

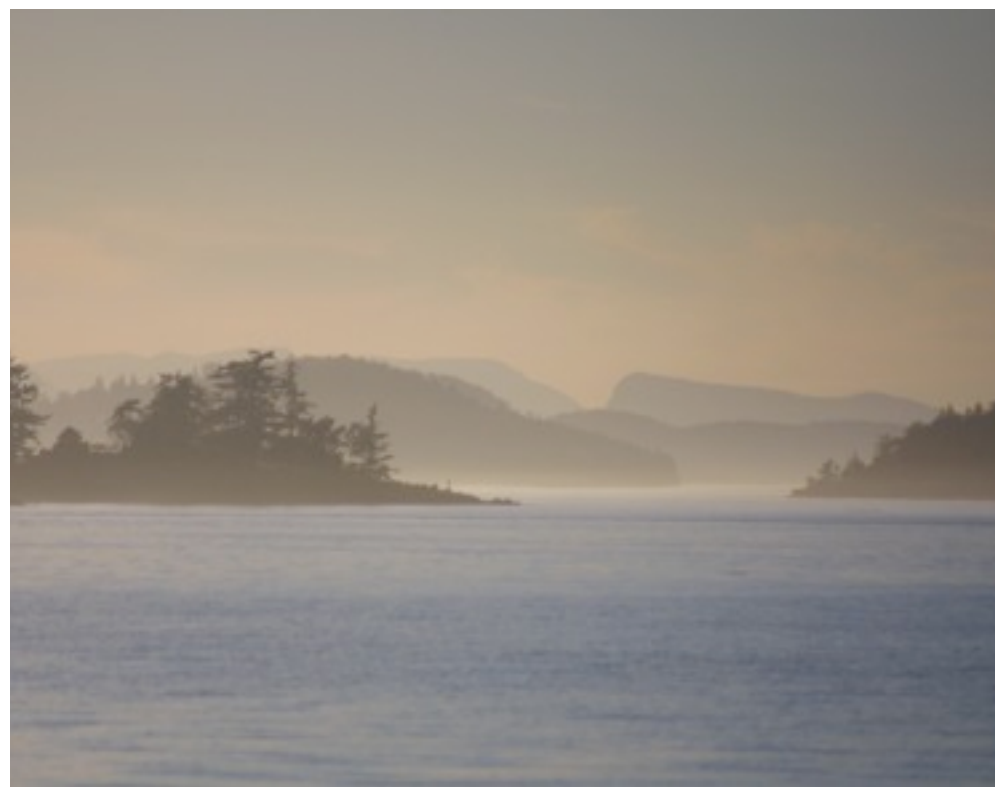
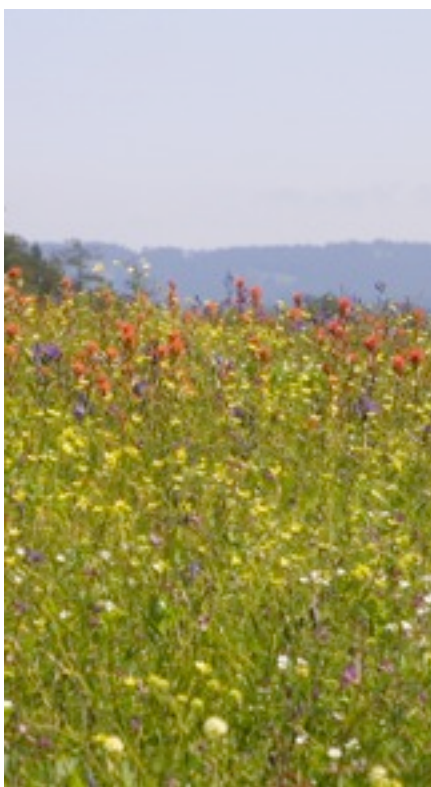


Guide to

Living in the San Juan Islands

by the San Juan Islands Conservation District

2009



Introduction

San Juan Islands Low Impact Living Handbook

Many species and cultures have called the San Juan Islands home. The Lummi, Clallums, Saanitch as well as the later Anglo settlers have shaped the landscapes we see today (Gibbs, *Geological Memoir of the Islands between the Continent and Vancouver's Island*). Tribes utilized the islands during salmon runs and it was noted that they contained "fine timber, good water and grass" (July 19, 1859, Brig. Gen. W. Harney). Living in the San Juan Islands remains important to current residents and the many species on which we rely and share the resources with.

The islands are home to 190 wildflowers, shrubs, trees, and grasses. Animal life includes marine mammals, terrestrial mammals, bats, reptiles, amphibians, more than 200 species of birds, 200 species of fish and hundreds of species of marine invertebrates.

To get to the islands all species must find a way to cross seven to 20 mile stretches of 50-degree open water or traverse the vast expanses of the sky. Some species such as the Scotch Brome, European rabbit, and Norway rat were introduced to the islands by humans.

The future of all of these species is intricately tied to the environmental health of the land, water and air of the San Juan Islands, the Straits of Juan de Fuca, Georgia, Haro and beyond.

Since 1947 the San Juan Islands Conservation District has worked to conserve San Juan County's soil and water resources. We are one of 47 Conservation Districts in Washington State. We are administered by the Washington State Conservation Commission and are charged with protecting natural resources by working with landowners on a voluntary basis, providing incentive-based conservation assistance on private lands, and developing community education and outreach programs. Conservation districts are a unique form of non-regulatory government, matching local needs with technical and financial resources to help landowners solve on-the-ground conservation issues.

Thank you to the Centennial Clean Water Fund at the Washington Dept. of Ecology for funding this guide.

