



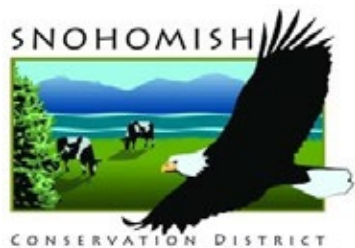
Landowner Perspectives on Voluntary Conservation Incentive Programs

***Results and
Recommendations from a
Landowner Survey in the
Snohomish and
Stillaguamish Watersheds***

June 2014

**Christy Carr
Cindy Dittbrenner
Robin Fay**





Landowner Perspectives on Voluntary Conservation Incentive Programs

***Results and
Recommendations from a
Landowner Survey in the
Snohomish and
Stillaguamish Watersheds***

June 2014

**Christy Carr
Cindy Dittbrenner
Robin Fay**



Executive Summary

There is a strong consensus that voluntary participation in environmental conservation and restoration is the key to achieving landscape-scale improvements on working agricultural land. Too often, however, the current incentive programs miss the mark in meeting the needs of the landowner, and as a result, the intended environmental outcomes are not achieved. Due to a shared commitment to helping farmers improve environmental quality while remaining economically viable, American Farmland Trust (AFT) and Snohomish Conservation District (SCD) wanted to understand more about why some landowners participate in conservation incentive programs and others do not. We also wanted to gain insights into how to overcome the barriers that may be preventing wider participation, and recommend steps that will lead to a more effective and efficient technical and financial support system for landowners. Since the landowners themselves are the best source for this kind of information, between December 2013 and May 2014, AFT and SCD conducted a survey and community meetings with agricultural and rural landowners in selected areas of the Snohomish and Stillaguamish River basins. Six focus sub-basins were chosen because they represent a nexus of agricultural land and Chinook salmon habitat: Pilchuck River, Woods Creek, Tualco Valley, Cherry Creek/Snoqualmie River, Upper half of Lower Stillaguamish River and Lower North Fork Stillaguamish River.

The survey was completed in tandem with a series of six landowner community meetings held in the focus sub-basins. Approximately 75 landowners attended the workshops with attendance varying by area and the survey was distributed via US mail to 650 streamside landowners. The initial survey included 41 questions, and was distributed at three of the six community meetings. Seventeen workshop participants filled out this survey. After reviewing these survey results, project staff decided to create a simplified, shorter survey with only 25 questions. The second version of the survey (see Attachment 1) was filled out by 47 people. In total, 64 completed surveys were collected, a 10 percent response rate.

Survey results include quantitative data compiled from survey questions and qualitative information gathered from comments made by landowners either on the survey or at landowner workshops. Survey results are summarized by category:

Highlights from Survey Results

- The project area covers a wide variety of agricultural uses, but our survey did not show a strong correlation between type of agriculture and participation in conservation incentive programs.
- Landowners prefer to work with local organizations, particularly Conservation Districts.
- Landowner workshops are informative and helpful and may increase the likelihood of participation in programs.
- There is a prevailing lack of awareness about available programs in the project area we surveyed. Twenty-five percent of survey respondents had not heard of any of the conservation incentive programs included in the survey.
- Existing knowledge about available conservation incentive programs is highest for programs that offer direct financial benefit to landowners.
- Only 38 percent of survey respondents had participated in any conservation incentive program.

-
- Many landowners who had participated in conservation incentive programs in the past expressed frustrations with the process.
 - Almost two thirds (63%) of survey respondents reported that they had done the work because the project provided a benefit to the environment. This was the most often cited motivating factor.
 - When participating in a conservation incentive program, an overwhelming majority (82%) of landowners prefer to retain ownership rather than sell their property (or a portion of their property).
 - Available programs are often not flexible enough or tailored to meet landowner needs. Programs may not be designed to solve the particular challenges landowners face and program staff and/or literature may not promote the most relevant attributes and/or benefits to landowners.
 - There is strong resistance to planting 100-foot wide (or greater) riparian buffers. Although there is a general willingness to plant riparian buffers, most are willing to set aside only a 35-foot area along a stream or river for planting.
 - Financial considerations for planting riparian buffers are less important than anticipated.
 - There is strong interest in the “working buffer” concept and modifying conservation incentive programs to include additional uses – including those that could generate income for the landowner – compatible with restoration objectives.
 - Finally, there is a general lack of awareness of, but strong interest in, ecosystem services.

Summary of Recommendations

Landowners in the Snohomish and Stillaguamish River basins are interested in improving environmental quality. They are willing to consider participating in conservation incentive programs to address salmon habitat and water quality resource concerns, including planting riparian buffers. No single barrier to participation bubbled to the top; rather, a range of challenges – perceived and actual – related to information and outreach, program design and administration and technical and financial assistance present very real obstacles to landowners.

Based on what we have learned, we believe that a significant expansion of participation in voluntary conservation incentive programs will require a broad-based, coordinated effort to address all of the key challenges landowners face in considering whether to participate. We recommend that federal, state and local conservation incentive program providers and other interested parties come together to discuss the findings of this report to develop a comprehensive strategy for helping farmers and agricultural landowners obtain the right type and level of information, technical assistance and financial compensation needed to significantly increase voluntary conservation incentive program participation. Specific recommendations are made for information and outreach, financial assistance, technical assistance, program administration and program design.

Acknowledgements

This report was made possible with funding from The Bullitt Foundation, NOAA and American Farmland Trust.

Many thanks to the agencies and organizations who participated in the development and design of the landowner survey and workshops and those who attended the workshops, including staff from Snohomish Conservation District, King Conservation District, King County, Stewardship Partners, NOAA and Forterra.

The authors would also like to thank the landowners in the project area who took the time to attend a community meeting and/or complete our survey.

Preferred Citation

Carr, Christy; C. Dittbrenner and R. Fay. 2014. *Landowner Perspectives on Voluntary Conservation Incentive Programs: Summary of Findings and Recommendations from a Landowner Survey in the Snohomish and Stillaguamish Watersheds*. American Farmland Trust and Snohomish Conservation District. June 2014.

About American Farmland Trust

American Farmland Trust is a private, non-profit organization that works cooperatively with the agricultural community and other partners to protect farmland from development, help agricultural landowners and producers improve environmental quality and keep farmers on the land. AFT has helped to expand stewardship on many acres of working lands through advocacy for federal and state conservation programs and on-the-ground demonstration projects, often working with local farmers to improve salmon habitat and reduce water pollution in key watersheds. The Pacific Northwest Regional office oversees several programs as part of AFT's national Agriculture and Environment Program. This program implements projects to strengthen policies, practices, and programs in support of agriculture's role and participation in conservation practices to achieve environmental outcomes, as well as economic benefits to farmers.

Contact: Christy Carr
PNW Conservation Program Manager
ccarr@farmland.org or 206.860.4222
www.farmland.org/programs/states/wa

About Snohomish Conservation District

Snohomish Conservation District (SCD) is a political subdivision of state government that has been working with farmers and landowners since 1941. District boundaries include Camano Island and most of Snohomish County. SCD's mission is to work cooperatively with others to promote and encourage conservation and responsible use of natural resources. SCD has habitat restoration specialist on staff to help with habitat and water quality plans and projects. SCD works hand-in-hand with agricultural and rural landowners to plan and implement conservation projects as well as provide resources and tools to help them protect and improve natural resources.

