriculture and natural resource parameters and goals, while leaving room for well informed, diverse and creative farming proposals that fit within those parameters.
- ◆ Assure that farmland is managed responsibly and protected by having clear and enforceable metrics in the lease agreement (e.g., soil nutrient content and water quality).
- ◆ Farm lease proposals will be reviewed and ranked by a committee including Land Bank staff and Commissioners, who may opt to consult with qualified agricultural professionals. The Land Bank Commission will then recommend a lessee to the County Council and/or Manager. If approved, the process will culminate in a signed lease.
- ◆ Provide ample time for proposal development, especially for complex properties.
- ◆ Provide sufficient time for farm lease transitions.
- ◆ If a farm lessee defaults in their lease duties and responsibilities, and the breach continues for more than 30 days after Lessee receives written notice of the default, the Land Bank may pursue legal remedy or terminate the lease.

Additional Information –

Appendix D: Current Land Bank farmland lease status

Appendix E: San Juan County Leasing Code

MONITORING

Monitoring of all preserves and conservation easements is critical to ensuring that core values are being maintained and stewardship goals achieved. When monitoring leased farmland, the focus is on resource protection and infrastructure. The Land Bank completes soil and water quality testing (where applicable) and compiles photo-points and other monitoring data to document conditions over the long term.

Conservation easement monitoring is conducted annually and is an opportunity to communicate with landowners and document any changes, issues, violations, and discuss plans for the property.

Monitoring Objectives:

- ◆ Conduct annual monitoring of all Land Bank preserves and conservation easements
- ◆ Conduct routine monitoring as needed based on the intensity of operations. Monitoring focuses on resource protections, such as preventing overgrazing, soil compaction and exposed soil/erosion, controlling weed populations, maintaining buffers, and tracking water use. It can also include review of infrastructure and potential hazards.
- ◆ Conduct routine soil tests on farmed preserves approximately every three years. Develop a testing protocol for replicating testing method, area, and timing.
- ◆ When necessary, monitor surface water quality (e.g. streams, lakes, ponds) on farmed preserves.
- ◆ Involve farm lessees in monitoring and data collection efforts and communicate observations and data to inform management.
- ◆ When necessary and/or the opportunity arises, partner with third parties to monitor agricultural impacts on natural resources such as soil health and water quality.
- ◆ Maintain strong communication with farm lessees to allow either party to address questions, issues and concerns in a timely manner to prevent or correct poor management and acknowledge accomplishments.

COMMUNITY AND COMMUNICATION

Collaboration is key to maintaining and supporting a robust and vibrant local food system. The Land Bank strives to engage with the farming community and diverse stakeholders towards this goal. Working farms on public lands can have broad community benefits including local food production and distribution, jobs, education and training, research, and long-term farmland and environmental protection.

In addition, the Land Bank is committed to understanding how justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion (JEDI) intersect with our work and with San Juan County farm and food systems. To help eliminate inequity, Land Bank staff will continue working to better understand the ways in which our work interfaces with these foundational issues.

Community and Communication Objectives:

- ◆ Align with SJC Resolution No. 31-2020 affirming a commitment to a safe and inclusive community.

- ◆ Increase education around justice, diversity, equity, inclusion and the structural barriers that exist in the farm and food system and then apply our learning to adjust our planning, operations, and public messaging to help eliminate inequity.
- ◆ Create new farming opportunities for traditionally underserved communities via innovative leasing or other approaches.
- ◆ Support local food production and distribution.
- ◆ Create opportunities to engage and listen to members of the farming community and other stakeholders.
- ◆ Share agriculture information with public including current agricultural uses, lease opportunities, research and monitoring data.
- ◆ Participate in Agricultural Resource Committee meetings and community discussions.
- ◆ Collaborate with other organizations to connect farmers to farmland.
- ◆ Support expanding community benefits on Land Bank farmland (e.g., educational opportunities, research, and food system resiliency).
- ◆ Strengthen and diversify organizational partnerships and collaborations.
- ◆ Advertise farm lease opportunities broadly and provide language translation.

