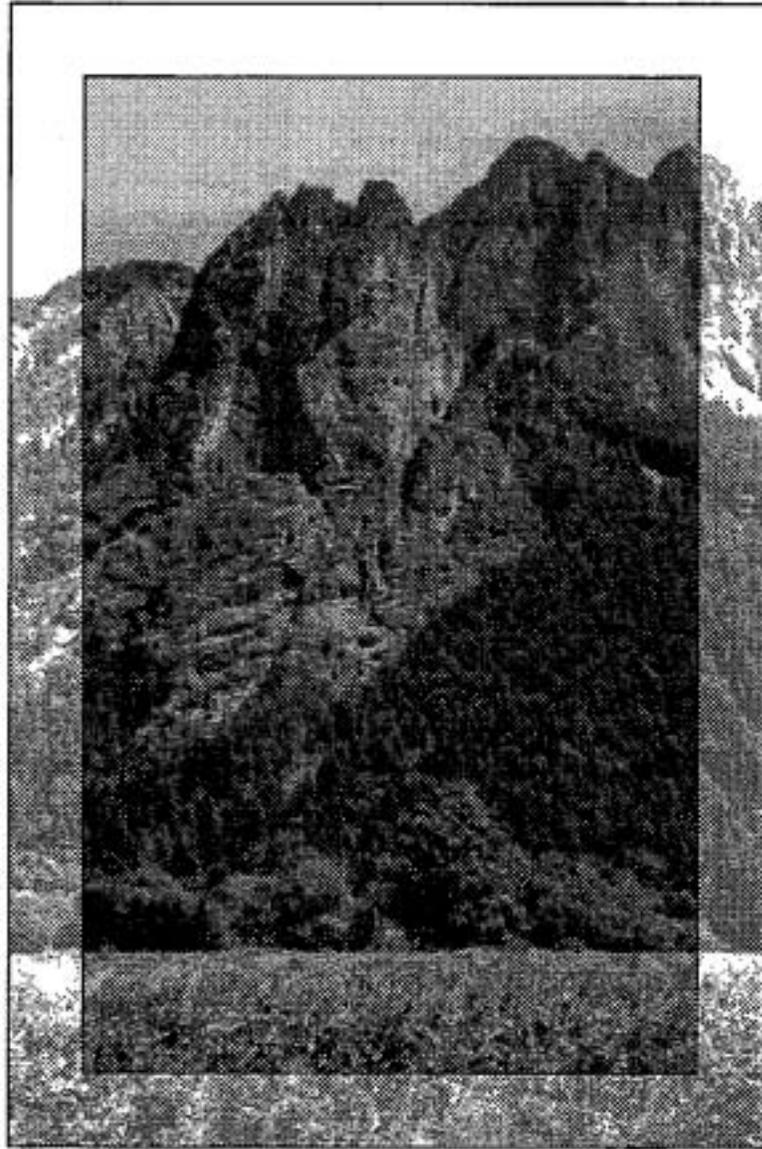


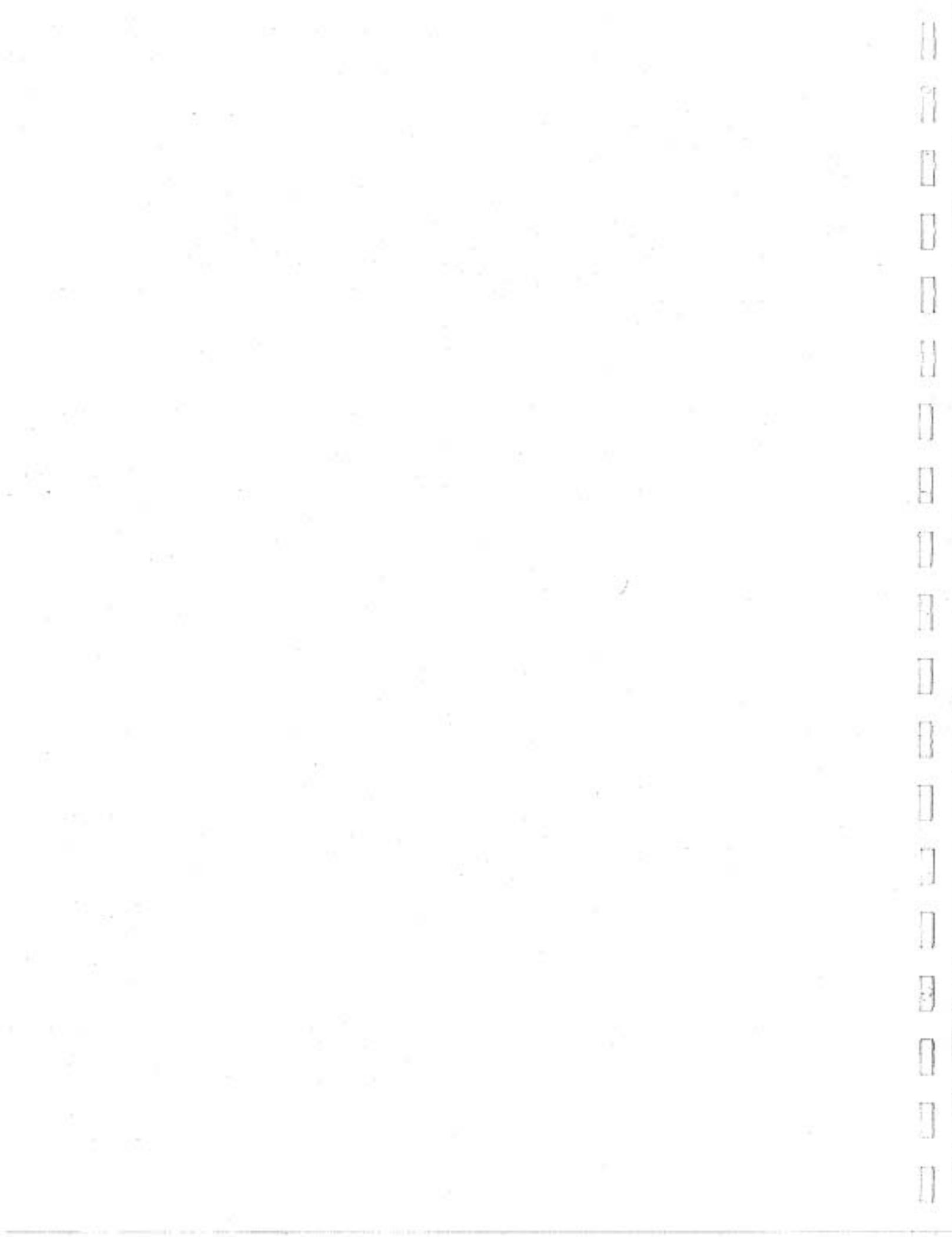
# The Landscapes of Rural King County

Goals for Preservation Incentives



## Chapter Four





## Chapter 4

# The Landscapes of Rural King County: Goals for Preservation Incentives

The rural farm and forest districts play very different roles in the local landscapes in which they are located. For example, some forest districts are now important primarily as buffers between urban development and agricultural lands, others provide essential fish habitat, and still others remain highly productive commercial forests.

If incentive programs are to be successful in preserving the lands for these purposes, they must be designed with an understanding of the differences among the districts, their specific contributions to the varied landscapes of rural King County; and differences in ownership patterns and development potential.

To this end, the team established nine sub-areas or "landscapes" within the rural zone and developed goals to ensure that the incentive programs developed as part of the Farm and Forest Project are tailored to the unique circumstances of each district.

We refer to the nine sub-areas, as "landscapes." This term was chosen as a non-bureaucratic way to describe the natural systems and human communities that comprise rural King County. These nine "landscapes," as shown on map A-2 in Appendix A, are:

- The Sammamish Valley
- The Bear Creek Plateau
- The Lower Snoqualmie Valley
- The Mountain to Sound Greenway
- The Cedar River Watershed
- The Middle Green River
- The Enumclaw Plateau
- The Kent Valley
- Vashon Island

In general these "landscapes" conform to basins or watersheds, but in a few cases (most notably the Enumclaw plateau) the human, economic, and ecological communities span two watersheds, and the landscape descriptions have been modified accordingly. This section of the report provides brief descriptions of the nine landscapes and lists proposed criteria (or goals) for the incentives to be applied within each.