Contact: Cindy Dittbrenner
SCD Natural Resources Program Manager
cindy@snohomishcd.org
www.snohomishcd.org

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Background	1
Overview of Project Area	2
Pilchuck River	2
Woods Creek	3
Tualco Valley	3
Cherry Creek/Snoqualmie River	3
Upper Half of Lower Stillaguamish River	3
Lower North Fork Stillaguamish River	3
Landowner Outreach Methodology	4
Summary of Survey Results	5
Land use and parcel size	5
Common landowner challenges	5
Landowner knowledge and participation	6
Landowner motivations and preferences	7
Landowner experiences with conservation incentive programs	8
Landowner interest and outreach	8
Riparian buffers	9
Ecosystem services	11
Summary of Findings	11
Recommendations	14
Information and outreach	15
Financial assistance	15
Technical assistance	16
Program administration	16
Program design	16
Appendices	
Landowner Survey	

Introduction

Between December 2013 and May 2014, American Farmland Trust (AFT) and Snohomish Conservation District (SCD) conducted a mail survey and community meetings with agricultural and rural landowners in selected areas of the Snohomish and Stillaguamish River basins. The purpose was to better understand landowner participation in voluntary conservation incentive programs.

AFT and SCD collaborated to conduct a landowner outreach effort aimed at: (1) identifying barriers to participation in conservation incentive programs; (2) soliciting feedback about landowner preferences and experiences; and (3) develop recommendations to improve incentive program design, implementation and funding allocation. Improving the ability of these programs to meet the needs of farmers will increase enrollment in incentive programs while maintaining the economic viability of farming operations. The ultimate outcome will be an increase in the pace, scale and quality of environmental benefit gained from restoration projects on farms.

This report provides a summary of the landowner outreach and survey effort including:

- Overview of project area
- Overview of outreach methodology
- Summary of survey results
- Summary of findings
- Recommendations

Background

Farmland borders almost every major river and stream flowing into the Puget Sound. With agricultural uses concentrated in critical natural

resource areas – floodplains, estuaries and wetland and stream corridors – the health of these areas, and the Puget Sound itself, depend a great deal on how this farmland is managed. While there are serious concerns among farmers about the recent infusion of regulatory requirements and authority, there is also a growing awareness about the critical need for farmers and other rural landowners to do their part to improve and protect the health of our waterways and the Puget Sound.

Conservation incentive programs are a popular means of engaging private landowners to improve and protect wildlife habitat and water quality on a voluntary basis. In Washington State, these programs range from federal and state financial assistance programs to local government tax relief and technical assistance programs. Many federal, state, and local agencies offer voluntary conservation incentive programs that partially compensate landowners for doing conservation and restoration work on their property. These programs have great potential to improve environmental quality, help farmers maintain financially and environmentally sound operations and engage and educate landowners on land stewardship.

There is a strong consensus that voluntary participation in environmental conservation and restoration is key to affecting landscape-scale improvements. Too often, however, the current incentive programs miss the mark in meeting the needs of the landowner, and as a result, the intended environmental outcomes are not achieved. Additionally, critical state and federal funding for agricultural best management practices is conditioned upon the implementation of specific salmon and shellfish restoration measures; specifically, mandated minimum riparian buffer widths on fish-bearing rivers and streams. Anecdotally, it appears these minimum riparian buffer width requirements, which were recently increased in 2013, are not economically feasible for farmers. AFT and SCD are concerned that participation rates in voluntary conservation incentive programs on the part of farmers have and will continue to decline as a result of these new requirements. As a result, we could be missing out on a sizeable

opportunity to achieve desired improvements in salmon habitat and water quality. This is one of the major reasons AFT and SCD conducted this study with the hope that the agencies managing these incentive programs will use this as a guide as they work together to increase voluntary participation.

During the last several years, a number of agencies and organizations have been examining ways to increase the effectiveness of conservation incentive programs. A recurring theme emerged from their assessment: more landowners need to participate to achieve the desired results of voluntary conservation incentive programs. Due to a shared commitment to helping farmers improve environmental quality while remaining economically viable, AFT and SCD wanted to understand more about why some landowners participate in conservation incentive programs and others do not. We also wanted to gain insight into how to overcome the barriers that may be preventing wider participation, so we could recommend steps that will lead to a more effective and efficient technical and financial support system for landowners. Since landowners themselves are the best source for this kind of information, we initiated a landowner outreach effort to learn more about the barriers to participation in voluntary conservation incentive programs and what kind of assistance would help them overcome these barriers.

Overview of Project Area

The Snohomish River Basin was chosen for the project area for a number of reasons. It is the second largest watershed in the Puget Sound, straddling two counties—King and Snohomish—allowing outreach efforts to cross jurisdictional boundaries. The Snohomish Basin is one of the fastest growing areas in Puget Sound. With much of its farmland near urbanized areas or under development pressure, conservation actions can often be most effective. Local jurisdictions and environmental groups have a strong history of collaboration toward

mutual goals and working with farmers on successful restoration efforts, most recently through the Sustainable Lands Strategy. The Snohomish watershed is also named in the Puget Sound Partnership’s Action Agenda as an area of local priority for the control and management of agricultural runoff. Finally, some of the best farmland remaining in western Washington flanks the Snohomish River and the lower portions of its two main tributaries, the Skykomish and Snoqualmie Rivers. Two sub-basins in the Stillaguamish River were added to

Focus Sub-basins

- Pilchuck River
- Woods Creek
- Tualco Valley
- Cherry Creek/Snoqualmie River
- Upper half of Lower Stillaguamish River
- Lower North Fork Stillaguamish River

the project area to broaden outreach efforts. These reaches share many of the same landscape characteristics, agricultural use and resource concerns found in the Snohomish River Basin.

Six focus sub-basins were chosen because they represent a nexus of agricultural land and Chinook salmon habitat. As such, they represent major rivers or larger streams in areas zoned for rural residential or agriculture. All six project area sub-basins are located in the Snohomish River watershed (WRIA 7) and the Stillaguamish River watershed (WRIA 5).

Pilchuck River

The Pilchuck River enters the Snohomish River about 10 miles before it empties into Possession Sound North of Everett, WA. While the upper watershed is in forestry, the floodplain of the middle and lower reaches that we targeted for this project is zoned primarily for agriculture (10 acre parcels). The project area extended south from the town of Granite Falls to the confluence with the Snohomish River, where ESA listed Chinook salmon spawn and rear. Salmon habitat is limited by high water temperatures in the

summer and lack of side channels and large wood in the channel for use by juvenile fish.

Woods Creek

Woods Creek is a tributary to the Skykomish River, and passes through land zoned for rural residential (5 acre parcels) as well as forestry. While the lower section of the stream runs through land zoned for agriculture, most of the land-use adjacent to the stream is small hobby farms and equestrian centers. The focus area covered Lower Woods Creek, the West Fork, and the East Fork to the fish impassable waterfall. Chinook salmon, in addition to steelhead, coho, pink, and bull trout inhabit this stream. Salmon habitat is limited by high water temperatures in the summer, lack of large wood in the stream, and high fine sediment loads. Woods Creek is also impaired for fecal coliform contamination.

Tualco Valley

The Tualco Valley is north of the Snoqualmie River and South of the Skykomish River, immediately before they join to form the Snohomish River. The Tualco Valley consists of a series of streams, sloughs, drainage ditches, and wetlands that run through prime agricultural land. The valley is characterized by large parcels, many traditional commercial-scale agricultural enterprises, including row crops, dairy, and hay. Chinook, coho, and pink salmon as well as steelhead spawn and rear in the Skykomish and Snoqualmie Rivers. Tributary streams, side channels, and sloughs in the valley have the potential of providing valuable habitat to rearing salmon but are currently limited by water quality and flow issues.

Cherry Creek/Snoqualmie River

Cherry Creek is a tributary to the Snoqualmie River. Like much of the Snoqualmie Valley it has significant agricultural activity in the lower portion while the headwaters are dominated by

active forestry. The project area includes approximately 2.5 miles of Cherry Creek, to its confluence with the mainstem Snoqualmie River, and 9.5 miles south along the mainstem to its confluence with Ames Creek. Chinook salmon, in addition to steelhead, coho, pink, and bull trout inhabit this stream. Salmon habitat is limited by lack of riparian vegetation in the lower reaches and loss of floodplain connectivity due to dikes along the river.