CONCLUSION

Conserving agricultural land presents great challenges and opportunities. The Land Bank recognizes that for farmland to remain in production in perpetuity, the quality of its agricultural and natural resources must be protected or restored and then be maintained indefinitely.

Healthy agricultural lands can provide benefits both for people and for the many species that depend on the remnant native habitats or natural areas both within and adjacent or connected to them. Ecologically managed farms have the potential to provide local food sources, support rural economies, protect waterways and wetlands, mitigate the effects of climate change, and connect us to the natural world. When we think about farmland conservation as more than just local food and jobs, we open opportunities for creativity and collaboration.

Within a community, exposure to agriculture can be life-enriching and can promote learning about food systems, ecology, eating well, the satisfaction of working outside, land preservation, and much more. Publicly owned farms provide a platform for learning, with children participating through school curricula and adults through agricultural workshops. Local farms contribute directly to local economies and support a variety of small businesses. Actions that

avoid conversion of farmland to developed uses benefit us all. Active farming on these lands maintains the cherished agricultural and pastoral view sheds and rural character.

The Land Bank plays a vital role in supporting agriculture in San Juan County through efforts to reduce development of agricultural resource lands, by providing land access opportunities to farmers, and through engagement and collaboration with the agricultural community. The Land Bank strives to support an economically, environmentally, and socially vibrant and viable local food system.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS AND RESOURCES

- SJC Open Space Conservation Plan – 1990
- SJC Growing Our Future – 2011
- SJC Working Towards Climate Resilience – 2017
- Conservation Agriculture Resource Team, Coffelt Farm Report – 2021
- SJC Natural Resource Lands Analysis – 2018
- Agriculture Resource Committee docs (see website)
- 7. SJC Agricultural Viability study - 2021
- SJC Land Bank Policy Manual
- Land Bank Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Guidance 2021 document
- SJC Parks Trails and Natural Areas Plan – 2017
- USDA Ag Census – 2017
- Regenerative Farming Definition: <https://regenerationinternational.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Regen-Ag-Definition-2.23.17-1.pdf>
- Land Tenure and Conservation in Farming: <https://delta-institute.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Land-Tenure-and-Conservation-in-Agriculture-2019.pdf>

Appendix A – Land Bank Farmland Conservation Easements (2022)

Property	Acres	Acquisition Date	Purchase Price	Stated Purpose for Acquisition	General restrictions	Ag use status
Cole (Buffum) Farm	193	1997	\$534,000	Ag, scenic,	development	livestock and grain
Harris/ Prassenda Farm	50	2001	\$79,600	Ag, scenic, habitat,	development	livestock
Kjargaard (Buffum) Farm	95	2012	\$620,300	Ag, scenic	development	livestock and grain
Lee (Zautke) Farm	36	2000	\$74,600	Ag, scenic	development	livestock and grain
Ritchie Farm	130	2020	\$600,000.	Ag, scenic, habitat,	development	livestock
Stonecrest Farm	36	2006	\$1,000	Ag, scenic	development	livestock
Plum Tree Farm (Johnson)	47	1996	\$66,100	Ag, scenic	development	livestock
Coffelt Farm (Eng)	10	1995	\$235,100	Ag, scenic,	development	livestock
Cayou Valley (Conner) Farm	109	1995	\$40,500	Ag, scenic, habitat,	development	orchard, vegetable, nursery
Stonebridge Farm (McCormick)	34	2006	\$42,500	Ag, scenic, habitat,	development	chestnut orchard, vegetable
Warm Valley Farm	78	1993	\$153,400	Ag, scenic, forest	development	livestock, vegetable, forest
Schaefer (Mitchell) Farm	34	1996	\$253,200	Ag, scenic	development	livestock
Heritage Farm (Sesby)	39	2003 and 2009	\$221,300	Ag, scenic	development	livestock, vegetable
Howard Farm	27	2009	\$241,800	Ag, scenic	development	livestock
Mulno Cove Farm	78	1999	\$187,600	Ag, scenic, forest	development	medicinal herbs
Oak Knoll Farm (Greene)	30	2004	\$700	Ag, scenic, habitat,	development	livestock, orchard
Portland Fair Homeowners	21	2001	\$202,000	Ag, scenic	development	hay
Sundstrom Farm (SJPT)	120	2008	\$1,575,000	Ag, scenic	development	livestock
Twigg-Smith (David),(Roberts)	155	1997	\$394,800	Ag, scenic, habitat,	development	livestock, hay
Total	1,322		\$5,523,500			0

