



**South of the Sound
Community
Farm Land Trust**

**ANNUAL REPORT TO THE MEMBERSHIP, MARCH 5, 2010
ACTIVITIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR 2009**

When the Board of Directors looks back on our efforts over the past year, we realize that our hard work has resulted in accomplishments that we are both proud of and excited about continuing into 2010. We hope that you--our members and supporters--are equally proud and excited about our progress as a small, community-based membership organization. We have become significantly more well-known and appreciated as the primary local community-based organization advocating for and developing programs and strategies to support our local farmers. As we move into 2010, we are well-poised to take the next steps in developing our organizational capacity to assure that these efforts can sustain themselves for as long as we need and want locally-grown, healthy food for ourselves and our children. Here are updates and highlights from our accomplishments in 2009.

The Black River Ranch Since our 2008 Annual Report, the Black River Ranch acquisition project has been on a fascinating rollercoaster ride of progress and setbacks. Most significantly, by mid-2009 The Nature Conservancy had decided to focus its Washington State acquisition priorities elsewhere. Fortunately, our local Capitol Land Trust was willing to step in and assume TNC's role as project lead and potential owner of the conservation portion of the property, and The Nature Conservancy agreed to provide significant project planning funding so the new team of partners would be able to continue to pursue the acquisition.

Our community farm land trust was the beneficiary of \$20,000 of those funds. This enabled us to contract with three local experts for critical technical and professional expertise we needed to round out our farm land trust's planning team. JT Wilcox, former CFO of Wilcox Family Farms, provided business planning advice and cash flow analyses for various scenarios of farming activities in the near and long-term future. Jeffrey Erwin, of Jensen, Kokis, Erwin Law in Olympia, is our legal counsel. Jeffrey has legal expertise in land use, real estate and environmental law and is also a small farmer in the Tenino area. Finally, we hired Shannon Kirby as our Project Planner and Stewardship Coordinator. Shannon is an environmental planning consultant who previously worked for the Mason County Conservation District for ten years.

Board Member Russ Fox continued to represent SSCFLT as our Project Manager in extensive (and intensive) collaborative planning with our primary partners who, if successful, would become fee title owners (SSCFLT and CLT) or holders of conservation easements on the land (PCC Farmland Trust, Thurston County and Washington State Dept of Fish and Wildlife). The Nature Conservancy, Washington Rivers Conservancy and the owners, Black River Ranch LLC, were also at the table each week as our planning team worked through a myriad of complex issues needing to be resolved as we attempt to reach a purchase and sale agreement.

The research and negotiation issues are too complex to summarize easily. Environmental assessments, title reports, property surveys, appraisals and conservation easement agreements all identified issues that needed to be researched, negotiated and resolved. Matching available funding allocations to final appraisal values has proven challenging. But, none of the partners have given up--including the current owners--and we hope to submit a finalized offer for the owners' consideration very soon.

Building Our Organization

- a. **Increasing Our Membership.** SSCFLT is a membership based 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization. An extensive, diverse, active membership will be needed to support our ambitious plans for the future. Therefore, building the membership base was one of the major goals of 2009 and the primary task given to our part-time staffer, Caitlin Krenn. As the result of Caitlin's and our volunteers' efforts, SSCFLT's membership has reached 120.
- b. **Strategic Planning.** In June 2009, after 6 months of intensive work, the Board adopted a detailed three-year strategic plan. The 17 page document clarifies our mission and develops specific strategies and benchmarks for four major goals: 1. Acquire farmland; 2. Build organizational capacity; 3. Expand public support for our mission, and 4. Support local farmers and farming. Staffers Caitlin Krenn and Shannon Kirby mapped the strategic plan into MS Project to facilitate tracking progress on the many benchmarks. Copies of the strategic plan are available on our website, www.communityfarmlandtrust.org and were distributed at the 2009 annual membership meeting.
- c. **Fundraising and Major Donor Campaign.** In October the Board, working with the consultants Oldenburg and Associates, began planning a major fundraising campaign. Central to any fundraising effort is a clear "case statement"

or prospectus. A Board sub-committee has completed both a detailed prospectus and a shorter version of the case statement for use in the up-coming major donor campaign. The Board believes that to increase our membership base, effectively utilize active members, coordinate fundraising and realize our strategic plan, our first priority is to hire a part-time executive director. (Members and supporters, let us know if you are interested in applying.) Budget estimates indicate that SSCFLT needs to raise approximately \$60,000 for this first phase.