Upper Half of Lower Stillaguamish River

The lower Stillaguamish River, where the North and South Forks combine, meanders through large, productive farms within the wide floodplain. Much of the lower river has been diked and actively drained to support agricultural production primarily in crops, livestock, and hay. As a result, much of the riparian forest has been removed. Salmon habitat is impaired by high water temperatures in the summer and the shellfish harvest in Port Susan and South Skagit Bay are threatened by high fecal coliform counts. The Stillaguamish River supports runs of Chinook salmon, steelhead, and bull trout as well as coho and pink salmon.

Lower North Fork Stillaguamish River

While much of the land draining to the North Fork of the Stillaguamish River is in active forestry, the parcels along the river itself are primarily in agriculture. Horse owners share the land with production of cattle, crops, and hay. The North Fork supports a distinct run of Chinook salmon and habitat it limited by high water temperatures and lack of in-stream habitat (lack of large wood, high fine sediment levels, lack of side channel and edge habitat).

Landowner Outreach Methodology

Project staff developed an initial set of questions that asked landowners about the size and type of their farm, their level of knowledge about conservation incentive programs, any past experience they had participating in these programs, their motivations for doing so, and their preferences regarding the structure and design of the programs. Relevant experts within AFT and SCD, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Farm Services Agency (FSA), Washington State Department of Ecology, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and Forterra reviewed draft questions and provided feedback and/or added questions that were relevant to their own funding sources and programs. Reviewers' feedback was integrated to construct a survey that addressed landowners' general interest in the incentive programs being offered and willingness to implement specific conservation actions. The primary purpose of this survey was to find out how we can increase participation in the incentive programs.

The survey was completed in tandem with a series of six landowner workshops (community meetings) held in the focus sub-basins throughout the Snohomish and Stillaguamish River watersheds.

Landowners were invited to participate based on their property's river/streamside proximity, and meetings were held at local venues in each of the six project areas. Landowners were invited to learn about ways they could make money by implementing conservation on their property. This message was effective as the workshops were well attended (more so than typical educational workshops offered by SCD). The workshops provided information on conservation incentive programs offered by federal, state and local entities, how to get involved, and what benefits landowners might be able to receive through participation. During the meetings, project and agency staff presented to participants on the challenges of balancing competing resource needs within the watershed,

and the potential for conservation incentive programs to help provide benefits to farms and fish. Short informational presentations gave landowners the information necessary to determine which programs would be most appropriate for them and the potential benefits of enrollment were provided. Key staff members led small group discussions after the presentations to listen to landowner feedback and collect input. Program staff was available to answer questions, and at the end of the meeting participants were encouraged to fill out surveys. Approximately 75 landowners attended the workshops with attendance varying by area.

The survey was distributed in three ways: (1) at the six landowner workshops; (2) via US mail to 650 streamside landowners; and (3) via an on-line survey (a link to a Survey Monkey website was sent via US mail to the 650 streamside landowners). The initial survey included 41 questions, and was distributed at three of the six community meetings. Seventeen workshop participants filled out this survey. After reviewing these survey results, project staff decided to create a simplified, shorter survey with only 25 questions. The second version of the survey (see Attachment 1) was filled out by 47 people. In total, 64 completed surveys were collected, a 10 percent response rate.

Conservation Incentive Programs Presented to Landowners

- Selling property for conservation (easement or outright)
- Selling development rights (purchase or transfer)
- Ecosystem services
- Wetland Reserve Program (NRCS)
- Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) (FSA)
- Environmental Quality Incentive Program (NRCS)
- Leasing water rights
- Open Space Taxation (County and State of Washington)
- Financial assistance through the local Conservation District
- Financial assistance through grants

The landowner workshops and survey focused on both private and public federal, state, county and local programs offered by a variety of organizations including Farm Services Agency (FSA), Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), King and/or Snohomish counties, King and/or Snohomish Conservation Districts and non-profit organizations.

Summary of Survey Results

The results below represent quantitative data compiled from survey questions and qualitative information gathered from comments made by landowners either on the survey or at landowner workshops.

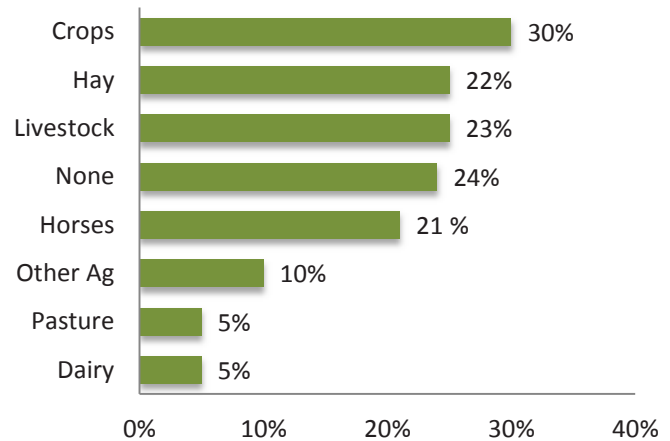
Land Use and Parcel Size

Of the 64 respondents who completed the landowner survey, 76 percent practice agriculture on their property, with row crops, hay and livestock being the most common types farming. Non-agricultural landowners accounted for 24 percent of respondents. Although this project seeks to help target incentives and conservation actions on farms, some incentive programs can offer support to non-agricultural landowners, and including these neighboring properties in a larger restoration project can help provide continuity and increase environmental benefits.

The survey asked landowners to identify all types of agriculture they practice. Results show there is a wide variety of agriculture occurring in the project area, dominated by crops (30%), livestock (23%) and hay (22%) and over a third (35%) of respondents reporting more than one type of agricultural use. Equestrian use is also common in the area.

Survey respondents reported owning (or leasing) over 3,500 acres throughout the project area. Parcel size of survey respondents ranges from 0.5 to 950 acres. The average parcel size for the landowners is 45.6 acres; slightly smaller than

Type of Agriculture in the Project Area

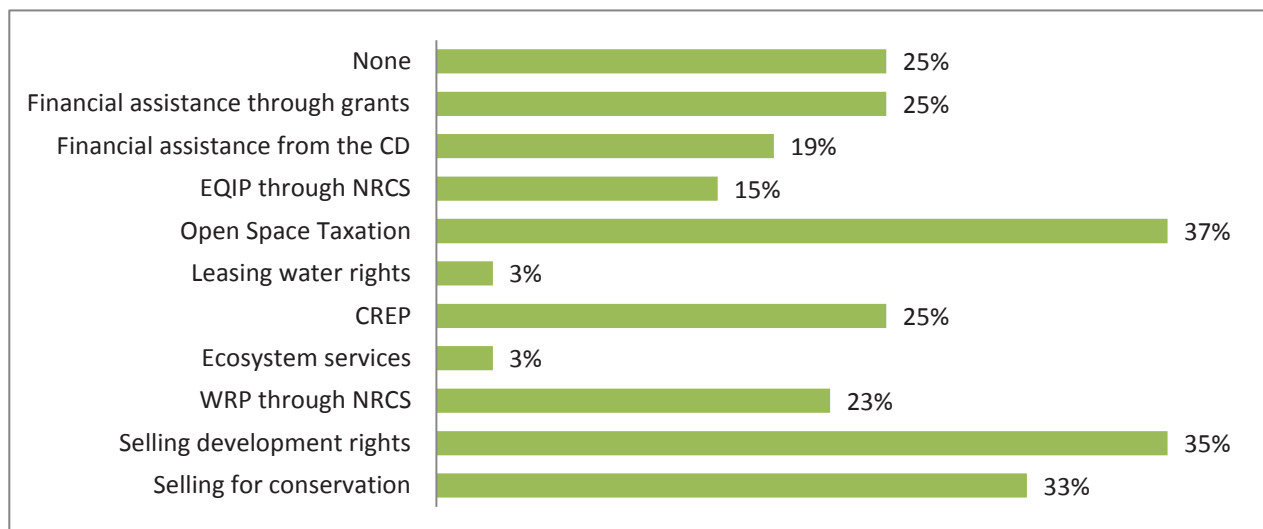


the average farm size in the Puget Sound, which is just over 52 acres. The median parcel size is 14 acres indicating that a few large farms skewed the average size up higher. Over one third (36%) of all landowners surveyed own five acres or less. The smaller average parcel size in the project area may be due to the large number of non-agricultural landowners and hobby farmers included in the survey, primarily in the Pilchuck and Woods Creek areas. Additionally, the most common type of agriculture is crops, and farmers growing vegetables and other specialty row crops often need less acreage to be financially successful. Nine respondents (14%) reported owning (or leasing) over 100 acres. Over half (5) of these respondents practiced livestock or dairy operations.

