



**For Immediate Release:**  
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**New Ideas Proposed for Helping the Environment on Private Lands**  
*Project suggests ways to protect the environment AND help landowners*

*Seattle, WA*—American Farmland Trust (AFT), in partnership with several local organizations and public agencies, has completed a report that suggests several creative new ways to help the environment on private lands in the State of Washington.

“This project has identified a whole range of improvements in how incentives are used to help landowners improve the environment. At the same time, it will greatly strengthen the impact these projects have on the ground,” said Don Stuart, Pacific Northwest States Director for AFT. “We’ve taken a big step in both helping the environment and providing tools to help our private farmers and forest landowners stay in business.”

The project partners surveyed and consulted with private landowners, with the managers of the programs that provide conservation incentives, and with the agencies and groups that work with landowners to implement projects to save salmon and wildlife and to improve water quality and the environment in Puget Sound and around the state. It joined with the Washington Biodiversity Council, and others, in a statewide conference called the Washington Forum on Conservation Incentives, held early this year in Tacoma,. And it enlisted the help of environmental and business groups interested in the project. The work was partly funded through the Public Information and Education (PIE) program of the Puget Sound Action Team. AFT worked in cooperation with the Washington Biodiversity Council, the Puget Sound Partnership, Washington State Conservation Commission, and other state and federal agencies and worked with farm and forestry industry groups in preparing its recommendations.

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“What we found is that the two keys to making these programs more strategic and effective are: better coordination among the agencies that provide them; and, making them easier to use and more appealing to the landowners we hope will use them,” said Stuart. “We’re certain that if these programs are effective, elected policymakers will be more much more inclined to fund them,” he added.

Key recommendations in the report include, for example, convening the various State and Federal agencies, private organizations, and the Governor’s Natural Resources Cabinet to work out ways the agencies and organizations that operate environmental incentives programs can cooperate in setting priorities; making programs simpler and easier to apply for – including a possible single “virtual” application that would suffice for programs offered by several agencies; a “clearinghouse” for constantly updated information on what programs are available, both public and private and at all levels of government; improved training for the professionals who work with landowners to do conservation projects; and, of course, enhanced funding.

The full report and recommendations from this project entitled: “*Creating Stronger Incentives for Private Lands Conservation in Washington*,” can be found at AFT’s website at [www.farmland.org](http://www.farmland.org).

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*American Farmland Trust is a national nonprofit organization working with communities and individuals to protect the best land, plan the future of agriculture and keep the land healthy. AFT has ensured that more than a million acres of American farmland stays bountiful and productive. AFT’s national office is located in Washington, D.C. Our Pacific Northwest States office is in Seattle, WA and can be contacted at: 206-860-4222.*

*For more information, visit [www.farmland.org](http://www.farmland.org).*

**Appendix J-1 – Press Release**