Appendix B – Land Bank Farmland Fee-Owned Acquisitions (2022)

Island	Property	Total Acres	Prime Ag Acres	Acquisition Date	Purchase Price
San Juan	Beaverton Marsh (North)	135	45	2001	\$850,000
San Juan	Beaverton Marsh (South)	315	0	2020	\$1,100,000
San Juan	False Bay Creek	40	30	2008	\$129,600
San Juan	Frazer Homestead	70	50	2006	\$2,017,000
San Juan	King Sisters	60	40	2005	\$531,400
San Juan	Anderson	42	20	2003	\$464,800
San Juan	Alderman	10	10	1995	\$95,200
San Juan	Zylstra	284	100	2015	\$1,362,000
Orcas	Coffelt	190	150	1995	\$1,321,700
Orcas	Fowler's Pond	51	10	1994 and 2006	\$465,000
Lopez	Richardson Marsh	24	16	2020	\$75,000.
Lopez	Weeks	24	7	1993	\$45,000
Total		1,060	478		\$8,456,700

Appendix C: Land Bank Farmland Background

NRCS Soil Type Categories:

Prime farmland – PF

Prime farmland when drained – PFD

Prime farmland if irrigated – PFI

Farmland of statewide importance – FSI

Not prime farmland – NPF

San Juan Preservation Trust- SJPT

Island	Beaverton North	Ag Use at purchase	Current Ag Use	Historic Ag use	Zoning	Conservation Easement	Soil Types	Water Resources
San Juan	Beaverton North	Cattle grazing	Sheep grazing	Grazing, hay, grain, homestead	Ag Resource	None	Coveland-Mitchell bay complex (PF) ~30acres, Coveland loam (PFD) ~15 acres, Semiahmoo muck (marsh)	Two deep wells (not hooked up), potential for agreement with pond water use from neighboring landowner.
San Juan	False Bay Creek	Cattle grazing	Cattle grazing	Cattle grazing, grain, peas?	Ag Resource	SJPT Restrictions: Development	Coveland loam (PFD) ~30 acres, Shalcar muck (PFD) ~7 acres	Stock pond, seasonal streams
San Juan	Frazer Homestead	Cattle grazing	Cattle grazing, grain	Cattle grazing, grain, homestead	Rural Farm Forest (11.5 ac)/ Ag Resource (58.5 ac)	None	Mitchell bay gravelly sandy loam (PF) ~38 acres, Pilepoint loam (PFI) ~20 acres,	Stock pond, seasonal streams
San Juan	King Sisters	Pastured horses	Cattle, sheep, market garden	Livestock, hay, orchards, homestead	Ag Resource	None	,Roche-Killebrew-Rock Outcrop complex Not Prime Farmland (NPF) ~20 acres, Roche-Killebrew complex (PF) ~20 acres,	2 gpm Deep well (hooked up)