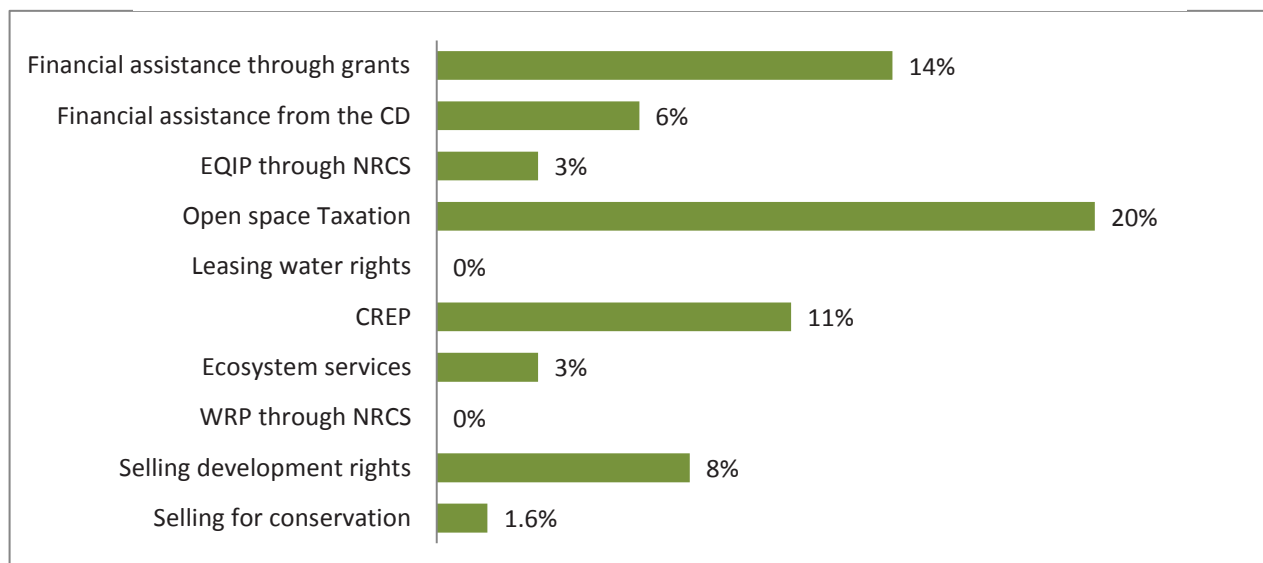
Common Landowner Challenges

When asked what challenges exist for landowners in their area, the majority of respondents reported changes in hydrology. Increased flooding and erosion, poor drainage, and sedimentation of local streams and other waterways were all cited as challenges—accounting in total for 60 percent of responses. It is also important to note that nearly a fifth (17%) of respondents cited burdensome regulations as a challenge for landowners.

Landowner Knowledge of Conservation Incentive Programs



Landowner Participation in Conservation Incentive Programs



Landowner Knowledge and Participation

Although many of the landowners we talked to and surveyed had owned property in the area for years, farmed their land, and were interested in learning how they could get paid to complete restoration projects and improve daily operations on the property, many had never heard of the conservation incentive programs presented at the community meetings. One quarter (25%) of survey respondents had never heard of any of

the programs presented. And of the ten programs mentioned in the survey, over 60 percent had heard of two or less.

Landowner knowledge about available conservation incentive programs varied with most respondents being familiar with the open space taxation program (37%) and selling development rights (35%). Other programs most known to landowners include selling property for conservation (33%), CREP (25%), financial assistance through grants (25%) and WRP (23%). Only 15 percent of respondents

25 percent of survey respondents had never heard of any conservation incentive programs.

had heard of EQIP. Programs that landowners are least familiar with include ecosystem services (3%) and leasing water rights (3%).

Landowners reported that they receive information about conservation incentive programs from a variety of sources. The most common source was through the local Conservation District (Snohomish and King Conservation Districts; 29%). Other sources of information include neighbors and other farmers, the County and news media.

Participation in existing conservation incentive programs was low among the survey respondents. **Only 39 percent had participated in any conservation incentive program.** The most common programs landowners had participated in were Open Space Taxation (20%), financial assistance through grants (14%), and CREP (11%). A handful of landowners had sold development rights (8%), received financial assistance from the local CD (6%), participated in EQIP (3%), environmental markets (3%), and sold land for conservation outright (2%). None of the landowners surveyed had leased water rights or participated in the Wetland Reserve Program.

Even for incentive programs such as Open Space Taxation, a state tax relief program run by individual counties, participation was lower than might be expected; especially given the relatively low barriers to participation and the (potentially) significant direct financial benefits to the landowner. Only one third of the

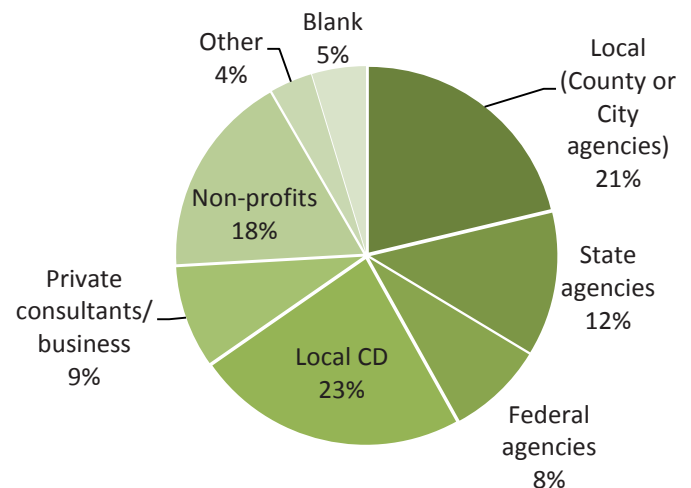
landowners surveyed were currently enrolled in the open space tax program. Of those who were not enrolled, over a third (33%) stated they lack sufficient information about the program.

Landowner Motivations and Preferences

Of the 25 survey respondents who had participated in one or more programs, **almost two thirds (63%) reported that they had done the work because the project provided a benefit to the environment. This was the most often cited motivating factor.** Over half cited a financial benefit, whether that was funding to complete necessary work on their property (32%) or to receive a payment or credit (29%). Nearly 15 percent stated they were motivated to participate because a neighbor did it first, suggesting that peer-to-peer outreach is important. Only 11 percent stated that they participated because “it improved production or operations on the property.” This could either indicate that landowners are more motivated by the environmental benefit or that the operational benefits are unclear to landowners.

When asked what type of organization they would prefer to work with, the majority of respondents preferred working with local groups

Type of Organization Landowners Prefer to Work With



rather than state or federal agencies.. The most preferred type of organization for landowners is the local Conservation District (67%), followed by City or County agencies (53%) and non-profits (45%). Landowners were less inclined to work with State (27%) and Federal (17%) agencies. Eight percent of the respondents had no preference.

To better protect or restore natural resources, some agencies have implemented acquisition or protection strategies based on purchasing restoration sites outright or purchasing easements. To better understand what type of restoration approach would appeal to landowners, survey respondents were asked whether they would rather sell the portion of their land that is being restored to the government or a non-profit organization, or rather retain ownership of it. Overwhelmingly, respondents said they would prefer to retain ownership (82%).

