



SSCFLT BUSINESS PLAN for 2014-2015 Results of the March 1, 2014 Board Retreat

SOUTH OF THE SOUND COMMUNITY FARM LAND TRUST
Keeping Farms in Production and Affordable to Farmers

I. WHO WE ARE:

South of the Sound Community Farm Land Trust (SSCFLT) is a membership-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving farmland and to keeping it farmed forever.

II. OUR VISION:

We seek a future with abundant, productive, sustainable and affordable farmland providing healthy food for our community and contributing to a vibrant, viable local farm economy.

III. OUR MISSION:

We work to:

- Permanently protect farmland and to provide affordable land security for farmers.
- Assure that farmland stays in production as part of the viable agricultural economy that provides for local food security.
- Build a community that appreciates and supports locally produced food, and where farms can provide a good economic return to those who work the land.

III. WHAT WE DO:

We use two methods to keep farmland in production and affordable to farmers:

Ground Lease Based on the Community Land Trust Model: Using this model and funding from federal, state, county and local sources the Land Trust secures fee title to farmland when it is up for sale. We then provide a long-term (typically 99-year) ground lease for the farmer(s). Farmers own the buildings subject to the ground lease. We monitor and enforce compliance. We require active and sustainable farming by our lessees. We expect farmers to own the farmhouse and other farm buildings needed for a viable farm business. We allow the lease to transfer to family members willing to actively farm. When the leaseholder or heirs seek to sell buildings or the lease arrangement, we limit the resale price so the farm remains within the means of future farmers but allows a fair return on investment for the current farmer.

Our first Community Land Trust acquisition was completed in fall 2013. By creating Scatter Creek Farm & Conservancy we are keeping nearly 100 acres of prime Thurston County farmland in production. Our primary leaseholder is Kirsop Farm.

Agricultural Conservation Easements with Option to Purchase at Agricultural Value: The Land Trust holds, monitors, and enforces an agricultural conservation easement on farmer-owned land. With funding from the same sources listed above, we compensate landowners for permanently removing development rights and for accepting a permanent farming requirement on the land. In addition, when the farmer decides to sell the land to a non-farmer, the land trust has the right to acquire the farm at a price consistent with its agricultural value regardless of the potential market value. This requirement

enables enforcement of affordability restrictions, transfer restrictions, and permanent enforcement of the active farming requirement.

IV. OUR PRIORITIES:

- Permanently **preserve working, affordable farmland**.
- **Grow SSCFLT** with the funding and staffing necessary to ensure its own sustainability as an organization committed to long term stewardship.
- **Build community support**, among the public and among other organizations, for permanently preserving working farms.
- Contribute to the **economic viability** of new and current farmers.

V. OUR BUSINESS PLAN FOR 2014-15:

Assure that Scatter Creek Farm & Conservancy is a Well Managed Resource

Lead Committee: Farm Management Committee

- Involve local farmers in Farm management
- Lease out or sell all buildings to generate sufficient income to cover the costs of property taxes and insurance
- Ensure the Farm is being used to its full potential
- Identify funds to cover the cost of property management and maintenance projects

Improve Financial System Transparency and Strengthen Financial Condition

Lead Committee: Finance Committee

- Update our financial manual with a clear statement of our financial systems and roles
- Hire a professional bookkeeper
- Provide Board training on financial management and responsibilities
- Create and distribute to the Board monthly financial statements
- Develop 2014 and 2015 budgets with monthly cash flow analyses
- Create annual balance sheets to show restricted assets
- Plan for a 2016 audit

Develop Strategies for Future Farmland Acquisitions

Lead Committee: Farmland Preservation Committee

- In preparation for a potential 2015 land acquisition, create a Request for Proposals (RFP) for future farmer leaseholders and building owners
- Research farm acquisition funding sources, including government grants, local investors, and transfer of development rights programs
- Use previously developed criteria for choosing and prioritizing future properties
- Work in partnership with other groups to determine if, when and how to approach seeking an increase in Conservation Futures funds
- Identify property owner(s) interested in working with us as we gain our initial experience as the holder of an agricultural conservation easement.

Grow the Organization and Raise Funds to Carry Out the Mission

Lead Committee: Membership, Outreach and Development Committee

- Fill projected revenue gaps in our 2014 budget by:
 - Fundraising from individuals
 - Generating net revenue from Farms Forever
 - Seeking new grant sources
- Explore potential for a capital campaign to fund:
 - Farm acquisition
 - Capital expenditures on properties
- Address the challenge of differentiating SSCFLT from the other land trusts by emphasizing SSCFLT's commitment to affordability and keeping farmland in production
- Utilize and promote the tag line *Farms Forever*
- Increase significantly the number of households who contribute financial support for SSCFLT
- Mobilize farmer members to help spread the word
- Explore other outreach strategies:
 - Present our message to area churches
 - Work with financial planners like Ragnar Wealth
 - Partner with the Olympia Food Co-op
 - Expand Combined Fund Drive contributions
- Set target amount for each board member to fundraise
- Host a public event at Scatter Creek Farm and Conservancy, in partnership with Creekside Conservancy

Ensure Organizational Sustainability and Capacity for Long Term Stewardship

Lead Committee: Executive Committee

- Grow the size of the Board to lighten the load and bring in new skills, expertise and potential access to donors
- Hire an Outreach and Philanthropy Coordinator
- Establish a process for staff evaluation
- Store Board documents online in a Board Only section of the website to assure all Board members have access to them
- Organize a Board-to Board meetings with:
 - Capital Land Trust
 - Nisqually Land Trust
- Identify Board members to liaise with important partner organizations.
- Clarify that public advocacy is a part of our work but not a priority