Thank you also to the authors who contributed their time to writing specific chapters.

San Juan Islands Conservation District
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SAN JUAN COUNTY STATISTICS

Land Area: 174.9 square miles

111,936 acres (smallest in Washington)

Number of islands: 172

(Ferry-served islands are San Juan, Orcas, Lopez, and Shaw)

Shoreline: 414 miles

(longest of any county in the nation)

Population: approximately 16,000

(increased 30% since 1995; second fastest rate of growth in Washington)

Density: approximately 90 persons per sq mi

Number of parcels in SJC: 17,347

Incorporated towns: Friday Harbor

Land in Farms: 21,472 acres

Average size of full-time farms: 97 acres

Number of full-time farms: 70

(up 32% from 1992 to 1997)

Part-time and non-commercial farms: Estimated acreage is 10,000

Land Cover:

Dominated by forests which protect shallow soils and provide abundant habitat. Almost 70% of land area is forested (Douglas fir, Western hemlock, Western red cedar, Big-leaf maple, Alder). Most of remaining landcover is grassland, largely used as agricultural land for hay or pasture, but with some naturally occurring open prairie.

Soils:

Three principal limiting factors occur in San Juan County soils—shallowness of the rooting zone, stones in the profile, and low moisture holding capacity (57%); excessive water (23%); susceptibility to erosion (19%).

Geology:

Two distinct geologic landforms predominate in the San Juans—bedrock domes thinly covered with glacial sediments (San Juan, Orcas, Shaw) and bedrock buried beneath sediments more than 300 feet thick (Lopez, Decatur).

Climate:

Climate is influenced by the Olympic Mountains and Vancouver Island which create a “rain shadow” effect resulting in less rainfall in the San Juans than in the rest of northern Puget Sound. Rainfall increases from south to north with average annual precipitation at the south end of Lopez at 19” while the northern portion of Orcas averages 30” per year.

Streams and Watersheds:

Watersheds in the islands are typically less than five square miles in size and streams are primarily seasonal, flowing from November-December until early May. There are two perennial streams on Orcas and two on San Juan Island.

Water Quality:

The 2000 San Juan County Watershed Management Action Plan identified a number of water quality problem areas—on-site septic systems, land conversions, agricultural practices, forestry practices, stormwater runoff, boating activities, solid and hazardous wastes.

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Agriculture in the San Juan Islands



Agriculture and Farming

The number of farms in the islands peaked in 1925 with 566 units documented by the Washington State agricultural department. The following decades, however, brought hardship with the Great Depression and the Second World War, and commercial farming began to decline when ground transportation on the mainland supplanted water transported goods.

By 1954, there were 327 farms on San Juan, Orcas and Lopez islands, only 127 of them were commercial operations. The average size farm was between 100 and 150 acres.

1954 employment in agriculture - 28%

1999 employment in agriculture - 2.5%

In 2007, 113 of 291 farmers were considered full time. Farms have been diminishing in size. In 2002, 119 of the 225 farms reported were between 10 to 49 acres, 52 were between 50-179 acres, and 32 were less than 10 acres. This reflects a statewide trend: From 1974 to 2002, farms under 10 acres have more than doubled in Washington (3,330 to 7,482 farms).

Acres in Agriculture

1900 – 50,981 ac

1925 – 67,042 ac

1940 – 68,017 ac

1954 – 45,499 ac

1997 – 18,843 ac

2002 – 17,145 ac

2007 – 21,472 ac

Farming operations include livestock operations, such as sheep and cattle, crops, orchards, poultry and the production of produce as well as flowers and nursery stock.

Local Contacts

San Juan Farmer's Market- Friday Harbor
www.sjfarmersmarket.com

Lopez Farmer's Market - Lopez Village

Orcas Farmer's Market - Eastsound Village
www.orcasislandfarmersmarket.org

San Juan County Fair, Friday Harbor
www.sanjuancountyfair.org

San Juan Island Agricultural Guild:
www.sjiagguild.com

WSU Extension:

www.sanjuan.wsu.edu/agriculture

State & Regional Contacts

Northwest Agricultural Business Center:

www.agbizcenter.org

Washington State Department of Agriculture:

<http://agr.wa.gov>

Washington State Conservation Commission

(WSCC): <http://www.scc.wa.gov>

WSCC Office of Farmland Preservation:

<http://ofp.scc.wa.gov>

National

American Farmland Trust: www.farmland.org

National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service: <http://attra.ncat.org>

Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education:

www.sare.org

UC Sustainable Agriculture and Research Program: www.sarep.ucdavis.edu

US Department of Agriculture: www.usda.gov

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service:
www.nrcs.usda.gov

Agricultural Resources Committee



In June of 2005, the San Juan Board of County Commissioners formed the Agricultural Resources Committee (ARC), the first such committee in the county's history, and appointed nineteen members. Over sixty percent of our committee members are active farmers.

Two of the most significant achievements of the ARC during the first year were: 1) the passage of a resolution calling on the San Juan County Council (the new name for the former Board of County Commissioners) to establish a "no net loss of farmland" policy in San Juan County; and 2) roundtable meetings with farmers on three islands where an agricultural producers survey was distributed that helped identify key issues of San Juan County farmers.

Based on the results of that survey, the ARC established three program areas of focus for 2007: farm marketing, farmland preservation and farm regulation.

In 2007, the ARC established the Islands Certified Local branding program for food establishments to promote their use of local farm products; defined farm stand and farm store and facilitated changes to county regulations effecting them; participated in the review committee drafting the critical areas ordinances; held an educational GMO forum; facilitated the founding of a broad-based effort to build a permanent farmers market on San Juan Island; and urged the County Council to make agriculture a County priority.