Landowner Experiences with Conservation Incentive Programs

The survey included two questions intended to solicit landowner feedback regarding their experiences in participating in conservation incentive programs. The questions essentially asked what went well, what didn't, and what could be improved. Positive experiences expressed by survey respondents include a well-organized project, helpful and efficient program staff and satisfaction with project results in terms of intended function and durability. Negative experiences cited by landowners include poor follow-through by program staff, difficulties with program administration and frustration with project outcomes in terms of intended function.

In addition to the survey responses, project staff gathered additional feedback on landowner experiences through conversations at landowner workshops. Many landowners who had participated in conservation incentive programs in the past expressed frustrations with the process, especially in trying to coordinate efforts with the program staff, agencies or funders. In a

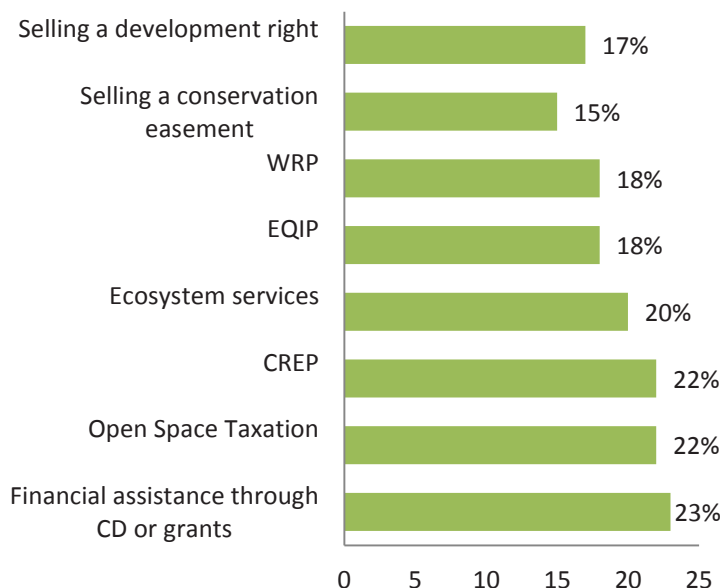
few cases, landowners had applied and were enthusiastic about participating in a program, but ended up feeling abandoned either because the program was not funded sufficiently or there was a lack of follow-through. Several landowners noted that often times programs are not designed to solve the challenges they face and available programs do not always promote the most relevant benefits. For example, program literature and staff may fail to emphasize flood control or erosion prevention benefits that might accompany a conservation action, like installing a buffer. Finally, a number of landowners noted the complexity of conservation incentive programs. Multiple programs, each with its own requirements, forms, deadlines, timelines, funding sources and restraints can be challenging for an individual to navigate if they wanted to take advantage of the opportunity.

Landowner Interest and Outreach

As stated earlier, surveys were distributed at each of the landowner workshops. The initial version of the survey, which was later shortened, was completed at a workshop by 16 landowners. This early version asked if the workshop was helpful and/or informative and 16 out of 17 respondents said yes (one respondent left the question blank). When these respondents were asked how likely they would be to participate in conservation incentive programs following the workshop, a majority (73%) answered "more likely" with 27 percent stating "the same". This indicates that workshops that are focused on ways landowners can receive financial incentives for projects on their property can be an effective way of increasing participation.

All 64 survey respondents were asked about their interest in being contacted about conservation incentive programs. Sixty-three percent of respondents wanted to be contacted with additional information about one or more programs. Nearly half (48%) of all respondents were interested in more than one program. Programs landowners are most interested in include financial assistance either through the conservation district or grants (23%), open space

Landowner Interest in Conservation Incentive Programs



taxation (22%) and CREP (22%). Landowners also wanted additional information about ecosystem services (20%), EQIP and WRP (18% each) and either selling a conservation easement (15%) or development rights (17%). One-quarter (25%) of respondents were not sure which program, if any, applied to their property but wanted to receive more information. These results underscore the relative lack of awareness of conservation incentive programs in the project area, the general willingness among survey respondents to participate in these programs and the need for increased landowner outreach efforts.

Respondents to the second survey were also asked if program staff (from AFT or SCD) could contact them to learn more about their views. A majority of respondents said yes (70%), suggesting that landowners in the project area are interested in sharing their experiences and perspectives on conservation incentive programs.

Riparian Buffers

Several of the survey questions asked landowners specifically about riparian buffers on their property. In light of the changing guidance

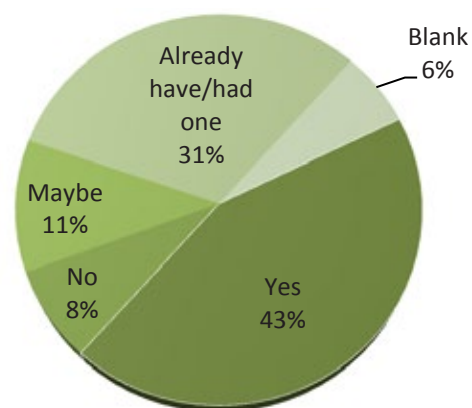
on stream buffers and the ongoing debate over the most appropriate way to use buffers to improve water quality and riparian habitat without negatively impacting farmers, project staff wanted to better gauge landowners'—and especially agricultural landowners'—willingness to plant native buffers on their property. When asked, landowners were open to planting native buffers along the waterways on their property.

Forty-three percent surveyed responded that they would be willing to plant a native buffer.

Only five survey respondents (8%) answered “no” outright when asked about their willingness to plant a native riparian buffer. Of those who responded “yes,” parcel size did not appear to be a factor – the median parcel size (14 acres) is the same as overall survey results. Twelve parcels are 5 acres or smaller and four parcels are 100 acres or larger. Of those willing to plant a native riparian buffer, over half (57%) reported a pasture-related agricultural use (e.g.; livestock, horses, hay) while just over 20 percent practiced exclusively crop-related agriculture. Thirty-two percent were non-agricultural land owners.

Although almost one third (31%) of the landowners surveyed said they already have a native buffer on their property, some of the individual responses revealed that the landowner was referring to a buffer of blackberries or other non-native species—highlighting a potential need for better education and clarification between native, and simply wild – and that these

Landowner Willingness to Plant a Native Buffer



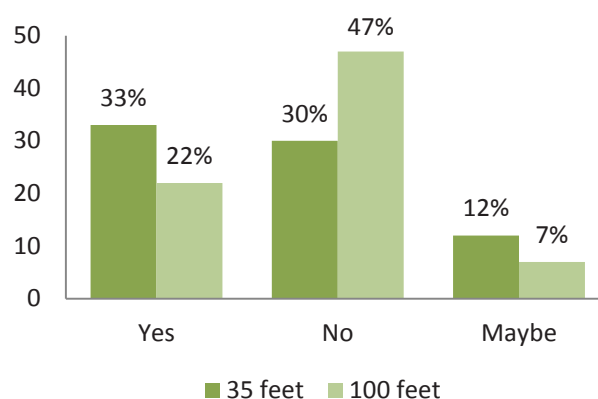
properties may hold good potential for riparian restoration projects.

Although many landowners seemed open to the idea of a native buffer on their property, even where none existed, many were not willing to consider planting at the widths some incentive programs hope to achieve to meet natural resource goals. Of the respondents who said they would be willing to plant a native buffer on their property, 36 percent responded that they would consider planting a buffer only up to 35 feet. Looking more closely at these respondents, only three were willing to plant a 35-foot wide buffer, the remainder indicated an even narrower maximum width. Only 28 percent willing to plant a native buffer expressed a willingness to consider buffer widths greater than 50 feet. A full one quarter (25%) responded “not sure” and 21 percent said it depends on one or more of several variables, including location, need and feasibility. These data indicate that landowners willing to consider planting a native buffer are most willing to plant narrower buffers (less than 100 feet) and that width is only one factor when determining whether or not to plant a riparian buffer.