Public Outreach and Education A prominent public presence is critical to SSCFLT's mission. Thanks to our energetic and resourceful part-time staffer, Caitlin Krenn, it has been a very active successful year. Caitlin has significantly increased our membership. She helped in the re-design of our website (www.communityfarmlandtrust.org) and assumed its management, continually adding new content. She arranged, through "Network for Good", a secure on-line way to make donations on the website and to pay membership dues. She created and then managed a member database, communicating news to members and making sure new members were acknowledged with a thank you and organization information. She put together a photo display and staffed the Land Trust's presence at a number of public functions including the Alternative Giving Fair, the Vandana Shiva lecture at SPSCC and local farmer markets several time throughout the season.

Farm Map SSCFLT produced and distributed the 9th annual Thurston County Direct Sales Farm Map. Its large fold-out, color format listed 45 local farms and included product and seasonality guides, documented the need to protect county farmland and suggested what citizens can do to help. SSCFLT's able staffer, Caitlin Krenn, managed the whole production, up-dating farmers' information, soliciting sponsors, arranging for layout and printing, and organizing a cadre of volunteers to distribute 12,000 maps around the county. Each year, the Farm Map is increasingly appreciated and has generated much publicity and good feelings for the Land Trust.

Creating Opportunities for Farms and Farmers to Flourish Part of SSCFLT's Mission Statement directs us to promote a local food and farming system. In keeping with that goal we received a \$1500 matching grant from Heifer International to purchase poultry processing equipment for use by small poultry producers in the local community. The equipment included a scalding tank, plucker and kill cones. By August all the matching funds had been raised and the equipment purchased. SSCFLT donated the processing equipment to the Thurston Conservation District (TCD) to add to the farming tools they make available to the community for a small service fee. TCD reported that the poultry processing gear was booked solidly throughout the summer and fall. In celebration of our successful collaboration, SSCFLT was honored with TCD's Partner of the Year award at their annual open house on November 17, 2009.

Thurston County Farmland Inventory In 2009 SSCFLT completed the Thurston County Farmland Inventory and Data Base (Jeff Fisher, GIS Project lead, and Lea Mitchell, Project Manager) funded by the Bullitt Foundation. The information provided by the inventory was used by the county in creating its "Strategic Plan for Thurston County Working Lands" and will be essential for SSCFLT as it prioritizes its farmland preservation efforts.

NW Cooperative Development Center Grant SSCFLT has continued to receive grant-funded support from NWCDC to provide a feasibility study of a community farm cooperative as a lessee for future SSCFLT's farmland acquisitions and to convene planning meetings with interested local farmers. This work will continue through 2010. So far, over 30 current and prospective farmers and agricultural entrepreneurs have completed an on-line survey indicating their interest in being a part of the future diversified farming on the Black River Ranch property if our acquisition is successful.

Participation in the NW Community Land Trust Coalition In 2008 and 2009 SSCFLT participated in NWCLTC's Capacity Building Institute for member community land trusts. The Institute provided scholarships for a Board or staff member to attend a sequence of workshops. In January 2009 Caitlin Krenn attended the final two workshops, including one on fundraising and membership development. In addition, for completing agreed upon organizational milestone outcomes, SSCFLT received \$7,000 in organization development funds. For SSCFLT, these milestones were the completion of our strategic plan and building our membership to over 100.

A Successful Annual Meeting and Celebration, January 30, 2009 The year got off to an enthusiastic start with our annual membership meeting celebrating SSCFLT's achievements of the year just finished. Held at the spacious South Bay Grange, the event attracted over 125 people who joined in an enormous potluck dinner and then let loose in come-one-come-all dance with the Grizzle Grizzle Trash Can Band. Together with a raffle, button sales, and new member contributions, the event raised approximately \$1400.