San Juan	Zylstra	Cattle grazing, hay	Hay	Livestock, hay, grain, vegetables, orchards, homestead	Ag Resource	SJPT Restrictions: Development Lake/stream buffers	Coveland-Mitchellbay complex (PF)~100 acres, Coupeville loam (PFD) ~14 acres, Mitchellbay gravelly sandy loam (PFD) ~18 acres	lake water right TBD
Orcas	Fowler's Pond	?	Sheep grazing	Livestock	Ag Resource	None	Bazal-Mitchellbay complex (PFD)~12, Sucia-Sholander complex (FSI) ~6 acres,	Stock pond, seasonal streams
Orcas	Coffelt Farm	Diverse livestock, dairy, grain, hay, garden, orchard	Diverse livestock, dairy, hay, garden, orchard	Diverse livestock, orchards, homestead	Ag Resource	SJPT Restrictions: Development	Roche-Killebrew complex (PF) ~7 acres, Coveland loam (PFD) ~27 acres, Coupeville loam (PFD) ~50 acres, Coveland-Mitchellbay complex (PF) ~10 acres, Semiahmoo muck (PFD) ~50 acres	Spring, deep well (250 gpd), pond, seasonal stream
Lopez	Weeks	Hay	Hay	Livestock, hay	Lopez Village Institutional?	None	Mitchell bay gravelly sandy loam (PF) ~10 acres	None
Lopez	Richardson Marsh	Cattle grazing	cattle grazing	Livestock, hay, grain?	Ag Resource	SJPT Restrictions: Development Wetland buffers	Dugualla muck (NPF) ~18 acres	?

Appendix D: Land Bank Farmland Lease Status

Lessee	Agreement Type	Use	Acreage	\$ Rent	Lease duration
Shephard Family	Short-term lease	Seasonal grazing	45	\$1,200/yr	2021-2022
John Wilson	Short-term lease	Seasonal grazing	30	\$900/yr	2008-2022
Thor Black	Long-term lease	Seasonal grazing	60	\$800/yr	2017-2027
Rob Waldron	Long-term lease	Grazing and Market Garden	45	\$3,600/yr	2009-2029
Adam Greene	Short-term lease	Hay harvest	75	\$43/acre (harvested)	2021-2022
Lum Family	Short-term lease	Seasonal grazing	10	\$500/yr	2021-2022
Lum Family	Short-term lease	Diverse livestock, dairy, market garden	150	\$1,500/month	2019-2022
Arnott family	Letter of Agreement	Hay harvest	7	Stewardship services	Ongoing
Buffum Bros	Letter of Agreement	Seasonal grazing	17	Stewardship services	Ongoing

Appendix E – SJC Lease Code

San Juan County Code: 2.104.120 Lease or rental of real property.

A. If it appears that it is in the best interest of the County, the County council may lease or rent any real property and its appurtenances. Every lease or rental of land bank property shall be made only for uses not inconsistent with or detrimental to the purpose/rationale which justified the acquisition and only upon the recommendation of the land bank commissioners.

B. The rental of real property or real property interests for less than two years may be done by direct negotiation without publishing a notice of intent to rent or holding a public hearing, provided the rental rate reflects the fair rental value of the property.

C. The lease of real property may be done by direct negotiations. No lease shall be executed until after publishing a notice of intent to lease and holding a public hearing regarding the proposed lease. Notice shall be published at least 10 days before the public hearing.

D. Fair Market Value. Prior to renting or leasing real property, the County or land bank real estate officer shall conduct, or have conducted, a market review or rental study to determine the fair rental or leasehold value of the property. The County council shall consider the results of the study in setting the terms of the rental.

E. Proceeds. All proceeds from lease and rentals of real or personal property shall be deposited in the applicable County fund as designated by County ordinance or state law. Proceeds from the lease or rental of land bank real property shall be credited to the land bank's conservation area fund or stewardship fund. (Ord. 27-2007 § 9; Ord. 3-2002 § 12)

Appendix F: Regenerative Farming Definition

What is Regenerative Agriculture?

February 16, 2017

“Regenerative Agriculture” describes farming and grazing practices that, among other benefits, reverse climate change by rebuilding soil organic matter and restoring degraded soil biodiversity – resulting in both carbon drawdown and improving the water cycle.