When including all respondents (those who answered “yes”, “maybe” and “already have one”), one quarter (25%) responded that they would consider planting a buffer only up to 35 feet, while nearly the same number of respondents (26%) expressed a willingness to consider buffer widths greater than 50 feet. When asked specifically “If you were required to have at least a 100-foot buffer to qualify for incentive programs, would you be willing to consider it?” the majority of respondents (48%) answered “no”. It is worth noting that over a third (32%) answered “yes” and 8 percent answered “maybe” to considering at least a 100-foot buffer. Of those unwilling to plant a 100-foot buffer, only nine (26%) are producing crops while a majority (74%) are practicing some sort of pasture-related agriculture, with livestock the most prominent. Parcel size did not appear to be a prominent factor, although the median parcel size (12 acres) of those unwilling to plant a 100-foot buffer was slightly smaller than the overall median parcel size (14 acres).

Several survey questions were aimed specifically at the CREP program to determine whether or not current rental rates and buffer guidelines are effective. When asked if they would consider planting a 35-foot buffer at current rental rates (approximately \$350/acre), those that would or would not were quite similar (33% and 30%, respectively) with twelve percent answering “maybe”. When asked if they would consider planting a 100-foot buffer at the

Landowner Willingness to Plant CREP Buffers



same current rental rates, the number of those not interested in the program increased to 47%. Twenty-two percent said they would consider a 100-foot buffer at the current rate, and 7 percent answered “maybe”. Eighteen percent of those who answered “yes” or “maybe” to considering a 35-foot buffer answered “no” to considering a 100-foot buffer at the same current rental rate.

It also appears that potential income loss deters only a portion of landowners from considering a buffer. When asked if they would be losing income potential by planting a buffer, almost half (48%) answered “no” while only 20 percent answered “yes”. Of those who answered yes, a total of five landowners are growing crops, although only three are growing crops exclusively. Of those who answered “no,” a total of nine landowners are growing crops, five exclusively. The majority of those who answered “yes” regarding potential income loss are practicing pasture-related agriculture (e.g.; livestock, hay and horses). Based on comments

provided on the survey, landowners are concerned with the loss of land (i.e.; land in a buffer would not be available for pasture) as well as shading of crops and pasture.

The survey also included a question to gauge landowner interest in the “working buffer” concept. Landowners were asked, “If you could get compensation for a stream buffer, but still be able to use it for some purposes, which uses would be of greatest interest?” A large majority (78%) of respondents stated that they would like to retain use of a stream buffer for one or more activities. The activity of greatest interest to landowners is seasonal livestock grazing (34%) followed by harvest of non-timber forest products (28%), firewood harvest/pole production (17%), a variety of other uses (15%) and recreation (12%). These results suggest that there is strong interest in the “working buffer” concept and that conservation incentive programs could be modified to include additional uses compatible with restoration objectives.

In looking at the individual responses to both questions about buffer width specifically, several landowners articulated the complexities involved. Farmers expressed that the feasibility of installing a buffer depends on the location, type of farming, the size of their operation, and what they might be allowed to do with the buffer once it was planted and as it matures. In talking with farmers, it became clear that decisions about enrolling in a long-term conservation incentive program are not solely based on a simple rental rate calculation (like that used by CREP).

Ecosystem Services

AFT staff were especially interested in exploring the potential for ecosystem services – which can pay farmers and other rural landowners for producing ecosystem or natural resource “credits” on their land – as a component of a successful conservation strategy. The survey included a number of questions relevant to ecosystem services. When asked if they were interested in selling credits, 32 percent of respondents answered “yes,” yet a majority

(47%) answered “not sure, need more information”. This is not surprising since, as noted earlier, only 3 percent of respondents had existing knowledge about ecosystem services. It is interesting to note, however, that 20 percent of respondents expressed interest in obtaining more information about ecosystem services.

Summary of Findings

Although there is a wide variety of agricultural uses in the project area, our survey did not show a strong correlation between type of agriculture and participation in conservation incentive programs.

The primary challenge to landowners in the project area is hydrology, including recent climatic changes (increase in events and/or severity) and impact on farm operations and farmland. Burdensome regulations are also a challenge.

Landowners prefer to work with local organizations, particularly Conservation Districts, but are also willing to work with County agencies and non-profits. Who the “face” of the program is for the landowner may make an important difference in how willing they are to get involved. Many incentive programs are funded and administered by state and federal agencies, but many landowners prefer to work with programs that are administered locally. For example, only 17 percent of landowners preferred to work with the federal government and only 18 percent wished to be contacted about either EQIP or WRP. That said, federal programs constitute the lion’s share of available financial assistance. Administering more federal programs through local agencies, as is done with CREP, may increase participation.

Landowner workshops are informative and helpful and may increase the likelihood of participation in programs. Landowners who knew about the incentive programs already received their information from a variety of sources including direct mailings, informational

booths and websites, indicating that program providers need to consider more than one method of communication. Conservation Districts, as the preferred contact organization for landowners, are a good conduit for landowner outreach as well as neighbor-to-neighbor interaction.

Landowners are generally interested in learning more about all of the conservation incentive programs we presented. There is, however, a prevailing lack of awareness about available programs in the project area we surveyed. Twenty-five percent of survey respondents had not heard of any of the conservation incentive programs included in the survey. And of the ten programs mentioned in the survey, over 60 percent had heard of two or less.

Existing knowledge about available conservation incentive programs is highest for programs that offer direct financial benefit to landowners – open space taxation, selling development rights, and selling (outright or a conservation easement) a property.

Participation in voluntary conservation incentive programs is relatively low. Only 38 percent of survey respondents had participated in any conservation incentive program. The most common programs landowners had participated in were Open Space Taxation (20%), financial assistance through grants (14%), and CREP (11%). None of the landowners surveyed had




Only 38 percent of survey respondents had participated in any conservation incentive program.




leased water rights or participated in the Wetland Reserve Program.

Many landowners who had participated in conservation incentive programs in the past expressed frustrations with the process, especially in trying to coordinate efforts with the program staff, agencies or funders. Multiple programs, each with its own requirements, forms, deadlines, timelines, delays, funding sources and restraints can be challenging for an individual to navigate and use. A different suite of programs might be most appropriate for each landowner, meaning that getting more farmers involved may require additional support at an individual level to help package programs to provide a compelling incentive that will meet the specific needs of the landowner. This relies on outreach providers, such as Conservation Districts and non-profits, to be knowledgeable about the full suite of incentive programs and their continuing updates and/or changes.

Of the 25 survey respondents who had participated in one or more programs, almost two thirds (63%) reported that they had done the work because the project provided a benefit to the environment. This was the most often cited motivating factor. Improving water quality, completing necessary work, and a direct financial payment are also motivators.



63 percent of those who had participated in one or more programs said their primary motivation was because it provided a benefit to the environment.




When participating in a conservation incentive program, an overwhelming majority (82%) of landowners prefer to retain ownership rather than sell their property (or a portion of their property). Easement programs such as CREP, WRP and selling of development rights might, therefore, be more popular than selling property outright. Easement programs such as CREP, WRP and selling of development rights might, therefore, be more popular than selling property outright.

Available programs are often not flexible enough or tailored to meet landowner needs. Programs may not be designed to solve the particular challenges landowners face and, often times, program staff and/or literature does not promote the most relevant attributes and/or benefits to landowners. Additionally, programs don't always promote the most relevant attributes, and program literature and staff may fail to emphasize flood control or erosion prevention benefits that might accompany a conservation action, like installing a buffer. As one farmer enrolled in CREP pointed out, having a stream buffer has prevented thousands of dollars in damage to his crops by keeping brush and other debris carried by floods from accumulating on his fields. The rental payment he receives for the land the buffer is planted on is important, but not the only benefit gained from enrollment in the program. Ultimately, program providers must effectively demonstrate that the programs that they are offering, or "selling," will benefit the landowner, fit into the existing farming operation and be simple to use. Much of the challenge of promoting programs is effectively communicating with the landowner. Learning to talk to landowners about the whole picture, and explaining the benefits of conservation incentives in terms that make sense to them, may help boost participation.