## The Sammamish Valley

Although no study areas were within the Sammamish Valley, it was included in the Farm and Forest Project because it contains important agricultural lands at the very edge of the urban growth boundary, and may need additional protection.

### The Challenges:

Although the valley has been designated as an Agricultural Production District, and large portions of its land have been protected by the County's farmlands preservation program, (see Map A-4) several important portions are not yet protected. These parcels are subject to development pressures from the rapidly growing areas to the north, south, and west. The rapid population growth surrounding the valley is creating increased traffic and rising demand for space for active recreation, placing added pressure on agricultural land uses in the valley.

### Goals for incentives to preserve the farms in the Sammamish Valley:

1. Encourage the preservation of farming on all historically productive agricultural lands;
2. Minimize the economic pressures to convert unprotected lands;
3. Encourage the evolution of the valley as a "close-by supplier" of fresh produce to the surrounding communities;
4. Encourage the resolution of the land disputes between active recreation and agricultural interests.

## Bear Creek Plateau

*"Bear Creek, located in an urbanizing area of King County, provides some of the highest-quality river habitat in the County. It contains spawning and rearing habitat for salmon populations entering from Lake Washington, freshwater mussels in large beds, rare freshwater sponges, and diverse areas for birds and wildlife. King County has already acquired several key properties in the basin, from Cottage Lake Park in the 1989 Open Space Bond to parcels in the 1993 Regional Conservation Futures Acquisition Program. Over \$3,000,000 has been designated for streamside plantings and habitat improvements. . . ."*

WATERWAYS 2000 REPORT

The forest district on the Bear Creek Plateau contains the headwaters of the main branch of Bear Creek, and includes one of the top priority reaches in the Waterways 2000 program. (See Map A-6.) The aquatic resources of this area are well documented, and there are significant archeological remains in the area as well.

### **The Challenge:**

The forest and aquatic resources of Bear Creek are threatened by the burgeoning development in the surrounding area.

### **Goals for incentives to preserve the forest district on Bear Creek Plateau:**

1. Protect the aquatic resources of Bear Creek by reinforcing the Waterways 2000 strategy for the area;
2. Encourage the preservation of the forest for values other than large-scale commercial timber production; and
3. Support the current stewardship efforts by property owners.

## **The Lower Snoqualmie Valley**

The Lower Snoqualmie Valley is a tremendous regional resource: a relatively unspoiled rural landscape and a productive agricultural community within just a few miles from one of the nation's larger metropolitan populations. The fresh agricultural products, scenic resources and outdoor experiences it affords to everyone in the County are extraordinary.

The recommended forest and farm districts in the Lower Snoqualmie landscape contribute to the quality of the valley in a variety of ways. Map A-1 shows how the forest district on the west side of the valley forms the buffer that separates the valley from the proposed North Ridge development, protects the farmlands from run-off, and provides the scenic backdrop for the valley's west side. Portions of the forest districts on the east provide similar functions for both the Snoqualmie and the Cherry Valleys, as well as providing a forest buffer for the rural cities of Duvall and Carnation.

The forest districts to the east of the valley are comprised of lands close to the Forest Production District that have historically been highly productive commercial timber lands. Portions of these districts also lie within the Griffin Creek Basin, the Harris Creek Basin, Stoessal Creek and the Tolt River basin, all of which have been identified by Waterways 2000 as an important habitat area for coho salmon.

At the south end of the valley, several of the forest districts form a forest buffer between the urban growth boundary of the East Sammamish Plateau and the upper valley communities of Snoqualmie and North Bend. Portions of these districts lie within the Patterson Creek Basin, which has been designated by the County as high priority fisheries habitat. The recommended agricultural districts within the Snoqualmie consist of three areas that lie between the agricultural production district and the communities of Duvall, Carnation, and Fall City.