ARC Priorities:

- Advise the San Juan County Council regarding agricultural priorities
- Farmland preservation
- Conduct Agricultural Conservation Easement Education
- Help landowners open space ag status
- Assist the SJC Land Bank in developing farmland leasing options
- On-line bulletin board on www.sjcarc.org
- Farmer Enrichment
- Expand the Islands Certified Local branding program
- Assist in the strengthening of farm-to-school efforts in the county
- Develop a position statement on agritourism in the county.

Products Developed Include:

- No Net Loss Resolution
- 2006 Farm Survey
- Dog Ordinance 19-2006

The ARC endorses a policy of "No Net Loss" agricultural land policy in Resolution 2006-01. The ARC proposes that "...no Agricultural Resources Land should be redesignated unless effective, equivalent mitigation -- that assures no net loss in total Agricultural Resource Land -- is required as a condition of any such redesignation."

Also with recommendations from the ARC, the County Council amended Chapter 6.08 of the San Juan County Code regarding the Regulation of Dogs and Other Animals. The new code increases the penalty on dog owners whose animal, while at large, has chased, bitten or injured another animal."

Buying Land



‘Unimproved’, meaning it does not have the basic utilities such as electricity, sewage, or water. You must have them developed or installed on the property. This can be costly, especially if the nearest power line is miles from your building site.

Utilities

Electrical power in San Juan County is provided by Orcas Power and Light Company (OPALCO). Telephone outside plant (telephone lines to the house) is owned by Centurytel. Both of these utilities can advise you on how service is installed and initiated.

Sewer

Because most land is far from sewer lines, you will probably need to install a septic system. Due to gravelly soils, many septic systems must be professionally designed to prevent contamination of ground water. Septic systems must be approved by the San Juan County Health and Community Services.

Water

Some rural communities provide community wells, but in most cases, you will have to have a well dug on your property.

Access

Make sure you have access. If you buy land that requires crossing private property, you should determine who owns the land and establish an easement. Seek legal advice for this aspect.

Road Maintenance

The county maintains the majority of roads. However, landowners are expected to maintain access and easement roads not owned by the county. Private roads should be maintained by the landowners using it.

Rural Landowner Responsibilities

The responsibilities associated with rural living include being a good neighbor as well as a responsible land steward. We all have an impact on the land and our environment. Fulfilling your responsibilities can be accomplished in a manner that doesn’t scar the land, pollute the water or cause problems with your neighbors.

Keep in mind:

- Rural areas don’t have roadside garbage pickup, so you must locate a landfill or transfer station where you can take your garbage, junk, and recyclable items. (Do not burn or bury garbage or allow it to pile up in such quantities that it attracts rodents and insects.)
- There is free mail delivery but it is your responsibility to purchase, erect and maintain a mailbox. This includes maintaining access for your postal deliverer in winter or other inclement weather. Some areas have clustered mailboxes so that the deliverer only has to make one stop. (Check with the closest Post Office before you erect a mailbox.)
- Your access road is your responsibility. Not only must you maintain the road, but also you must do your own grading and snow removal, as private roads are not graded or plowed by county road crews.
- Wells, septic systems and electrical systems on your property are your responsibility. If you are planning to build, do not begin excavation until all underground cables are located. Location services are

free. (Call the Buried Cable Location service at 811 at least two days in advance before you begin digging.)

- Noxious weeds must not be allowed to grow on your property. Many are introduced unintentionally and can become a serious problem. Their seeds are brought in by vehicles or the plants escape from gardens. Check with the San Juan County Noxious Weed Control Board . The Weed Board will help you identify which plants are noxious and must be removed. In some cases, the weeds are dangerous, and must be disposed of in special ways.

- Fire department services are provided for by your taxes. Many rural districts have volunteer fire departments. Because there are no water mains in most rural areas, fire fighters bring their own water. Practice good fire prevention. Establish a ‘defensible area’ around your house and buildings. This buffer zone will not burn as readily in case of a forest or grass fire. Keeping grassy areas mowed and the area around your buildings kept free of trash or other flammables are all ways to prevent your home from destruction. (Contact your local fire department or the US. Dept of Natural Resources for an evaluation of how you can prevent fires from destroying your property.) See your local fire department for information on how to be ‘Firewise’.

- Rural school districts provide bus services on public roads. If your home is a distance from the nearest public road, it is your responsibility to get your children to and from the bus stop.

- Living in rural areas means living with agricultural activity. Farmers spread manure and compost on their land to produce hay, crops and pasture. Most farmers and ranchers manage their manure wisely, but many people new to rural living will find that manure is a smell they are unaccustomed to. In addition, animals make noise. Roosters crow, cows bellow and horses neigh at all times of day or night.

The lesson here is: do your research before you buy your land. Many areas now have covenants that specify any animal restrictions, but they must allow a grandfather clause (meaning that the land use existing prior to the covenant are allowed to continue) If you think that your neighbors next door might annoy you, perhaps that property is not the best one for you.

Pets

San Juan County has a leash law that applies county wide, regardless of where you live. It means that your dog must be under your control at all times. It is illegal to allow your dog to roam free. They not only can be a nuisance to your own pets, children or home, but a threat to livestock and wildlife as well. Livestock owners have the right to protect their livestock and will destroy dogs that threaten their animals.

Unneutered pets, allowed to roam free, will reproduce, adding to the already staggering number of unwanted animals to the Humane Society’s burden.

Pet waste is one of the major sources of water pollution and shellfish bed contamination. Pick up pet waste and dispose of it in the garbage.

Fences

The old saying “good fences makes good neighbors” still holds true today. Fences serve to keep your livestock on your property. Under Washington law, when agricultural landowners share a property line, they must maintain half the existing fence or equally share in the construction of one to divide the two properties.

Contacting adjacent landowners and working out a fence maintenance schedule will help both landowners prevent unwanted livestock escape and improve communication. Many people new to rural living are unaware that boundaries exist regardless of whether or not it is fenced or posted. Sometimes people trespass when they have preconceived notions about open ranges and federally or state owned land.

Landowners are not required to post ‘No Trespassing’ signs. It is understood that one is trespassing if one hasn’t received permission from the landowner. The landowner is not obligated to inform the public of ownership. To prevent unintended trespass, use a good county map that clearly shows public lands and roads. ALWAYS ask permission before entering private land. If permission is denied, you must leave the property immediately.

Rural areas

San Juan County has a Right-To-Farm and Forestry policy that allows, encourages and promotes agricultural and forestry related activities in all resource and rural land use areas except rural residential.

- Respect your neighbor's endeavors.
- Cooperatively build and maintain boundary fences so that neither your livestock nor your neighbors' trespass.
- Control your dogs so that they do not harass, harm or kill your neighbor's livestock, or cause them undue tension. Owners of wayward dogs may be subject to fines and their dogs can be ordered to be put down.
- Recognize that moving livestock and farm machinery on county roads is necessary. Be cautious and prepare for delays.
- Understand that some actions, such as burning fields or running farm machinery after dark are necessary farm activities.
- Insure you have the proper land base to support your livestock and other agricultural activities, in general two acres per animal unit.
- Prevent noxious weeds from moving from your property to others via wind, water, or other means.
- If you must use pesticides or herbicides, use them only as specifically directed and use them so that no overspray covers your neighbor's land or is washed downstream.
- Remember that it is unlawful to use the county roadway as a parking area for overflow traffic during yard sales and family gatherings.
- Realize that the groundwater, surface water and runoff is part of the overall watershed and impacts your neighbors downstream. Beware what you put into the ground.

(SJC Code 18.30.050 Land Use Regulations - General Provisions)

Respect for the land

While you have the right to utilize your land the way you choose, you have the moral and ethical duty to do so respectfully. Do not contaminate the aquifer. Do not turn your land into a landfill, a toxic waste site, or a junkyard. Do not allow livestock to overgraze it. The legacy of a good landowner is a property that is in as good or better condition when you leave it as it was when you bought it. Your neighbors, your children and the land itself will benefit from and appreciate it. 2/3 of the land in the United States is privately owned therefore conservation truly begins at home.

The Land Ethic

"The land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land."- Aldo Leopold

A Sand County Almanac 1949



(Aldo Leopold, The Aldo Leopold Foundation)

Composting & Vermiculture (Worm Composting)

Garden material and vegetable food waste unfortunately end up in our landfills. An alternative is to compost yard waste and food waste (separately). When the organic matter is reduced to nutrient rich soil, you can spread it on your soil or in the garden as a nutrient supplement. Classes in composting offered at least once a year, and compost bins are sold at a reduced cost. Contact San Juan County Public Works Solid Waste Division for more information.

Composting is an outdoor form of recycling. It's a great way to keep wastes out of the landfill and wastewater treatment plants and you will have ready-made organic matter for gardening or landscaping. Start your own compost bin and you'll soon discover rich soil where you put what you thought was garbage.

Hints for successful composting

Turn the compost regularly to increase decomposition. Locate the pile or bin out of the wind and hot sun in the summer months. Keep a lid or some plastic on the compost pile during the winter months. Add water when necessary; the proper moisture is like a moist sponge. Use a bin with a cover if you intend to include food scraps. Add a shovelful of soil occasionally to add more microbes. Chop up large materials to aid the decay process. Turn the pile immediately if you notice offensive odors. Another type of composting using worms, is called vermicomposting.

The basic recipe for composting is one-part nitrogen and two-parts carbon. Here is a list of compostable items and those to avoid:

- **Nitrogen:** grass clippings, fruit and vegetable waste, plant clippings, coffee grounds, teabags, rotted manure (cattle or horse), spoiled food, crushed eggshells, flowers, and fresh leaves.
- **Carbon:** dried leaves, hay and straw, small twigs, sawdust, newspapers, breads and pastas, evergreen needles, untreated bark chips, hair, and unbleached paper.
- **AVOID:** cat and dog manure, meat, fish, bones, grease or greasy foods, charcoal or coal ashes, walnut leaves or husks, plant or grass clippings that have been treated with chemicals and dairy products.

It is important to be patient and wait for the materials to break down. Compost that is not fully decomposed may cause nitrogen starvation when used on plants. Seeds that have not been properly broken down may be able to sprout in your garden. When your food and yard waste scraps are a deep brown and look like soil, your compost is ready to use. If there are still some larger pieces of material you can screen them out and keep them for further composting. Apply the compost to your garden in a layer from 1" to 3" thick. Mix it into the top 2" of soil before and after planting.

To begin composting you will need an area for a pile or a compost bin. You could build a bin out of wood and chicken wire or purchase a plastic tub or barrel and drill holes in it.. A two-bin system can be built in a weekend and can run anywhere from \$150 for a timber bin to \$1000 for a two-bin system built with treated 4 X 4's. An optional concrete pad will run another \$1000.

The System. A two-bin system allows you to store leaves, grass clipping, branches and manure in the first bin until full, and then start filling the second bin while the first bin decomposes. To effectively and quickly compost, you will need to tarp, turn, and water each bin. The tarp keeps the compost from becoming too dry in summer and too wet in winter, conditions that will greatly prolong the composting process. The tarp also keeps nutrients you want for your garden from washing out and contaminating ground or surface waters. Turning the bin contents provides oxygen to the bacteria and other little critters that break down the manure into a fine textured natural fertilizer.

The Benefits of Compost

- Compost enriches soils: Compost has the ability to help regenerate poor soils. The composting process encourages the production of beneficial micro-organisms (mainly bacteria and fungi) which in turn break down organic matter to create humus. Humus--a rich nutrient-filled material--increases the nutrient content in soils and helps soils retain moisture.
- Compost helps cleanup (remediate) contaminated soil: The composting process has been shown to absorb odors and treat semivolatile and volatile organic compounds (VOCs), including heating fuels, polyaromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), and explosives. It has also been shown to bind heavy metals and prevent them from migrating to water resources or being absorbed by plants.
- Compost helps prevent pollution: Composting organic materials that have been diverted from landfills ultimately avoids the production of methane and leachate formulation in the landfills. Compost has the ability to prevent pollutants in stormwater runoff from reaching surface water resources. Compost has also been shown to prevent erosion and silting on embankments parallel to creeks, lakes, and rivers, and prevents erosion and turf loss.
- Using compost offers economic benefits: Using compost can reduce the need for water, fertilizers, and pesticides. It serves

as a marketable commodity and is a low-cost alternative to standard landfill cover and artificial soil amendments. Composting also extends landfill life by diverting organic materials from landfills and provides a less costly alternative to conventional methods of remediating (cleaning) contaminated soil.

(Source: Environmental Protection Agency 2009)

There is more information on composting and vermiculture on the SJI Conservation District website www.sanjuanislandscd.org or contact San Juan County Public Works Solid Waste Division 360-370-0503 or WSU San Juan County Extension 360-378-4414.



Farmland Preservation



To survive, people need air, water, food, and shelter. Farmland provides food as well as cleans our air, creates wildlife habitat and filters our water.

In the fifty years after 1954, San Juan County lost almost three-quarters of its farmland. We lost 9% just from 1997 to 2002. As a 'rural' county, with farmland representing one acre out of seven, only 12,000 acres of the 110,000 total acres are in the Agricultural Open Space Program. Unfortunately, with residential development pressure, a view tends to be valued more than a productive farm and this may harm our food security and increase our dependence on mainland goods.

There are ways to keep our productive soil available to produce food, water, and oxygen. Something as simple as siting a house in the trees instead of in the middle of a field can make all the difference. San Juan County has a county Land Bank and the San Juan Preservation Trust, both of which work to protect farmland. These organizations use "conservation easements", which are voluntary agreements to limit the uses of land in order to protect its best features. The San Juan County Assessor also provides a way to save farmland through the statewide Agricultural Open Space tax relief program. All of these programs have financial compensations, as well as emotional rewards and gains for the community.

Perhaps you are considering donating your development rights to reduce your income taxes. Possibly your heirs will benefit from lower inheritance taxes. Or you may just like the feeling of knowing your farm will never be carved into pieces and developed. So how do you go about it?

There are two main steps: 1) Decide what you want, and 2) Contact a local land conservation organization to work out the details. The organization will want to meet you on your farm if it sounds like protecting your land will fit their mission. If there's a good match between your goals and those of the organization, a 'conservation easement' can be created. This is a voluntary legal agreement between the landowner and the conservation group. The conserva-

tion easement identifies the land's important values and spells out restrictions designed to protect them. For farmland preservation, for example, conservation easements commonly prohibit houses from being built on prime agricultural land. The conservation easement is attached to the land title, and is permanent. The entire process, from calling to filing, usually takes six months to a year.

The Farm Bill determines the rules on deductions allowed for charitable conservation easement contributions, with the potential to allow very generous deductions for farms (up to 100% of your adjusted gross income with multiple years carry forward). Consulting a lawyer and financial advisor early in the process is strongly recommended.

Preserving our remaining farmland is just a single, but very necessary step in preserving our working farms. If you have questions or interest in these programs, please contact the organizations listed below.

San Juan Preservation Trust -- 468-3202 www.sjpt.org

San Juan County Land Bank -- 378-4402 www.co.san-juan.wa.us/land_bank/

Agricultural Resources Committee -- 378-6621 www.sjcarc.org

San Juan County Assessor—378-2172 www.co.san-juan.wa.us/assessor/

County Code: No Net Loss Resolution Resolution 2006-01 (Adopted by the Agricultural Resources Committee on October 23, 2006)

The Agricultural Resources Committee proposed that "...no Agricultural Resources Land should be redesignated unless effective, equivalent mitigation -- that assures no net loss in total Agricultural Resource Land -- is required as a condition of any such redesignation," and recommends the San Juan County Code be amended to include similar language.

Farm Planning



San Juan County is home to diverse small scale farms and ranches. Small scale farming is challenging throughout much of the United States as industrial farming replaced other operations. Here in the islands there are extra burdens: the high cost of land and transportation, lack of fertile soils and poor drainage, higher costs of fuel and limited access to markets.

Improperly managed farms, like other developments, can contribute to non-point source pollution. Through conservation planning and implementation of a farm management plan, landowners can reduce environmental impacts and increase farm production. San Juan Islands Conservation District has a USDA-NRCS-Certified Farm Planner that can help you develop and implement your conservation plan. Your plan is custom made for you and your property. It can be modified as your plans or circumstances change.

