

Major Themes from Nov. 8 Sending Area Discussion

The following comments are organized by topic, paraphrased from the Nov. 8 meeting notes, and attributed to the person who made them. Please let me and other committee members know if you feel your comments are taken out of context.

Purpose and Goals of Conservation through TDR: Need a better explanation of the purpose and goals of land conservation generally and the specific conservation goals to be advanced by TDR. (Martha)

- In identifying TDR sending areas, it's more important at this point to determine what conservation values you want to protect, not the specific geographic areas or land-use designations. (Allen)
- The Skagit County Comprehensive Plan was created as a resource conservation master plan. Which resources are not being adequately protected and where is the evidence? (Ed)¹
- There's not going to be a huge demand to buy TDRs, therefore having too broad a [sending area] focus might defeat the effort. (Kim)
- We should keep an open mind. If a landowner wants to conserve their land by selling the development right, and if there is demand....a TDR program should be made to work for them. (Allen)

Agricultural Lands:

Consider not applying TDR to Ag-NRL

- A TDR program shouldn't apply to Ag-NRL because the three-year farm income rule removes the development potential from most Ag – NRL parcels, and because the Farmland Legacy Program is already working well. (Bruce)
- For reasons already identified, it may be best for a TDR program not to apply to Ag – NRL. There are other areas such as forestry and rural resource lands where TDR could apply. (Kim)
- While doesn't think TDR is likely to compete with Farmland Legacy, there is limited funding for conservation of non-ag areas or resources, and TDR should perhaps focus on those other resources. (Martha)

¹ From Nov. 8 and subsequent conversations.

Keep Ag-NRL on the table

- We need to be thinking about the future, in case there is a change in the current political support for farmland protection. (Kendra)
- A Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program such as Farmland Legacy and a TDR program won't be in conflict if they are properly constructed. (Allen)
- Don't throw out categories of land yet, such as Ag-NRL. It's important to ask: could TDR help to supplement the Farmland Legacy Program and in so doing, extend the acres of Ag-NRL that can be protected? (Taylor)

General Ag Land comments

- Would be interested to know how much, if any land has been removed from Ag-NRL since the 1970s. (Bruce)
- Regarding possible Ag – NRL replacement lands, most of the land that has active agricultural uses but is not Ag – NRL has lower quality soils than Ag-NRL and is primarily used as pastureland. (Charlie Boon)

Forest lands

- [This] forest landowner's perspective is "leave us alone, we can take care of our business ourselves." A person with timber would be "crazy" to sell their development rights as that might be all they have left in the future. (Paul)
- There are other areas such as forestry and rural resource lands where TDR could apply. (Kim)
- We should keep an open mind. If a landowner wants to conserve their land by selling the development right, and if there is demand....a TDR program should be made to work for them. (Allen)

Other Conservation Resources to Consider

- There is limited funding for conservation of non-ag areas or resources, such as habitat, rural character, open-space, etc., and TDR could be an exciting opportunity for these other lands. (Martha)
- There are many environmental resources that a TDR program could help to protect including: sensitive headwater areas; the most intact and threatened wetlands; wildlife corridors; green separators between cities; saltwater shorelines; scenic values, viewscales and open-space lands; and secondary forest lands. (Martha)

- There was general agreement that it would be a good idea to talk to the cities about linking a TDR program with the UGA open-space plan. On the one hand, close-in lands would have higher land values (prices), but there may be stronger support within cities for conserving close-in lands than areas that are more distant in rural portions of the County.
- It's important to work with the cities to determine what their conservation values and priorities are. They might include conserving nearby agricultural lands, forest lands, or recreational and open space lands. (Taylor)

What About Parcels that Arguably Don't Have Development Rights?

- If a rural parcel is unable to be developed due to a limitation such as poor soils for septic or lack of water, would it be considered to have a development right eligible for purchase through a TDR program? (Ed)
- In some cases TDR programs will credit such parcels with a development right, in and in other cases they don't. (Taylor)
- A TDR program should not apply to Ag-NRL because the three-year farm income rule removes the development potential from most Ag-NRL parcels.... (Bruce)