### **The Challenges:**

Fortunately, much of the agricultural land in the valley has already been preserved through the King County Farmlands Preservation Program. (See Map A-4.) Yet the valley and its stewards face a daunting list of challenges. Although the *farmland* in the lower valley has been preserved, the survival of *farming* there remains an open question. As the land base of agriculture in the county continues to shrink, the infrastructure for farming is also disappearing. If farming is to remain viable, the County must find new ways to assure that a critical mass of agricultural activity continues. This will mean dealing with some of the economic pressures that are squeezing out farmers, as well as helping to develop new products and new marketing opportunities.

The farmers of the Snoqualmie are also facing new pressures from growth occurring on the ridges above them. Major new "master planned developments" have been permitted on both sides of the valley, and large chateaux are appearing on the wooded hillsides that constitute the last narrow buffer between the valley and these developments. Map A-12 shows a high level of recent subdivision activity east of the Snoqualmie Valley.

### **Goals for incentives to preserve the farms and forests in the Lower Snoqualmie Valley:**

1. Encourage the retention of a critical mass of agricultural activity to keep farming viable;
2. Encourage the development of new markets and new product lines;
3. Encourage the entry of new farmers into the Valley;
4. Preserve the forested hillsides bordering the Lower Snoqualmie and Cherry Valleys to buffer farming from residential development and protect against run-off;
5. Encourage the continuation of responsible forest production in the upland areas east of the Snoqualmie Valley;

6. Protect the aquatic resources of Griffin, Harris, Stoessel, Tolt, Patterson, and Ames Creeks;
7. Encourage the retention of the forest buffer separating the East Sammamish Plateau from the Snoqualmie Valley; and
8. Provide buffers of forests and farmlands to define the edges of the urban growth boundaries of Duvall, Carnation, and Fall City.

## The Mountain to Sound Greenway

The forested lands and rural communities adjacent to the I-90 corridor form the western end of the scenic "Mountain to Sound Greenway" that is enjoyed by millions of travelers each year. The "Issaquah Alps" and other public lands in the greenway also provide a broad spectrum of outdoor experiences within reach of every resident of central Puget Sound. King County, in cooperation with the Mountain to Sound Greenway Trust, the State of Washington Department of Natural Resources and many others, is building a lasting legacy of conserved lands for future generations within this landscape.

Map A-3 shows that the proposed forest districts that lie within the Mountain to Sound landscape consist primarily of private forest lands adjacent to public parks and forests, and forested hillsides within the Greenway corridor. Two farm districts are also proposed within the Greenway landscape, between the cities of North Bend and Snoqualmie and the Forest Production District. One of the priority reaches of the Waterways 2000 program lies within these districts.

A large forest district north of I-90 forms a triangle between that highway, the Snoqualmie Valley, and the urban growth boundary along the East Sammamish Plateau. This area is very important to the character of the greenway as a buffer from the urbanizing areas to the West. Map A-4 shows the district also contains a number of County Parks and Open Space acquisitions, including the section 36 property recently acquired with Conservation Futures funds. In addition, the district contains the Patterson Creek and Canyon Creek reaches identified as important aquatic resources by Waterways 2000.

The southern portion of this landscape includes parcels in the May Creek and Issaquah Creek area, including a large forest district north and south of the May Valley Road, and parcels along the Issaquah-Hobart Road near the SR-18 interchange.

Natural resources within this area include Lake McDonald, various wetlands, and salmonid habitat for spawning and rearing salmonids, particularly coho and sea-run cutthroat trout. The portion of Carey Creek that is included in the forest district represents a diversity of habitats and is believed to be underutilized by salmonids currently. The portion of Holder Creek within the district is also important for coho, sea-run cutthroat trout, and steelhead spawning. The district also

contains three segments of the wildlife corridor as mapped in the 1994 Comprehensive Plan.