There is a general willingness to plant riparian buffers although most are willing to set aside only a 35-foot area along a stream or river for planting. There is strong resistance to planting 100-foot wide (or greater) riparian buffers. When asked "If you were required to have at least a 100-foot buffer to qualify for incentive programs, would you be willing to consider it?"

almost half of respondents (48%) answered "no".

Financial considerations for planting riparian buffers are less important than anticipated; however, it could be that the CREP rental rates provided in the survey are nowhere near enough



When participating in a conservation incentive program, 82 percent of landowners prefer to retain ownership rather than sell their property.



and thus not a significant motivator to participate in the program. For farmers, the feasibility of installing a buffer depends on the location, type of farming, the size of their operation, and what they might be allowed to do with the buffer once it was planted and as it matures.

The majority (78%) of those willing to plant a buffer expressed an interest in retaining some type of use of the buffer for one or more activities. The activity of greatest interest to landowners is seasonal livestock grazing (34%) followed by harvest of non-timber forest products (28%), firewood harvest/pole production (17%), a variety of other uses (15%) and recreation (12%). These results suggest that there is strong interest in the "working buffer" concept and that conservation incentive programs could be modified to include additional uses – including those that could generate income for the landowner – compatible with restoration objectives.

Often in talking with farmers, it became clear it that a simple rental rate calculation (like that used by CREP) was only one factor in many in making a decision about enrolling in a long-term conservation incentive program. Surprisingly,

the potential loss of income was not reported as a significant barrier to planting a riparian buffer. Flexibility with other factors, such as location, species composition and width, surfaced as a key component of program participation, particularly riparian buffer installation.

Finally, there is a general lack of awareness of, but strong interest in, ecosystem services. Given the private, market-based funding that may accompany these programs, along with direct landowner involvement in project design, ecosystem services hold good potential for engaging farmers and other rural landowners in conservation work. This is further supported by landowners' strong interest in the "working buffer" concept wherein landowners could participate in revenue-generating activities – such as harvest of non-timber forest products and firewood harvest/pole production – while enrolled in a conservation incentive program.

Recommendations

Landowners in the Snohomish and Stillaguamish River basins are interested in improving environmental quality. They are willing to consider participating in conservation incentive programs to address salmon habitat and water quality resource concerns, including planting riparian buffers. No single barrier to participation bubbled to the top; rather, a range of challenges – perceived and actual – related to information and outreach, program design and administration and technical and financial assistance present very real obstacles to landowners.

Based on what we have learned, we believe that a significant expansion of participation in voluntary conservation incentive programs will require a broad-based, coordinated effort to address all of the key challenges landowners face in considering whether to participate. We recommend that federal, state and local conservation incentive program providers and other interested parties come together to discuss the findings of this report. Collectively, providers can develop a comprehensive strategy

for helping farmers and agricultural landowners obtain the right type and level of information, technical assistance and financial compensation needed to significantly increase voluntary conservation incentive program participation. Our works suggests five broad categories to address.

Recommendations to Address

- Information and outreach
- Financial assistance
- Technical assistance
- Program administration
- Program design

Information and Outreach

The fact that over 60 percent of respondents had heard of less than two of the ten programs presented indicates there is a great need for outreach work to landowners. Recommendations for improving information and outreach efforts include:

Increase landowner outreach and education efforts. Use a diversity of media and information outlets to contact landowners.

Market incentive programs in a way that addresses landowner needs. Staff should emphasize the multiple benefits to a property owner when marketing incentive programs. As one farmer enrolled in CREP pointed out, having a stream buffer has "prevented thousands of dollars in damage to his crops by keeping brush and other debris carried by floods from accumulating on his fields." Ultimately, program providers must effectively demonstrate that the programs they are offering, or "selling," will benefit the landowner, fit into the existing farming operation and be simple to use. Tailor the outreach – or "sales pitch" – for conservation incentive programs to effectively communicate with individual landowners and promote relevant benefits.

Increase the capacity of local organizations to educate landowners about available incentive programs. Conservation Districts, non-profit organizations, and County government interface with landowners frequently and need to be educated on the myriad of incentive programs available so they can share appropriate programs with landowners. Funding sources and programs must include capacity funds to help these local organizations support outreach staff and enable them to target priority areas.

Provide funding for on-the-ground watershed-based staff dedicated to conservation incentive program delivery.

Provide “one stop shopping” for conservation incentives. A regularly-updated landowner-friendly publication or a coordinated website with comprehensive information about programs, benefits, and requirements would help landowners identify which incentive programs they might qualify for.

Better coordinate the services and information of various program providers to provide a comprehensive suite of available programs. Program providers need more knowledge about programs outside their agency/organization to adequately answer questions about the benefits of trying conservation incentive programs and also to create opportunities that will encourage landowner participation in any program.

Assess and improve the effectiveness of landowner outreach efforts based on increased conservation incentive program participation. Gauging results of specific outreach activities can offer guidance to improve, streamline and scale-up regional efforts.

Financial Assistance

Financial assistance, either through cost-share that pays for work on a property that is perceived as necessary, or through a payment that provides added income, was a motivator for over 50 percent of participants who had already

participated in an incentive program. As such, we conclude that if the type and amount of financial assistance provided was better aligned with the needs of landowners, participation would increase. Specific recommendations include:

Decrease the amount of funding the landowner is required to contribute to a project. Rates for EQIP, for example, sometimes only amount to 50 percent of the total cost to implement the project. Getting the project implemented, therefore, relies on an immediate necessity and a landowner who has enough funding to contribute the cost-share required. In the case of riparian or wetland planting, 100 percent of the project should be paid for by the incentive program. The landowner’s “contribution” is the land that is set aside and no longer used for production or recreation. This is the case for CREP, but EQIP and many other grant programs require a match by the landowner or grant recipient for riparian planting.

Consider new types of financial incentives: bonuses for enrollment in areas of priority resource concerns, a cumulative buffer length bonus (to encourage adjacent landowners to participate), and/or a bonus for wider buffers.

To increase participation in the CREP program, specifically, incentive payments should be increased to more accurately reflect the value of the land taken out of production. While all landowners who received this survey live along a stream or river, only 33 percent were willing to plant a 35-foot buffer at the current rental rate of approximately \$350/acre and that percentage dropped to 22 percent when the buffer width was increased to 100 feet. While many factors contribute to this unwillingness, our data indicates that a higher rental payment or higher signing payment could increase participation. Many counties in other states have supplemented the CREP signing payment successfully (typically \$100/acre one-time payment) through mitigation, grant, or other funds.

Conduct additional landowner surveys to determine the cost-share and other payment assistance levels that are sufficient to engage landowners. Additional landowner input is needed to determine the “price points” for a landowner to participate and the other factors contributing to their decision-making about conservation incentive program participation.

Assess the potential to incorporate market-based ecosystem services programs into cost-share, rental and easement programs. A market-based program (e.g.; wetland mitigation bank) could be used in tandem with a publically-funded program (e.g.; EQIP) to maximize both landowner financial payment and environmental gain.

Technical Assistance

Multiple programs, each with its own requirements, forms, deadlines, timelines, delays, funding sources and restraints can be challenging for an individual to navigate and take advantage of the opportunity. Responsive and effective technical assistance is needed throughout the life of a project and additional support at an individual level may be key to getting more farmers involved. Specific recommendations include:

Reduce the time and effort required by landowners to learn about programs and determine their enrollment eligibility.

Provide streamlined or one-stop shopping opportunities.

Assist interested farmers in becoming enrolled participants by bundling programs to provide a compelling package that will meet their specific needs.

Ensure good follow through regardless of project outcome. Making sure that the landowner doesn’t feel deserted would help guarantee that the landowner remains positive about the program and will still participate in the future if possible.

