



Set Yourself Up for Success:

Finding Land and Due Diligence



# Introduction:

**Nayla Jiménez -Cabezas:** Farm to Farmer Network Manager

**Emily Trabolssi:** Farm to Farmer Coordinator (Statewide)

**Farm to Farmer Program:** Farm to Farmer, a program of Washington Farmland Trust, provides a land-matching website, [farmtofarmer.org](https://farmtofarmer.org), that allows landowners and farmers to access personalized technical assistance from experienced, local farmers in Pierce, King, and Skagit Counties of Washington State. Our program coordinators support users with land searches and the full leasing process from start to finish.

**Washington Farmland Trust:** WFT protects and stewards threatened farmland across the state. We keep land in production by making it accessible to future generations of farmers.





# Agenda

- How to find land
- Due diligence for buying farmland
- Additional considerations for leasing farmland
- Q&A and discussion



# Getting to know you!

How many of you are looking to buy farmland some time in the future? (raise your hand on zoom!)

How about lease farmland?





# How to Find Land

- For new farmers looking for small acreage, check out local incubators/Ag parks. Some Examples:
  - King/Skagit Counties: Viva Farms
  - King County: SnoValley Tilth's Experience Farming Project
  - Pierce County: Farm Foundations program, Enterprise for Equity
  - Whidbey Island: The Organic Farm School
  - Everson, WA: Cloud Mountain Farm
- Land-linking services:
  - Farm to Farmer: <https://farmtofarmer.org/>
    - King, Skagit, and Pierce (and expanding to be state wide)
  - SnoValley Tilth's Farmland Network
  - South Sound Farm Link, run by Thurston Conservation District
  - San Juan Agricultural Guild







# About Farm to Farmer:

Farm to Farmer is a **land matching program** that enables farmers to connect with the land opportunities they need to grow their businesses. It also helps retiring farmers transfer their land to the next generation.

Farm to Farmer includes a land matching website and personalized consultation and support.



How it works:

- Sign up at [farmtofarmer.org](https://farmtofarmer.org)
- Create a listing
- Receive personalized consultation and technical assistance from program coordinator in all 39 counties of Washington.
- Connect with land owners and land-seeking farmers through the private messaging system
- Enjoy free resources and access to service providers



# Other ideas...

- Reach out to your county public agencies or agriculture departments, and ask about county/agency land that may be available for lease. Some examples:
  - King:
    - <https://www.kingcounty.gov/services/environment/water-and-land/agriculture.aspx>
  - Snohomish:
    - <https://snohomishcountywa.gov/1505/Agriculture-Resources>
  - Pierce
    - <https://www.co.pierce.wa.us/3421/Pierce-County-Farming>
  - Skagit
    - <https://www.skagitcounty.net/Departments/PlanningAndPermit/forestandagmain.htm>
  - WA Department of Fish and Wildlife
  - WA Department of Natural Resources



- Reach out to conservation districts, land trusts, extension offices, and Agricultural organizations in the county. Some examples:
  - PCD, KCD
  - Vashon-Maury Island Land Trust, Jefferson Land Trust, Agrarian Trust
  - WSU Extension offices
- Try local Agricultural realtors
- Driving around the areas you want to buy/lease looking for signs.
- Talk to farmers/neighbors, local social groups. Word of mouth!





# Due Diligence for Buying Farmland

Why is due diligence important?



# Land Use

- Mapping: find your county's GIS mapping website and find the property on the website. Some examples:
  - King County: <https://www.kingcounty.gov/services/gis/Maps/imap.aspx>
  - Pierce: <https://matterhornwab.co.pierce.wa.us/publicgis/>
  - Snohomish: <https://snohomishcountywa.gov/1943/Interactive-Maps>
    - <http://gis.snoco.org/maps/farming/index.htm>
  - Spokane: <https://www.spokanecounty.org/222/Geographic-Information-Systems>
  - Yakima: <https://www.yakimacounty.us/1374/GIS-Mapping>
- Find: property zoning
- Historical images on GIS map (other options are Google maps & Historicaerials.com)
  - Look for: past farming activities, animal markings, winter/fall images: wet spots?, changes in buildings
- Review imap layers: environmental, topography, wetlands, property details, etc.
- Wetlands or trees: may need permits to do clearing or farming in the wetlands
- Title report: legal aspects to your land boundaries (realtor), conservation easements
- If needed, review other property resources such as general public records requests

# Natural Resources

- Soil
  - Explore [Web Soil Survey](#)
  - Look up soil type/series, for more info try conservation district or extension office
  - Compare map to digging holes and looking at the soils on the property
- Water options:
  - Water rights
  - Permit exempt well water
  - City/municipal water
- Water Rights
  - Does the property have water rights?
  - Ask realtor/past owner for: water right claim or permit/certificate, look at the details
  - [Look up water right](#) on WA DOE
  - And/or fill out form for information about right: <https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/publications/summypages/ecy04067.html>
- You can also call DOE
- No water right or insufficient? [Explore possible changes to water right](#)
- Or [look up permit exempt wells](#): and how much water you can use
- Additional resource, [WA Landowner's Water Rights Guide](#)







- Wells

- Is there a well on the property?
- How old is it?
- What shape is it in?
- Is it a domestic or irrigation well?
- Could the domestic well be used for irrigation?
- What kind of pump is in the well? what shape is it in?
- To understand more about a particular well, contact a local well driller or [DOE wells information/reports](#)
- If you are looking into installing a well:
  - [Are there other farms in the area using water rights?](#)
  - Check neighboring [boring logs](#): well depths and yields.
  - Deep dive: [hydrogeology maps](#)

- Drainage

- Understand drainage and flooding issues on the property



- Is there any drainage infrastructure on site like ditches or drainage tiles you need to know about? What shape are they in?
- Runoff concerns from adjacent properties? Or roads/development
- Drainage districts/counties assistance?