Specifically, **Regenerative Agriculture** is a holistic land management practice that leverages the power of photosynthesis in plants to close the carbon cycle, and build soil health, crop resilience and nutrient density. Regenerative agriculture improves soil health, primarily through the practices that increase soil organic matter. This not only aids in increasing soil biota diversity and health, but increases biodiversity both above and below the soil surface, while increasing both water holding capacity and sequestering carbon at greater depths, thus drawing down climate-damaging levels of atmospheric CO₂, and improving soil structure to reverse civilization-threatening human-caused soil loss. Research continues to reveal the damaging effects to soil from tillage, applications of agricultural chemicals and salt based fertilizers, and carbon mining. Regenerative Agriculture reverses this paradigm to build for the future.

Regenerative Agricultural Practices are: Practices that (i) contribute to generating/building soils and soil fertility and health; (ii) increase water percolation, water retention, and clean and safe water runoff; (iii) increase biodiversity and ecosystem health and resiliency; and (iv) invert the carbon emissions of our current agriculture to one of remarkably significant carbon sequestration thereby cleansing the atmosphere of legacy levels of CO₂.

Practices include:

1. No-till/minimum tillage. Tillage breaks up (pulverizes) soil aggregation and fungal communities while adding excess O₂ to the soil for increased respiration and CO₂ emission. It can be one of the most degrading agricultural practices, greatly increasing soil erosion and carbon loss. A secondary effect is soil capping and slaking that can plug soil spaces for percolation creating much more water runoff and soil loss. Conversely, no-till/minimum tillage, in conjunction with other regenerative practices, enhances soil aggregation, water infiltration and retention, and carbon sequestration. However, some soils benefit from interim ripping to break apart hardpans, which can increase root zones and yields and have the capacity to increase soil health and carbon sequestration. Certain low level chiseling may have similar positive effects.
2. Soil fertility is increased in regenerative systems biologically through application of cover crops, crop rotations, compost, and animal manures, which restore the plant/soil microbiome to promote liberation, transfer, and cycling of essential soil nutrients. Artificial and synthetic fertilizers have created imbalances in the structure and function of microbial communities in soils, bypassing the natural biological acquisition of nutrients for the plants, creating a dependent agroecosystem and weaker, less resilient plants. Research has observed that application of synthetic and artificial fertilizers contribute to climate change through (i) the energy costs of production and transportation of the fertilizers, (ii) chemical breakdown and migration into water resources and the atmosphere; (iii) the distortion of soil microbial communities including the diminution of soil methanotrophs, and (iv) the accelerated decomposition of soil organic matter.
3. Building biological ecosystem diversity begins with inoculation of soils with composts or compost extracts to restore soil microbial community population, structure and functionality restoring soil system energy (Compounds as exudates) through full-time planting of multiple crop intercrop plantings, multispecies cover crops, and borders planted for bee habitat and other beneficial insects. This can include the highly successful push-pull systems. It is critical to change synthetic nutrient dependent monocultures, low-biodiversity and soil degrading practices.
4. Well-managed grazing practices stimulate improved plant growth, increased soil carbon deposits, and overall pasture and grazing land productivity while greatly increasing soil fertility, insect and plant biodiversity, and soil carbon sequestration. These practices not only improve ecological health, but also the health of the animal and human consumer through improved micro-nutrients availability and better dietary omega balances. Feed lots and confined animal feeding systems contribute dramatically to (i) unhealthy monoculture production systems, (ii) low nutrient density forage (iii) increased water pollution, (iv) antibiotic usage and resistance, and (v) CO₂ and methane emissions, all of which together yield broken and ecosystem-degrading food-production systems.

Co-Authors:

Regenerative Agriculture Initiative, California State University, Chico

<http://www.csuchico.edu/sustainablefuture/aginitiative/>

The Carbon Underground

<https://thecarbonunderground.org/>

This definition will continue to evolve as research and practice inform what builds the health of soils, sequesters carbon, and grows more topsoil for future generations.

Appendix G: Map of Land Bank Conserved Farmland Conservation Easements and Preserves