Provide technical assistance at all stages of project planning and implementation. Assistance can be in the form of workshops, personal contacts and follow-up assistance to landowners enrolled in program(s).

Program Administration

Many landowners who had participated in conservation incentive programs in the past expressed frustrations with the process, especially in trying to coordinate efforts with the program staff, agencies or funders. Improvements in program administration may increase landowner participation. Recommendations include:

Improve and streamline efforts to leverage the resources of multiple agencies and programs. Find ways to encourage agencies to coordinate their efforts.

Improve coordination between outreach efforts and funding schedules to reduce waiting time and uncertainty. This will help landowners who enter into the enrollment process feel that their time will not be wasted. Having incentive programs such as CREP, EQIP, and WRP tied to the Farm Bill can result in long periods of program inactivity and back-ups in enrollments. This also puts significant pressure on conservation districts and other program administrators who struggle to handle the fluctuating capacity needs.

Provide written materials and other resources to WSU staff, Conservation District farm planners, and others who work closely with the local community. These materials should be designed to help landowners determine how conservation incentive programs could improve their farm operations, without getting lost in the details of individual programs.

Program Design

Landowners may be more willing to participate if they are active participants and decision makers in program design. Projects need to be

tailored to meet landowner needs and operational concerns. Recommendations for improving program design include:

Develop programs that address the particular needs of landowners or are offered to them as a package that is, taken together, sufficiently beneficial.

Do not increase minimum buffer widths to 100 feet for salmon bearing streams. Provide flexibility in required minimum buffer widths to address location, type of farming, size of operation and parcel, and future use. Consider flexible (averaging) buffer widths in all programs.

Develop a permanent riparian easement program that enables landowners to retain ownership of their land, while financially incentivizing them to implement riparian enhancement projects in areas of high priority resource concern.

Develop a system for allowing multi-benefit/working riparian buffers that provide a financial benefit to the landowner. Uses identified by landowners include limited livestock grazing, harvest of non-timber products, firewood, pole production, crops, and recreation. This system could incentivize landowners to participate in a program who would not do so otherwise.

Appendix

Landowner Survey

American Farmland Trust and Snohomish Conservation District are conducting a survey of landowners in your area to better understand how environmental incentive programs can be tailored to meet your needs. Your feedback is invaluable. Thank you for your help!

Your responses to this survey will be kept strictly confidential.

1. What type of agriculture do you practice on your property? Check all that apply.

- ☐ Livestock
- ☐ Horses
- ☐ Dairy
- ☐ Crops (vegetables, flowers, fruit)
- ☐ Hay
- ☐ Other _____
- ☐ None

2. What size is your property?

- ☐ It is _____ acres.
- ☐ I prefer not to answer.

3. What challenges exist for landowners in your specific area?

4. What is the most important thing that government agencies and/or nonprofit organizations can do to help support your farm AND improve local conditions for raising healthy salmon fisheries?

5. Conservation incentive programs are government or private programs that pay you to do environmental improvement work on your property. Which conservation incentive programs have you heard of before? Check all that apply.

Permanent approaches – selling something

- ☐ Selling your property for conservation
- ☐ Selling your development rights
- ☐ Wetlands Reserve Program through NRCS
- ☐ Ecosystem services

Temporary approaches – leasing/non-permanent programs

- ☐ Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)

- ☐ Leasing your water rights
 - ☐ Open Space Tax Exemption program through the County
- Project-based approaches – get help paying for something
- ☐ Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) through NRCS
 - ☐ Financial assistance from the Snohomish Conservation District
 - ☐ Financial assistance through grants to improve salmon habitat or water quality

6. How did you learn about them?

7. Check the conservation programs that you have participated in. **If you have not participated in any incentive programs skip to question 12.**

Permanent approaches – selling something

- ☐ Selling your property for conservation
- ☐ Selling your development rights
- ☐ Wetlands Reserve Program through NRCS
- ☐ Ecosystem services

Temporary approaches – leasing/non-permanent programs

- ☐ Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)
- ☐ Leasing your water rights
- ☐ Open Space Tax Exemption program through the County

Project-based approaches – get help paying for something

- ☐ Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) through NRCS
- ☐ Financial assistance from the Snohomish Conservation District
- ☐ Financial assistance through grants to improve salmon habitat or water quality

8. If you don't know what the program was called, who did you work with and what work was done?

9. What motivated you to participate? Check all that apply.

- ☐ Program helped pay to do necessary work on the property.
- ☐ Payment or credit helped provide extra income.
- ☐ Project provided a benefit to the environment.
- ☐ Project improved water quality.

- ☐ Neighbors did it first.
- ☐ Improved production or operations on the property.
- ☐ Other _____

10. What parts of the process went well? If you participated in more than one program, please be as specific as possible about which program you are referring to:

11. What could have been improved? If you participated in more than one program, please be as specific as possible about which program you are referring to:

12. Have you already enrolled your property in the Open Space Taxation program as agricultural, forest, or natural open space for a property tax reduction?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No. Why not?

If you do not live along a stream, river, slough, or wetland, you can skip questions 13 – 19.

A buffer is any area along a stream, river, slough, or wetland that is planted with native vegetation. The buffer width is the distance from the water's edge to the landward edge of your planting.

13. Would you consider planting a native plant buffer along your stream, river, slough, or wetland?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe
- ☐ Already have one

14. How wide of a native plant buffer would you be willing to plant along your stream, river, slough, or wetland?

15. If you were required to have at least a 100' buffer to qualify for incentive programs, would you be willing to consider it?

16. The CREP program currently provides landowners a payment of about \$350/year for each acre newly planted in a native plant buffer along your stream or river.

Example 1: Your river or stream frontage is 1,250 feet long. At \$350/year/acre, you would receive a payment of approximately \$350/year for a 35-foot buffer.

Example 2: Your river or stream frontage is one mile long. At \$350/year/acre, you would receive a payment of approximately \$1500/year for a 35-foot buffer.

Would this payment rate motivate you to plant a 35-foot wide buffer?

17. Would this same payment rate motivate you to plant a 100-foot wide buffer (see examples below)?

18. Are you losing income potential by planting a buffer (crops, pasture, etc.)? How does this influence your decision?

19. If you could get compensation for a stream buffer, but still be able to use it for some purposes, which uses would be of greatest interest?

- ☐ Seasonal livestock grazing
- ☐ Firewood harvest or pole production
- ☐ Non-timber forest products (berries, floral, mushrooms, etc.)
- ☐ Other _____

20. Would you rather sell the portion of your land that is being restored to the government or a non-profit organization or would you rather retain ownership?

21. What type of agency would you prefer to work with? Check all that apply.

- ☐ Local (County and/or City) agencies
- ☐ State agencies
- ☐ Federal agencies
- ☐ Local Conservation District
- ☐ Private consultants/business
- ☐ Non-profit organizations
- ☐ Other _____

22. If you could get paid to permanently improve environmental conditions (e.g., wetlands, riparian habitat, water quality) on your property, would you be interested? You would be able to sell improved and/or protected environmental resources to interested buyers (developers) in the form of "credits."

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure, need more information

23. Would you be interested in listing your property in an inventory so that interested buyers could contact you about purchasing credits?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure, need more information

24. Would you like to be contacted to receive more info or learn about participating in any of these programs? Check all that apply.

Permanent approaches – selling something

- ☐ Selling your property for conservation
- ☐ Selling your development rights
- ☐ Wetlands Reserve Program through NRCS
- ☐ Ecosystem services

Temporary approaches – leasing/non-permanent programs

- ☐ Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)
- ☐ Leasing your water rights
- ☐ Open Space Tax Exemption program through the County

Project-based approaches – get help paying for something

- ☐ Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) through NRCS
- ☐ Financial assistance from the Snohomish Conservation District
- ☐ Financial assistance through grants to improve salmon habitat or water quality
- ☐ Not sure which ones apply to my property but I would like to be contacted with more information.

Thank You For Your Feedback!

Optional:

25. May we contact you to learn more about your views?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Contact information: