



Washington Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program

Customer Focus

John Roozen grew up with his four brothers and five sisters on the western Washington farm that his parents established in the early 1950's. The maritime climate and rich bottomland were perfectly suited to growing tulip, daffodils, and iris. The farm prospered selling beautiful cut flowers and bulbs worldwide.

A large pioneer family farm of tremendously fertile Skagit Valley ground near the Roozen's was recently split up and sold. One of these fields directly bordered John's property. The same family had farmed this land since the turn of the century, but suddenly the prospect of highly productive farmland being turned into a residential lot became a possibility.

By utilizing Skagit County's Farmland Legacy Program, John was able to purchase the adjoining 33-acre field, place it under a permanent conservation easement, and add it to his farm to ensure that it would remain productive forever.

Skagit County's Farmland Legacy Program was established locally by a vote of the people. While substantial local funds have been allocated to the program, matching funds provided by USDA's Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP) have greatly enhanced the effort. The program is strictly voluntary but provides a means for farmers to preserve the agricultural viability of farm and ranchland for future generations.

John says, "It's satisfying to me to have this land remain in agriculture. It is such good land, the best of the best, that it would be a real shame to have it converted to other uses."

Overview:

The USDA Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP) helps farmers and ranchers keep their productive land in agriculture. The program partners with States, Tribes, local governments and non-profit organizations to purchase conservation easements for the purpose of protecting topsoil by limiting non-agricultural uses of the land. NRCS provides up to 50% of the fair market value of the easement to the cooperating entity, which acquires, manages, and enforces the easement. Landowners participate voluntarily, and protected farms remain in private ownership.

Conservation plans are developed on all highly erodible cropland. Nationally, over \$101.3 million have been obligated to state and local entities since establishment of the program in 1996. The 2002 Farm Bill produced some changes in the program, including the addition of a provision providing for the protection of historical and archaeological resources on farm and ranchlands, and the inclusion of nongovernmental organizations as eligible entities. The Farm Bill also significantly increased the amount of financial assistance available under FRPP, authorizing nearly \$600 million through Fiscal Year 2007. Sixty-seven million dollars was allocated to states to purchase easements in FY 2003.

Accomplishments:

Cooperating entities' proposals are selected through a competitive process designed to protect parcels that will help accomplish FRPP and local land use goals. FRPP easements protect entire working farms, woodlands, wetlands, important natural areas, and historical and cultural resources. Through FY 2002, \$3.3 million in FRPP funds have been awarded to purchase easements on approximately 2,954 acres of valuable agricultural land in Washington.

Due to increasing development pressure throughout the state, requests for FRPP funds have increased dramatically in recent years, far outpacing the program's funding capacity. In FY 2003, partners in Washington requested \$4,921,580 in FRPP funds. This request represents 7.5 percent of the total amount of FRPP funds available nationwide in FY 2003. Washington was allocated \$1,481,000 to purchase conservation easements in FY 2003.

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Outlook:

The Willamette and Puget Sound Valleys are in the top five of the Nation's most threatened agricultural areas, according to the American Farmland Trust (1997). Comprised primarily of forest and cropland, the area is undergoing extensive urbanization, particularly around the metropolitan Seattle-Tacoma-Bremerton area. King County in Washington was ranked sixth in the United States in the number of new private housing units authorized by building permits between 1990 and 1992. Despite intense urbanization pressure, the outlook for purchasing development rights to preserve prime agricultural lands within Washington looks promising. To date, over 35 governmental agencies or nongovernmental organizations have formed in Washington to help prevent the conversion of agricultural land to non-agricultural uses.

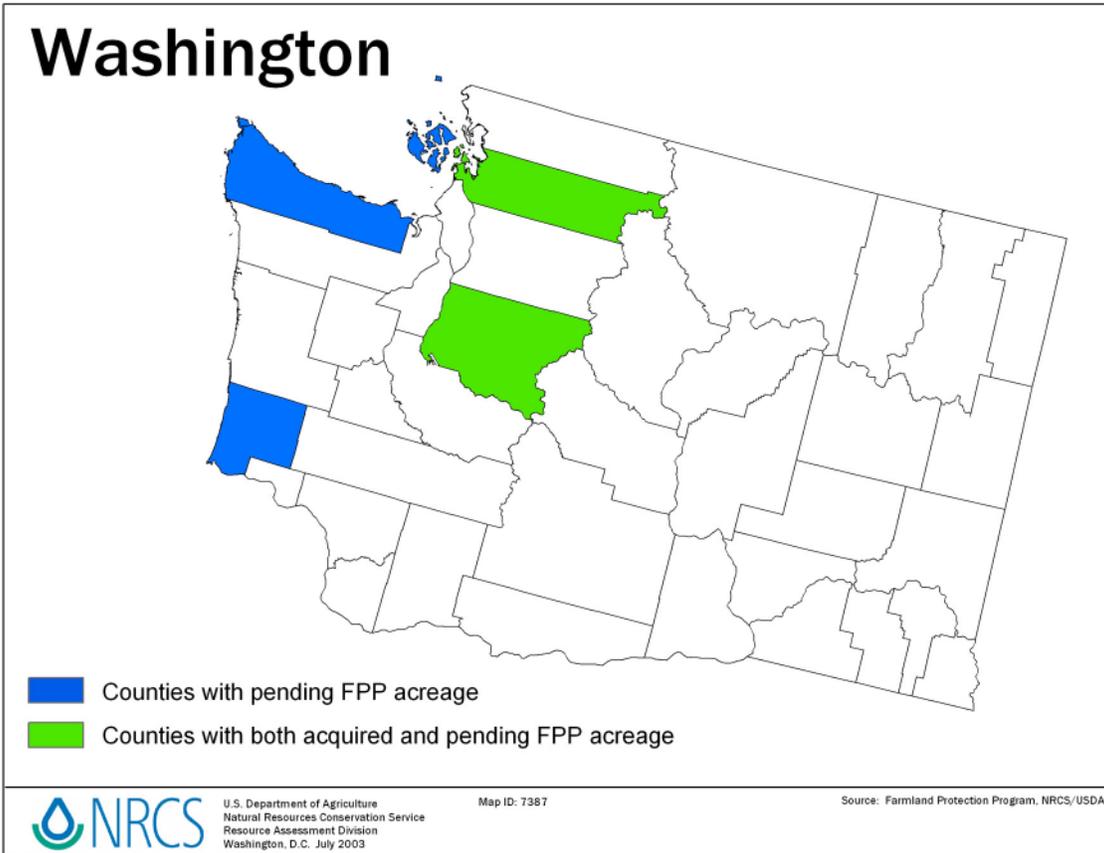
**Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program - Washington Easements
as of June 2003
Number, Acres, Easement Costs by County**

Washington					
	Easement Cost			Federal Payment	
County	Acres	Total (\$)	Avg. (\$/acre)	\$	%
King	129	1,454,172	11,273	460,000	32%
Skagit	1,212	1,535,390	1,267	754,802	49%
Total*	1,341	2,989,562	2,229	1,214,802	41%

*Totals do not include FY 2002 pending easements.

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Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program - Washington Easements as of June 2003



Trends in Population by County - Washington 1990 to 2000 (Census Data)

