

## **Outstanding questions for FFF committee (prepared by Siri Erickson-Brown):**

We, as a region, have wisely placed restrictions on what private landowners may do with parcels designated as agricultural land. We do not allow housing developments or sports fields to be built on agricultural land, because we recognize that there is a long-term public interest in preserving open, fertile land for use by future generations. When it comes to fish and other wildlife, we have not placed the same safeguards against conversion of farmland. Presumably this is because we, collectively, believe that these two types of resources are of similar importance. However, it is possible that the unchecked pursuit of habitat restoration within the footprint of our designated agricultural lands will result in more acres being lost than is in the long-term public interest. I think most people would agree that it would be a bad idea to allow all designated farmland to be returned to its original natural state. I think most people also agree that there is some need to provide more habitat for salmon and other species within the floodplain acreage. The question is, how many acres should be converted from farmland to habitat? The answer is somewhere between “all of it” and “no more than has already been taken”. Somewhere in between those two answers, we have to arrive at the appropriate balance.

Whose responsibility is it to answer this question and to decide what balance of land uses is in the best long-term interest of our region? If the FFF committee is to provide meaningful input to this decision, I think it’s important that we address the following issues:

1. GMA – how do proposed large projects meet the considerations of the state’s GMA law and the County’s related policies for the preservation of “agricultural lands of long term commercial significance”?
2. Whose responsibility is it to assess and determine how much farmland should be lost to habitat?
  - a. Does the County have policies or tools for making a determination about its future needs and capabilities for food production?
  - b. How are regional habitat restoration efforts and climate change being taken into account when we assess King County’s choices about balancing land uses in floodplains? Farm acreage is being converted to habitat in ag districts throughout the West coast, and climate impacts will alter ag productivity in the coming decades.
3. Bank armoring removal/passive decommissioning – what is the number of acres that would be affected?
4. Net impact on ag land – what is the total number of acres targeted for removal from agricultural production? Include longterm impact of revetment/levee removal, buffers on all waterways, large projects, and wetland restoration.
5. What is the committee being asked in regards to Fall City CIP projects?
  - a. Yes/no?
  - b. Which ones and/or which alternatives?

6. If FFF committee is expected to give a recommendation on the SAFC big project(s), are the corresponding recommendations for ag priorities intended to be direct offsets for the lost lands?
  - a. How should the type/classification of acres in question (those lost and those “enhanced”) be valued and weighed?
  - b. Is the County willing to make changes to the underlying policies that impact ag productivity and viability (drainage, pumps/gates, farm infrastructure restrictions) or rather to put more money toward programs that assist farmers in navigating the existing regulations?