Developing your plan is simple. Visualize your farm goals and necessary land uses. Decide what things are important to you, what things you want to avoid, and what you want from your land. We suggest you begin by looking around your property and create a sketch including the following:

Property boundaries	Septic systems and leach fields
Fences, arenas, and corrals	Bare ground
Buildings	Lawn, garden, and cropland
Roads, driveways, and paths	Trees and shrubs
Wells	Streams, ponds, and wetland
Topography	Native plant communities

Using these factors, (along with aerial maps, soil maps, and other resources), a District Planner will assist you in developing a plan for your property. The plan will include an inventory of the soils, water (drainages and wetlands), plants and animals. Factors unique to your property will be included. We can recommend alternative management practices to problems you may have. You will determine your plan of action and a timeline for completion.

Your objectives are the initial consideration when developing these alternatives. The decision to develop and implement the plan is voluntary. By developing and implementing your plan, you can assure that you are in compliance with County's non-point source ordinance.

The Conservation District's staff are qualified and experienced planners. They are farmers, gardeners, and/or livestock owners. If you would like to develop a conservation plan, need technical assistance, or desire more information, please call (360) 378 6621 or visit www.sanjuanislandscd.org

Current Use Programs and Financial Assistance:

Farm Plans can assist with land protection programs such as Conservation Easements or Agricultural Open Space programs which may reduce the cost of owning or maintaining land for agriculture. If you wish to get your land assessed as 'agricultural open space' you will need a farm plan to show the county assessor. Cost-share or other financial assistance is periodically available. In certain cases, financial assistance is available to help cover the costs of farm plan implementation through the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Services Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

Forest Planning

San Juan County is home to diverse small scale forests and farms. Small scale forestry is challenging. Got trees? Have a mess? Want a better forest?

Forest Planning may be the answer! A Forest Plan helps the landowner meet the goals that you have in mind for your forested land. Forest Plans also help protect the natural resources and water quality of your property.

How do I get a Forest Plan?

Improperly managed forests, like other developments, can contribute to non-point source pollution. Through conservation planning and implementation of a forest management plan and landowners can reduce environmental impacts. San Juan Islands Conservation District has a USDA-NRCS-Certified Conservation Planner that can help you develop and implement your conservation plan. Your plan is custom made for you and your property. It can be modified as your plans or circumstances change.

Developing your plan is simple. Visualize your property and forestry goals. Decide what things are important to you, what things you want to avoid, and what you want from your land. We suggest you begin by looking around your property and create a sketch including the following:

Property boundaries	Septic systems and leach fields
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Using these factors, (along with aerial maps, soil maps, and other resources), a District Planner will assist you in developing a plan for your property. The plan will include an inventory of the soils, water (drainages and wetlands), plants and animals. Factors unique to your property will be included. We can recommend alternative management practices to problems you may have. You will determine your plan of action and a timeline for completion.

Your objectives are the initial consideration when developing these alternatives. The decision to develop and implement the plan is voluntary. By developing and implementing your plan, you can maintain a healthy forest.

The Conservation District's staff are qualified and experienced planners. If you would like to develop a conservation plan, need technical assistance, or desire more information, please call (360) 378-6621 or visit www.sanjuanislandscd.org

Current Use Programs and Financial Assistance

Forest Plans can assist with land protection programs such as Conservation Easements or Open Space Forest program or Designated Forest Land (State Program) which may reduce your tax burden and/or the cost of owning or maintaining land in forest. If you wish to get your land assessed you will need a forest plan to show the county assessor. Cost-share or other financial assistance is periodically available. In certain cases, financial assistance is available to help cover the costs of farm plan implementation through the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Services Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) or the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP).

Invasive Plants & Noxious Weeds



Noxious Weeds are non-native plants introduced into Washington State. They spread quickly and can be difficult to control. They invade our croplands, rangeland, forests, prairies, rivers, lakes, wetlands, and estuaries, causing both ecological and economical damage that affects us all. Invasive plants get a foothold by many means, seeds can be carried by birds, domestic animals such as cats and dogs coming from the mainland, in hay for livestock, the soles of our shoes, via bilge water and tire treads of cars and construction equipment.

Once they get here they often thrive since they often have no food value to local animals and no natural enemies that would perhaps out compete them. Some species are relatively harmless, others outcompete local plants and forage and others can be toxic to animals.

San Juan County Noxious Weed Board

<http://sanjuan.wsu.edu/noxious/index.html>

Their mission is to focus on education, prevention, technical assistance and control of noxious weeds through voluntary compliance with RCW 17.10 and WAC 16-750. The program strives to detect and remove early infestations, provides weed identification workshops and publications, and offers technical assistance on weed identification and methods of control. They provide the following:

- Accurate information about the kind, extent and significance of exotic weed species in San Juan County.
- Coordinated efforts to prevent the spread of noxious weeds.
- Improved management practices for rights of way, utility corridors as well as private land to achieve biodiversity goals.

- Support from government, educational institutions, civic organizations, churches and other interested groups so that noxious weed awareness is a community-wide commitment.

Noxious Weeds Class B and C

Selected for control in San Juan County

Control means preventing the spread of the individual species by blocking reproduction, whether by seed or by vegetative spread from rhizomes or other plant fragments.

