



## King County

### Water and Land Resources Division

Department of Natural Resources and Parks

King Street Center

201 South Jackson Street, Suite 600

Seattle, WA 98104-3855

**206-296-6519** Fax 206-296-0192

TTY Relay: 711

March 11, 2010

Re: The New Agricultural Drainage Assistance Program

Dear,

As a follow-up to your conversation with Elizabeth Weldin, Program Manager for the Agriculture Drainage Assistance Program (ADAP), here is more information about how King County can assist you this year in maintaining your drainage ditches in exchange for your assistance in helping us develop a more effective program.

Because the old program is changing, we hope that you will be willing to commit to several “new” activities and give us feedback regarding the new program model. We will telephone you in the next week to confirm your interest and discuss how we can work together in the development of the new program. We want to be sure that both you and King County have a common understanding of our partnership. We appreciate your consideration of this opportunity because your assistance in “testing” the new program in 2010 will help improve drainage of agricultural lands in King County in the future.

As you may know, King County’s ADAP is in transition. The program as it existed for the past 11 years is not sustainable at the same level, given current and coming public funding constraints. In addition, the program has had difficulty meeting the county-wide demand for drainage maintenance assistance due to a variety of factors, including the complexity of the regulatory requirements. There are agricultural drainage systems in many parts of the county’s Agricultural Production Districts that are overdue for maintenance.

In partnership with the Agricultural Commission and area farmers, King County, the King Conservation District, and the state Department of Fish and Wildlife are redesigning the existing agricultural drainage program in King County. Some elements of this new program are modeled on the successful experience of farmers, regulators, drainage districts, conservation districts, and fish recovery groups working together in Skagit and Whatcom counties. King County’s goals for the redesigned program are:

- More acres of agricultural fields are drained more effectively
- Project costs and regulatory requirements are reasonable for farmers
- Public cost-shares (such as surface water management funds and grant opportunities) are made available
- Program overall contributes in a meaningful way to recovery of salmon and steelhead
- Roles of King County, King Conservation District, and others are financially sustainable.

If you are willing to serve as a test pilot for the new program, King County will do the following for your drainage project:

- Provide a manual and training on best management practices for drainage maintenance according to the type of drainageway you have
- Provide limited engineering assistance during a site visit, which could include an assessment of the drainage problem and suggestions for how to solve it, simple engineering drawings, and calculations you will need for the state Hydraulic Project Approval
- Obtain shoreline exemption coverage for all county pilot drainage projects together
- Obtain multi-project State Environmental Policy Act coverage for all county pilot drainage projects together
- Cover the cost of de-fishing to protect fish during construction activities; we will ask you to hire a certified contractor to do the de-fishing rather than providing King County staff to do this task
- Assist you in meeting your mitigation planting requirements, likely through a grant from King County to cover the cost of plants and labor to the extent possible.

In return for King County's assistance, we are asking you to do the following:

- Attend training in best management practices necessary to meet regulatory requirements for drainage maintenance projects (to be held in May or June); property owners and/or their contractors will receive this training free of charge
- Complete the state's joint permit application for your project (if you do not already have all required permits), with limited technical assistance from King County staff
- Ensure that you and/or your contractor follow all best management practices identified in the permit, described in a draft manual we will provide you and demonstrated during the training for pre-, during, and post-maintenance activities
- Cover the costs of the de-watering, erosion and sediment control, and dredging as landowners have done in the past
- Hire a certified de-fishing contractor from an approved list provided to you by King County; the county will cover these costs
- Allow King County to visit the site to evaluate whether the manual and the training have given you enough information to do the project successfully
- Keep track of expenses for the project to help us figure out how to make the process less costly in the future
- If mitigation plantings are required, maintain plantings for at least three years as required in the state permit
- Provide feedback to King County on effectiveness of the manual and training after you have cleaned your drainageway.

We hope that we can help each other as we develop this new program. We look forward to talking with you in the next week and to working with you during the next few months. If you have any questions, please contact Elizabeth Weldin at 206-296-1979.

March 11, 2010

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Sincerely,

Joanna Richey  
Assistant Division Director

cc: Jane Lamensdorf-Bucher, Regional Planning Manager, King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP)  
Elizabeth Weldin, ADAP Program Manager, King County Water and Land Resources Division (WLRD), DNRP  
Larry Pickering, Chair, King County ADAP Advisory Committee and Agricultural Commissioner