There are important recreation areas within the district on both State and County owned lands that form a contiguous block of ownership surrounding Cougar and Squak Mountains. In addition to recreation opportunities, the May Creek/Issaquah Creek forest district contains large blocks of commercial forest land managed by the Washington Department of Natural Resources, Weyerhaeuser, and the Manke Lumber Company.

### **The Challenges:**

A review of forest practice applications indicates that 1505 acres were proposed for harvesting in the May Creek/Issaquah Creek area of this landscape since 1987. An additional 761 acres were proposed for conversion to non forestry uses since 1987. This includes a subdivision of parcels owned by the Manke Lumber Company, which comprise a critical link in the habitat networks between the Cedar River Watershed and Tiger Mountain. The parcels also include the headwaters of Issaquah Creek. The forest districts north of I-90 are also subject to development pressures, with at least three major developments planned in the area in the near future. The largest of these, Grand Ridge, will test the effectiveness of the County's new "Four-to-One" program as an incentive to preserve lands by clustering growth in areas adjacent to the urban growth boundary.

### **Goals for incentives to preserve farms and forest in the Mountain to Sound landscape:**

1. Support the Mountain to Sound Greenway Trust in preserving the working landscapes within the Greenway by using Farm and Forest Project incentives to complement Trust resources;
2. Preserve the continuity of scenic vistas within the Greenway;
3. Preserve critical wildlife corridors connecting the Cedar River Watershed, Rattlesnake Ridge, Issaquah Alps, and other protected areas;
4. Protect the aquatic resources of Patterson Creek and the Middle Fork of the Snoqualmie;
5. Retain forested buffers between the urban growth area and the Greenway and the Lower Snoqualmie Valley;
6. Encourage the continuation of responsible forestry on the productive lands that lie adjacent to the Forest Production District;

7. Encourage the entry of new foresters throughout the Study Area, including reclamation of mineral resource lands to long-term forest management;
8. Retain the forest buffer on the slopes above the City of Issaquah along Squak Mountain;
9. Retain the forest buffers which protect aquifer recharge areas and streams, retard surface water runoff, and prevent sedimentation and pollutant loading to sensitive areas.
10. Enhance the value of the public investment in recreational and scenic lands within the Mountain to Sound Landscape;
11. Encourage the development of environmental education programs and facilities to take advantage of the accessibility afforded by I-90;
12. Encourage the completion of the regional and national trail networks within the Greenway;
13. Encourage the continuation of farming to sustain a critical mass of agricultural activity in the county;
14. Encourage the entry of new farmers;
15. Increase cooperation among various users of the Study Area's resources and governmental agencies (federal, tribal, state, and local); and
16. Preserve specific sensitive areas as identified in the Basin Plans.

## The Cedar River Watershed

Writer and outdoorsman Harvey Manning has written:

*"The Cedar is the most useful river in Puget Sound. Rising on the Cascade Crest, it brings clean mountain water to Landsburg, where more or less of the flow, depending on the season, is diverted into the pipeline that empties into a reservoir, Lake Youngs, which fills the bathtubs and swimming pools, greens the lawns, and washes the dishes of the south sector of Seattle and satellite communities. The waters not so diverted enter Lake Washington, where they provide the flushing action without which the celebrated Metro sewage cleanup wouldn't have done the job of cleaning up Lake Washington. Through the Ship Canal to Lake Union*

important tribal fisheries and cultural resources, and the Muckleshoot tribe operates a fish hatchery at the mouth of Boise Creek (White River).

Washington State Parks has Flaming Geyser and Palmer/Kanasket State Parks on the Green River and Nolte State Park at Deep Lake. The County's planned Enumclaw Plateau Trail will connect with Pierce County's Sound-to-Mountain Trail at the White River south of Enumclaw and extend north on railroad rights-of-way to the state parks near Cumberland and to the Iron Horse Trail, then east over the Cascades.

In addition to its valuable fisheries resources, the plateau is rich in wildlife. Elk herds migrate from Tacoma's restricted-access Green River watershed and the Upper White River Valley to the farms and forests on the plateau. Deer are abundant, and bears and cougars occasional visitors. Great varieties of birds are attracted to the plateau's farms, streams, lakes, wetlands, and forested uplands.

