

# Agriculture & Critical Areas: A Framework for Stewardship

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April 20, 2011

Governor Chris Gregoire  
Office of the Governor  
PO Box 40002  
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

RE: ENGROSSED SUBSTITUTE HOUSE BILL 1886

Dear Governor Gregoire:

We would like to thank you for your support in the development of the voluntary stewardship program for agriculture and critical areas that recently passed the Washington State Legislature. The bill is the result of over three years of discussion between farmers, county leaders, the environmental community, tribal representatives, and numerous state agency personnel to improve critical areas while retaining agricultural viability. We respectfully request that you sign this bill.

One of the key principles throughout our deliberations has been to build on existing efforts and successful programs. Our constituents do not want to disrupt productive efforts already underway in many watersheds for salmon recovery, water quality clean-up, or agricultural land conservation. The voluntary stewardship program is based on existing successful local models for restoring important ecosystems in agricultural areas.

We also recognize that habitat for fish and wildlife has been damaged in many places throughout the state, and that the depletion of these resources—salmon in particular—has been devastating to tribal communities and other citizens. Our caucuses are committed to making a sincere effort to move forward




and work on solutions instead of sliding back into conflict, and to ensure that we work to improve the status quo. To that end we have developed a framework that relies heavily on incentives with goals, measurable benchmarks, and accountability.

The voluntary stewardship program will not cause major miracles to occur in short order; it will take work. The bill does lay out a positive and hopefully productive pathway for farmers, environmental interests, and county, state, tribal, and federal governments to engage in how and where we improve important and critical areas of our state's key ecosystems, while preserving and improving our working farms.

Once again, we thank you for your continuing support during our deliberations, and we look forward to working with you as we move toward implementation of the voluntary stewardship program.

Sincerely,

  
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John Stuhlmiller  
Agricultural Caucus

  
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Len Barson  
Environmental Caucus

  
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Eric Johnson  
County Caucus

The Agricultural and Critical Areas Committee includes representatives from the following organizations:

Futurewise  
King County  
The Nature Conservancy  
Washington Cattlemen's Association  
Washington Environmental Council  
Washington Farm Bureau  
Washington State Association of Counties  
Washington State Dairy Federation  
Washington State Nursery & Landscape Association  
Western Washington Agricultural Association