

An Open Letter to Whatcom County Executive Candidates:

This fall's election of a new County Executive is an important milestone in our County's history. We are thankful for the stated commitment to preserving our natural resources that County Executive Pete Kremen provided during his 16 year tenure. We need to know that we can expect at least the same level of commitment from our new Executive.

Our County is blessed with diverse and highly productive natural resources. Our native tribes sustained their communities for centuries from the abundant fish and shellfish in our fresh and marine waters. Early pioneers were amazed at the immense forestlands and built new communities based on timber production. Farm communities followed the timber harvests and turned the fertile soils of our valleys and plateaus into some of the most productive farmland in the world.

We are privileged to be the managers of the large percentage of these resource lands. We are committed to management that provides for our children, grandchildren, and their descendants. We also recognize that how we manage these resources impacts the entire community. What we do affects each other, our open spaces, our natural beauty, and the wonderfully diverse economy that sustains our entire county.

Because of our responsibilities in resource management we expect our County leaders to be partners with us and not impediments. The new County Executive needs to assure us that his priorities include:

- A commitment to protecting our water. The County has abundant water resources. They need to be protected and managed to ensure they are clean, adequate to meet diverse needs, and respectful of those who have a history of dependence on these waters.
- A commitment to protecting our resource lands. Conflicts over land use priorities are a given in growing areas. This fact underscores the need for a clear land use vision that respects the need to protect enough land to sustain healthy forest, farm, and fish economies. This requires protecting an adequate base of resource lands from conversion to non productive status and ensuring that irrigation, drainage, and flood protection are provided so that resource managers can be sustainable.
- Public policies that clearly and consistently advance these commitments and our abilities to achieve them. Disjointed policies that confuse and frustrate resource managers are far too prevalent. This is both your and our opportunity to outline what we will do together.

We call on each of you to outline your vision for what you will do as County Executive to address our concerns. And we ask the voting public to hold you accountable to your commitments. Help make sure the County is our partner and not another challenge to overcome.

We are always adapting to weather, economics, and changing expectations. We are resilient! We will be here for centuries to come and Whatcom will be a wonderful place to call Home because of it.

Whatcom County Chapter of WA Farm Forestry Association
Whatcom Farm Friends