On the plateau (south) side of the gorge are located two major water sources. Black Diamond Springs is the sole source aquifer for the City of Black Diamond's water supply. The spring-fed Icy Creek is the water source for the state's Pautzke Rearing Ponds and also an important water source contributing to maintenance of instream flows below Tacoma's diversion pipes. Sources of these two major springs are believed to be the tri-lakes area of Hyde, Deep, and Fish Lakes.

### **The Challenges:**

The major challenge here, as in the Snoqualmie, is to preserve the practice of farming as well as the farmland, and to preserve the forest land base from encroaching development.

### **Goals for incentives to preserving farming and forestry on the Enumclaw Plateau:**

1. Preserve the economic viability of agricultural uses by maintaining a critical mass of agricultural lands to support needed infrastructure for farming;
2. Encourage new farmers to take advantage of underused farmland;
3. Provide a buffer of farm and forest land between the City of Enumclaw and the commercial agriculture and forestry lands;
4. Protect and enhance the fisheries resources of Newaukum and Boise Creeks;
5. Enhance the value of the public investment in recreational and scenic lands;

6. Provide forested buffers for lakes, streams, springs, and wetlands to protect aquifer recharge areas and other water resources; and
7. Encourage habitat conservation and enhancement to protect the wildlife diversity of the plateau.

## **The Kent Valley**

Surrounded by intense industrial development, freeways and railroads, the two Agricultural Production Districts in the Kent Valley provide an important remnant of the agricultural heritage along the lower Green River. Large portions of these areas were protected through the purchase of development rights, (see Map A-4), or they surely would have vanished long ago. Those who continue to farm in the lower Green face a complex challenge created by the conflicting uses which surround them, and yet they continue to produce valuable crops and livestock and preserve an historic legacy. The accessibility of the area is also an important consideration.

Recognizing the importance of these lands as open space, the City of Kent is developing a system of parks and trails along the river that will complement the farmlands and enhance their importance as an open space resource as well as an agricultural production area.

### **The Challenges:**

The pressures on farming in the Kent Valley may be more intense than in any other agricultural area of the County. The surrounding industrial and commercial uses have increased land values dramatically, (see Map A-13), and created conflicts with the remaining agricultural activities.

### **Goals for incentives to preserve farming in the Kent Valley:**

1. Encourage the retention of a critical mass of agricultural activity to support the infrastructure needed for farming;
2. Encourage the entry of new farmers to use any available farmland within the valley to take advantage of the area's accessibility;
3. Encourage the creation of an integrated open space system that complements the farmlands; and
4. Provide educational opportunities that take advantage of the proximity of the Lower Green Valley farmlands to urban populations.

## Vashon Island

Vashon Island has a rich history of agricultural production, and was once a major producer of produce for the cities of Puget Sound. Japanese immigrants were especially prominent as farmers on Vashon in the early twentieth century.

The proposed farm district of Vashon Island is comprised of parcels lying near the center of the island. About a quarter of the study area has been protected through King County's Farmland Preservation Program, (Map A-4), and other adjacent parcels of equal area are enrolled in the County's current use taxation program.

### The Challenges:

Although the rural character of Vashon is still evident, farming has been fading there for decades. The Island is currently experiencing increased popularity as a bedroom community for people commuting to and from the mainland. The resulting increases in property values are intensifying the pressures on both the land base and the practice of agriculture on the island.

In the past few years, the citizens of Vashon have begun to organize efforts to preserve the rural character of the island and to reinvigorate the practice of farming there. Innovative strategies are being employed in this effort, including subscription farming, the creation of a farmers' market, and development of an "agricultural co-housing project" to provide affordable housing (and potentially land) for families interested in farming.

The success of these efforts will depend, in large measure, on the degree to which they can be nurtured by the larger community -- and on the continued availability of farmland at affordable prices.

### Goals for incentives to preserve farming on Vashon Island:

1. Preserve a critical mass of agricultural land on the island;
2. Encourage the economic viability of farming; and
3. Provide technical assistance in developing markets for island produce.