■ Meadow knapweed	<i>Centaurea jacea x nigra</i>
■ Spotted knapweed	<i>Centaurea stoebe</i>
■ English ivy	<i>Hedera helix 'Baltica'</i>
■ Gorse	<i>Ulex europaeus</i>
■ Purple loosestrife	<i>Lythrum salicaria</i>
■ Scotch broom	<i>Cytisus scoparius</i>
■ Tansy ragwort*	<i>Senecio jacobaeae</i>
■ Water (Asian) milfoil	<i>Myriophyllum spicatum</i>
■ Common tansy	<i>Tanacetum vulgare</i>

*special care is needed because of plants toxicity.

Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board

Their mission is to serve as responsible stewards of Washington by protecting and preserving the land and resources from the damaging effects of noxious weeds. www.nwcb.wa.gov

Local Food

Caesar salad in the middle of winter? Some of those ingredients may have traveled many miles to your plate. Buying locally grown foods supports local farms and sustains the agricultural community. Most of our locally produced foods are grown using sustainable farming practices.

Where to Buy Locally Grown Food

The Lopez Farmer's Market is open May through Labor Day weekend from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturdays. The market began in the early 1990s. It is located in the heart of Lopez Village. Island grown produce is available and includes salad greens, vegetables plus flowers and fruit in season.

The Orcas Farmer's Market is open from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. every Saturday from May 1 to the end of September on the Village Green in the heart of Eastsound. All items sold in the market are grown or crafted by Orcas Island farmers and artisans. The market includes produce, meats, seafood, food and drink vendors. Dogs are prohibited.

Website: www.orcasislandfarmersmarket.org

The San Juan Farmer's Market has more than 40 vendors. Local farmers bring their produce and artisan products to sell. The San Juan Islands Farmers' Market began in the early 1980s. Winter hours are 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on the first Saturday of the month at the Friday Harbor High School Cafeteria. The summer Saturday market runs from May to mid-October and the location moves to the San Juan County Courthouse parking lot in Friday Harbor.

Website: www.sjifarmersmarket.com

Islands Certified Local (ICL)

The program promotes island farm-products. Look for the logo at the restaurants, farmers markets, grocery stores and specialty shops.

For a list of participants:

<http://www.sjcarc.org/certified.asp>.

In addition, many of our local bakeries, grocery stores and markets carry local foods.

Celebrate Local Producers at the San Juan County Fair

The Fair has a great annual event that celebrates agriculture, local county producers. It runs the third week of August at our county fairgrounds located in Friday Harbor on San Juan Island. The first San Juan County Fair was held in 1906 in a warehouse on the waterfront in Friday Harbor during the first week of October. The first Fair was held in its present location on October 8, 1924.

Website: www.sanjuancountyfair.org

Everyone in the county can conserve our island resources by helping to sustain local businesses, products and farms. This also provides the added benefit of eliminating ferry trips that saves time, fuel and ferry fare.



Design courtesy of Tif & Gil Creative, Friday Harbor

Soils



Soils

The updated Soil Survey for San Juan County is available online through the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service. The web address is:

<http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/WebSoilSurvey.aspx>

When you start the WSS (Web Soil Survey) you will want to navigate to your area of interest (AOI), you can do this by address, or a custom area defined by you through the interactive map. The San Juan Islands Conservation District also has the 1957 hard copy of San Juan County soils in its library.

Soil Testing

Soil testing is a tool used to help make informed decisions about the management of soil nutrients - whether for a garden, lawn, field, or forest. Soil tests should be taken in the spring or fall. Taking a soil test every two to three years is usually adequate to monitor nutrient levels; however, if management practices change, testing more frequently may be necessary. Soil will be tested for: pH, nitrate-nitrogen, phosphate, potassium, magnesium, calcium, sodium, organic matter, and cation exchange capacity.

You can send in one sample for smaller acreages, or if you have larger acreages to deal with, you may want to send in a number of samples. Collect different samples where the soil is different.

You will need: (Be sure your supplies are clean)

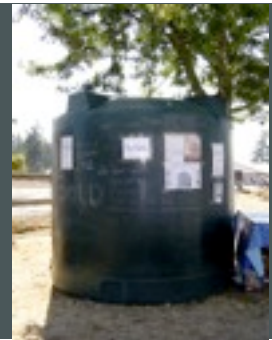
- • Spade, shovel, or soil probe
- • Knife
- • Bucket
- • Soil testing bag, plastic Ziploc bag, or small paper sack

A sample should represent the area: Each sample should typically consist of about 10 to 15 sub-samples taken from random locations within the sampling area.

(Avoid sampling unusual spots, such as manure piles or swampy areas.)

- Step 1: Remove vegetation and organic material from the surface of the sites to be sampled.
- Step 2: Take soil samples from the correct depth
 - • If you use a shovel, dig a hole 4 to 6 inches deep. Take a slice of soil ½ inch thick and keep it on the shovel. Using a knife, from the center of the slice, cut a strip ½ inch wide from the top to the bottom and put it in the bucket. Repeat this step at each sampling site.
- Step 3: Mix and package the soil sample.
 - • Fill the soil sample bag. About 2 cups for each test.
 - • Write on the sample bag the date it was taken, the pasture or field ID (if you have multiple samples), and what was growing there (pasture, crops, etc.)
- Samples should be dried or frozen within 12 hours of collection. Fresh samples can be sent UPS if sent promptly after sampling. Otherwise, refrigerate samples until they are sent.
- Step 4: Send your soil sample to the lab.

Water Rights



Washington State owns all the water within its bounds. This includes rainfall, surface water and ground water. Property owners who rely on a well for potable water are allowed up to 5,000 gallons per day for residential use. Water rights in San Juan County are regulated by the Washington State Department of Ecology.

A **water right** is a legal authorization to use a certain amount of water for specific purposes. Washington State law requires certain users of public water to obtain approval from the State prior to actual use of the water. Approval is granted in the form of a water right permit or certificate.

