



# Conversion Pressures Facing Farmland in the Puyallup River Watershed

Over time, agricultural land throughout the Puyallup Watershed has decreased, and the reasons for land-use changes have been complex. To better understand the factors influencing farmland conversions, Floodplains for the Future (FFTF) partners conducted research to identify current and future pressures facing agricultural lands throughout the watershed. This research supported the FFTF goal to track Actively Farmed Land as a metric to monitor floodplain health.

The research team examined the following topics from 2013 to 2019:

- General loss of farmland
- Habitat and infrastructure projects
- Conserved farmland
- Cities and Urban Growth Areas (UGAs)
- Zoning

Through this process, the team worked collaboratively with stakeholders to explore fish, farm, and flood perspectives for each topic. Partners convened for two workshops to review data layers and statistics, discuss findings, and determine next steps.



## What is the *Actively Farmed Land* metric?

The FFTF Monitoring and Adaptive Management Program tracks the amount of actively farmed land in the Puyallup Watershed to support two FFTF goals:

- Protect/conservate agricultural lands
- Maintain viable farming economy/ critical mass of farmland and farm businesses

For more information on the Monitoring and Adaptive Management Program, visit [www.floodplainsforthefuture.org](http://www.floodplainsforthefuture.org).

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## Results Highlights

### General Loss of Farmland

The continued loss of farmland to residential and warehouse development in the Puyallup Watershed is significant. From 2013 to 2019, a total of 804 acres of farmland throughout the watershed was converted for residential and warehouse development.

#### ACRES OF FARMLAND

2013	16,823
2019	16,019
<b>Net decrease:</b>	<b>804 acres, 5%</b>

### Habitat and Infrastructure Projects

Habitat projects do not appear to be a major driver of farmland conversion in the Puyallup Watershed.

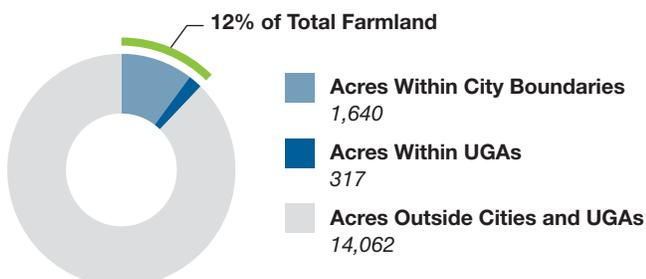
- One parcel of active farmland (40 acres) was converted to a habitat project.
- All other actively farmed land adjacent to a mapped habitat improvement project remained actively farmed land.

While habitat projects appear to have low influence on farmland conversion based on these results, many farms are at risk of conversion from proposed and planned transportation projects in the short term and the long term.

- 704 acres of Actively Farmed Land are bisected by or adjacent to planned infrastructure projects. These include Pierce County transportation, airport and ferry, surface water management, and sewer projects.
- 164 acres of Actively Farmed Land are located within the project footprint for the SR 167 expansion project.

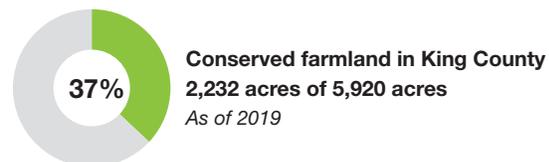
### Cities and Urban Growth Areas

A significant portion of the active farmland in the watershed is within city boundaries or Urban Growth Areas (UGAs) and is therefore at a high risk of conversion to urban development.



### Conserved Farmland

King County has a Farmland Preservation Program that has permanently conserved 2,232 acres of farmland in the Puyallup Watershed. Pierce County does not have a similar program, but land trusts and the County have collaborated on individual farmland conservation easement projects that have permanently conserved 563 acres in the Puyallup Watershed.



### Zoning

Zoning cannot be relied upon to conserve agricultural lands in the watershed, as most farmland is not within long-term agricultural zoning designations.

- 27% (219 acres) of the total 804 acres of farmland lost from 2013-2019, was within zoning designations intended to provide the greatest protection to agriculture
- 5,205 acres of actively farmed land are located outside of Agriculture Resource Land (ARL) zoning (Pierce County) or Agriculture-35 zoning (King County)

In addition, long-term agricultural zoning designations are not sufficient to protect farmland from conversion. Of the farmland converted from agriculture to other uses between 2013 and 2019, 71 acres were zoned ARL (Pierce County), and 148 acres were zoned Agriculture-35 (King County). This represents 27 percent of the farmland lost over that six-year period.

Floodplains for the Future is a multi-organizational partnership led by Pierce County with funding and support from the Department of Ecology, The Nature Conservancy, and Puget Sound Partnership.

For more information, visit: [FloodplainsForTheFuture.org](http://FloodplainsForTheFuture.org)  
Contact us at: Spencer Easton at [seaston@esassoc.com](mailto:seaston@esassoc.com)