



## Rural Stewardship

### Objective:

Preserve the unique character of our rural communities in collaboration with rural residents

### Strategy:

Encourage stewardship of rural landscapes including agricultural and forestry land

### Why is this strategy important?

In order to protect and sustain forest and farmland, King County needs to provide timely and predictable land use decisions and responsive technical assistance to ensure effective land stewardship.

### How is our performance?

As of 2012, the owners of nearly one-third (30 percent, 65,400 acres) of the privately-owned land zoned Rural and Agriculture demonstrate stewardship with a farm, forest or rural stewardship plan and/or enrollment in conservation incentive programs. In 2012, 720 new acres were enrolled in stewardship programs, exceeding the annual target of 500 acres.

This measure accounts only for properties in the initial year of their participation in county land management programs. Most landowners take advantage of a series of county services and incentives over a period of years. For example, completing a stewardship plan is often a landowner's first step toward sustainable land management practices and improving their resource-based business enterprise. Subsequent steps may include seeking training, implementing conservation practices, qualifying for current use taxation, or periodically updating stewardship plans. In 2011 the county's stewardship and incentive programs assisted the land owners of over 2,000 acres who were already enrolled in a program, further enhancing conservation of the land.

The county offers current use taxation (CUT) programs to provide property tax incentives to encourage landowners to voluntarily conserve and protect land resources, open space, timber and farms. The Public Benefit Rating System (PBRs) is designed to preserve open space and ensure for its sustainable management. The Timber Land and Forest CUT programs are lands devoted to the growth and harvest of timber. The owner must have an approved and implemented forest stewardship plan. The Agriculture CUT program conserves property used for the production of livestock or agricultural commodities for commercial purposes.

Agriculture is an important land use in the county. The production of food is a critical contribution to supporting the healthy diets of King County citizens as well as to economic growth. The agriculture sector includes a variety of farm and non-farm jobs related to farm inputs, marketing, services and processing facilities. The county provides technical assistance to farmers and is working toward a regulatory environment that fosters increased agricultural activity in King County. Forest management

and restoration generate economic activity and jobs. The county's forestry technical assistance to landowners supports active forest management that otherwise would not occur, thus expanding opportunities for the private sector to do work on small private forestlands and in wood processing while enhancing forest health.

Healthy farms and forests deliver other important benefits such as providing habitat for wildlife and fish, improve water quality, and offer opportunities to learn about our local environment.

## **What can you do?**

- Develop a forest stewardship plan for your forested property
- Consider enrolling protecting your forested land through a property tax reduction or transfer of development rights program
- If you own land that is not being farmed, consider enrolling it the FarmLink Program
- If you live in the rural zone (RA), consider Rural stewardship planning
- Farm Planning is a good option if you are primarily farming or managing livestock on your property

## **Moving forward**

King County will continue to encourage stewardship and conservation on privately-owned lands through effective program delivery and strategic use of funds to acquire high priority lands that will protect environmental quality for future generations.

King County's technical and marketing assistance to farmers will continue. The expansion of Farmers Markets, particularly into urban areas, has created new opportunities for farmers in King County. The county will continue efforts to keep land available for farming and affordable for new farmers. Streamlining permitting and lowering costs will help ensure that the county's regulatory processes are not barriers to successfully managing farmland for environmental protection and rural livelihoods.

King County will continue to assist landowners in planning forest management and restoration activities and will help them landowners find funding and resources to get the work done. Much of the lowland forest in King County is in rural residential lots of five to twenty acres. There are almost 7,000 of these small lot forests, amounting to 45,000 acres of forest cover. Typically these forests are in poor health, either overstocked even-aged Douglas fir plantations, or aging hardwood stands with little seed stock for regeneration as the trees die. The stands are susceptible to pathogens, wind-throw, fire, and invasive species. Forest management and restoration generate economic activity and jobs. There is a significant untapped potential for work to be done by the private sector on these small private forestlands.

## **Related Links**

[Current Use Taxation](#)

[Forestry](#)

[Agriculture](#)

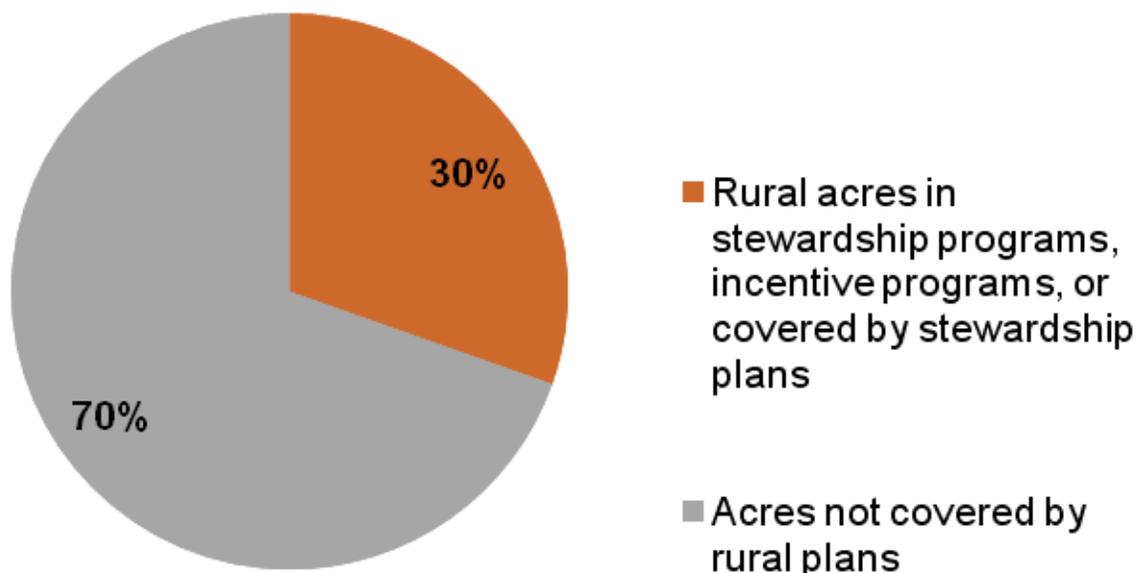
## Forestry Climate Preparedness and Response

### Technical Notes

- Data provide by King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks
- Methods for Analysis: Non-duplicated privately-owned rural acres outside the Forest Production District with some portion of the parcel covered by stewardship plans or enrolled in incentive programs. Included are: farm, forest and rural stewardship plans and enrollment in the Public Benefit Rating System, Timber Land, Forest and Agriculture Current Use Taxation programs. (2011 data),

### Charts and Maps

## Stewardship of Rural Lands 2012 Data



Non-duplicated privately-owned rural acres outside the Forest Production District with some portion of the parcel covered by stewardship plans or enrolled in incentive programs (includes: farm, forest and rural stewardship plans, PBRs, Timber Land, Forest and Agriculture CUT programs).