A **surface water** right is necessary for those planning to divert any amount of water from surface waters (water above ground). Surface water sources include lakes, rivers, streams and springs. Surface water rights are extremely difficult to obtain because of potential conflicts with other resources such as fish. Non-consumptive water right applications or applications that contain mitigation proposals stands the best chance of approval.

A **ground water** permit is necessary for withdrawal of more than 5,000 gallons per day or if you plan to irrigate more than a half acre of lawn or non-commercial garden. If you use **less than** those amounts, you may have an “exempt well.” This means you are exempt from the permitting process but **not** the regulatory process. Surface water quantity is regulated under Chapter 90.03 RCW, the Water Code. Groundwater is regulated by Chapter 90.44 RCW, Regulation of Ground Waters. These can be found on the legislature’s website at

www1.leg.wa.gov/LawsAndAgencyRules/

Attributes of Water Rights

Water right authorizations generally contain the following information. Some of the items listed may not apply to certain classes of water rights.

- a specific location for each surface diversion or well that was authorized under that right.
- a legal description of the place in which the water may be used.
- the specific purposes for which the water may be used.
- the authorized season of use.
- the maximum diversion or withdrawal rate.
- the maximum annual quantity that may be used.
- for irrigation, the number of acres that may be irrigated in a season.

When Ecology considers issuing a water right, it looks at four things regarding the proposal:

- Is water available?;
- Is the proposed use beneficial?;
- Is it in the public interest to issue the proposed water right?; and
- Is there an impact on other water rights, including instream flows.

Water rights may also include specific provisions that limit the manner and use of water under the right. Right holders may apply to

change attributes of a water right, such as the place of use or the point of diversion or withdrawal. Failure to adhere to the specific limits and provisions set forth in the right without an authorization constitutes an illegal use of water and may subject the water right holder to enforcement action.

Why Compliance with Water Laws is Important

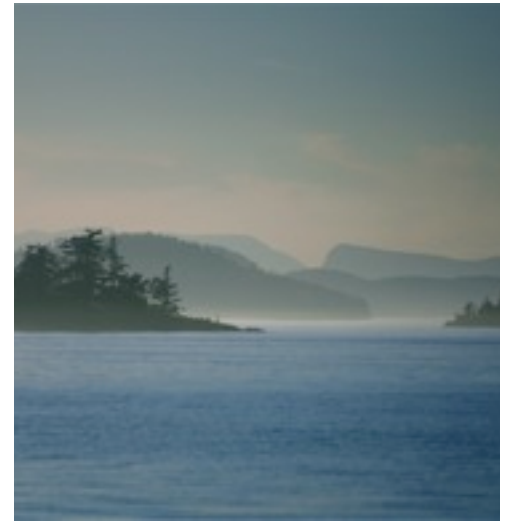
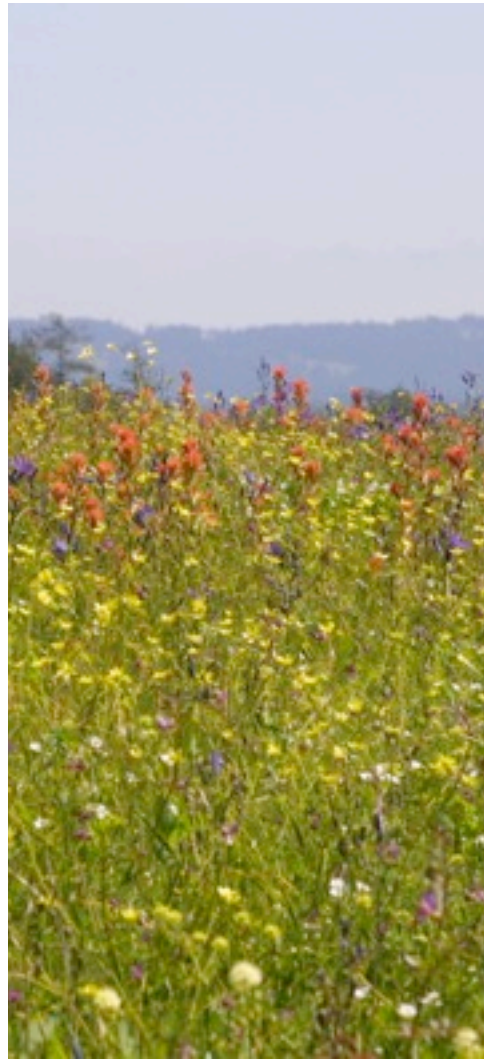
Laws regulating water usage date back to the early days of settlement. Laws were established to reduce conflicts among competing water users and to protect a resource. The state legislature established the current surface water code in 1917. The groundwater code was established in 1945, with provisions for fish and wildlife being added in 1949.

As the needs and demands for water in Washington increase, so does the need for water law compliance. Obeying the law serves a number of purposes:

- protecting legal water users from impairment or loss of water by those using water illegally.
- protecting those with senior (older) water rights from harm by those with junior (newer) rights.
- keeping enough water in streams to protect the environment and restore fish runs.
- keeping enough water in streams for other in-stream uses including recreation, aesthetics and electricity production.
- ensuring that water being used without authorization is returned to the streams for allocation to others who are waiting in line for new water rights and to assist in restoring stream flows.
- ensuring that water use can be sustained for the long term rather than drying up streams and depleting aquifers faster than they can be recharged.
- ensuring that water laws and the permitting process are credible and deter further illegal use.

- creating awareness about the importance of wise water use and conservation.





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