

Chapter II

Outreach and Engagement

The Agriculture Resilience Plan is intended to be the farmers' plan – a document that reflects the interests and priorities of farmers in Snohomish County. Therefore, outreach to and engagement with the farming community has been a key component of developing this plan and will continue to be central to its implementation. Input has been solicited through the formation of a Steering Committee of local farmers, outreach to existing agricultural groups and individual farmers, and the PhotoVoice project. The next phase of plan implementation will involve robust planning conversations with groups of farmers on the landscape to develop and scope landscape-scale projects that improve agricultural viability.

Snohomish Conservation District formed a **Steering Committee** for the Agriculture Resilience Plan in order to ensure that the plan is guided by the input of local farmers. The Committee is comprised of 9 Snohomish County farmers representing various types, sizes, and locations of farms. The Steering Committee meets quarterly and provides guidance to the direction and development of the plan and its implementation. The Committee reviewed the technical information gathered as part of the Impacts Assessment (Chapter V) and assisted in prioritizing the needs of agriculture at the county-wide scale.

In addition to soliciting guidance from the Steering Committee, the Conservation District conducted extensive outreach to the local farming community. In

Steering Committee Members

Brian Bookey, Cherry Lane Farms

Libby Reed, Orange Star Farm and SCD Board Member

Jeff Ellingsen, SCD Board Member and Farmer

Nick Pate, Raising Cane Ranch

Dan Bartelheimer, Sno Valley Farms

Jeremy Visser, dairy farmer

Darren Carleton, Carleton Farms

Spencer Fuentes, Hazel Blue Acres

Andrew Albert, Andrew's Hay

fall 2016 and winter 2017, the Conservation District reached out to existing agricultural groups to ask for input into the scope of this project. Groups included the Snohomish Conservation District Board of Supervisors, Focus on Farming attendees, the Sustainable Lands Strategy Agriculture Caucus, the Snohomish County Farm Bureau, Snohomish County Cattlemen, the



Where it Happens

“Prominent in the center of the farm is the barn, which gives a refuge throughout the seasons for family and for visitors who come to pick or buy organic blueberries in this beautiful, peaceful setting.”

*Karen Wolden-Fuentes,
Hazel Blue Acres Farm, PhotoVoice 2017*

Snohomish County Agricultural Advisory Board, SnoValley Tilth, the Coordinated Diking Council, the Marshland Flood Control District, the French Slough Flood Control District, and the Stillaguamish Flood Control District.

In spring 2019, the Conservation District launched a broader **community engagement effort**, primarily focusing on commercial farmers in the river floodplains. Presentations were given for local diking, drainage, and flood control districts and community meetings were organized outside of these areas. The goals of this effort were to provide localized results from the risk modeling and assessment work and gather feedback on resilience needs and potential projects. This information was used to create Reach Summaries (Chapter VII) that were then reviewed and revised by the farming community in summer 2019. In total, eight community meetings or presentations were organized and over 75 farmers provided input into the final recommendations in the plan.

In order to increase engagement of farmers in development of the Agriculture Resilience Plan, the Snohomish Conservation District and The Nature Conservancy conducted a **PhotoVoice** project. Seven farms took part in the project and participated in a series of four photography workshops. Participants were taught photography skills, then each took photographs

to respond to two questions – “Why is agriculture important to our community?” and “What are the major challenges facing agriculture?” Themes that emerged in the photographs included farmland protection, increasing resilience to climate change impacts, improving drainage in the face of increased flooding, and the importance of local and sustainable agriculture. The photographs and accompanying captions were the centerpiece of an exhibition event attended by farmers, elected officials, and agency staff. The photos were presented to the Snohomish County Council and have become part of an exhibition that has been shown at venues and events throughout the county. Photographs and captions from the PhotoVoice project are included throughout this Plan.