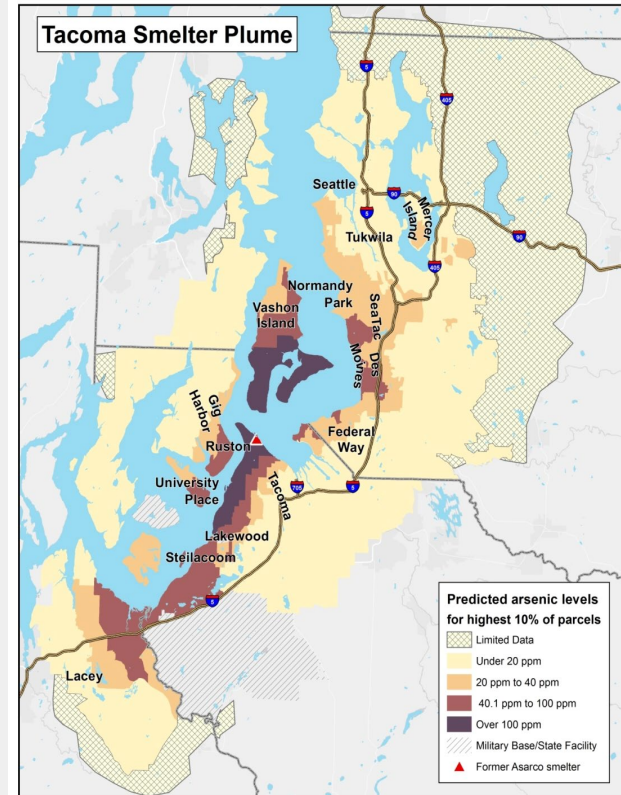


# Property Details: Site Visit

- Full sun? Track the shade
- Any micro climate?
- Wind: where is it coming from? Effect on structures?
- Where is the septic field?
- Where is the well?
- How was the property used previously? (Ask neighbors)
- Any deer/elk activity?
- Other signs of pests?
- Soil compaction that you'll need to rehab?
- Wet/low spots on the property?
- What weeds/grasses are there



- Neighborhood/Environmental:
  - Is there a history of crops growing in the area?
  - Look for conventional farming nearby. If you want to be certified organic, you need to be aware of potential sprays from neighboring farms.
  - Look upstream and upwind: any industry or dairies nearby that may affect your property?
  - Be aware of the [Tacoma plume](#)
  - Other Environmental hazards and considerations: <https://ecology.wa.gov/About-us/Online-tools-publications/Online-tools-databases>





# Infrastructure



- Consider costs for:
  - Rehabbing existing infrastructure (if in bad shape), or hauling out collapsing structures
  - County permits for new infrastructure
  - Drilling new irrigation well and pump if needed, or rehabbing old well (contact a local driller)
  - Getting electric hooked up where you need it
  - Trenching an in-ground irrigation system
  - Enforcing farm roads
  - Fencing repair or build
  - Rehabbing Soil

# Additional Leasing Considerations:

- Leasing Resource:  
<https://landforgood.org/resources/toolbox/leasing/>
- Build-a-lease tool:  
<https://landforgood.org/lease-tool-login/>
- Legal resource for leasing:  
<https://farmcommons.org/land-matters>
- Questions to ask about property:
  - Flooding?
  - Property access all season long?
  - Fencing? Enough to prevent deer/elk?
  - Electricity accessible on the property?
  - Is there good-quality road access into the property?





# Lease Checklist

- Go over entire lease with landowner
- What type of farming is allowed?
- Organic/conventional farming on-site?
- Lease length, parameters for terminating lease
- How is the landowner going to use the land otherwise? (Will they be farming also? Using the land in some way?)
- Create a water agreement
  - Need to track your water use? Could install a flow meter
- Include map of where farming can take place, where can you drive/park?
- Property access: where/when can property be accessed, by what vehicles?
- Who takes care of the property? Maintenance, mowing? Infrastructure upkeep?
- Trash hauling? How is it done and by who?
- What pests have been on the property?
- What infrastructure will you have access to?
- Building/bringing temporary structures: allowed? Where?
- Port-a-potty or use of bathroom facilities?
- Who pays what utilities? Estimated cost?
- Guests/helpers: allowed? Any stipulations?
- Pets allowed?
- Children allowed on-site?
- Where are sales allowed on-site? Is a farm stand allowed?
- Events: allowed? Any stipulations?
- Consider having a local lawyer go over lease with you
- Farm insurance needed?



# Any Questions?

For Farm to Farmer support or any other questions:

Nayla Jiménez-Cabezas  
[naylajc@wafarmlandtrust.org](mailto:naylajc@wafarmlandtrust.org)

Emily Trabolsi  
[etrabolsi@wafarmlandtrust.org](mailto:etrabolsi@wafarmlandtrust.org)