

The Cascade Agenda Frequently Asked Questions

Developing *The Cascade Agenda*

What is the Cascade Agenda?

The Cascade Agenda is a 100-year vision for the Central Cascade region, stretching from Puget Sound to the Columbia River (Counties: King, Kittitas, Pierce, and Snohomish). This region's population will likely double in 100 years, to more than 7 million people. The Cascade Agenda recognizes that conservation, our economy and quality of life are inextricably intertwined. Unless we have homes and jobs, we will not have the financial means for conservation. And unless we conserve our natural resources and our high quality environment people will not want to bring their creativity, talent, and productivity to the region.

The Cascade Agenda advocates growth that is sustainable and useful for all. All sectors of the region's communities are encouraged to:

- Sustain a strong regional economy.
- Promote vibrant and livable communities.
- Ensure healthy ecosystems.

Implementing the Cascade Agenda with non-regulatory, market-based strategies will protect 1.3 million acres of private working forests and farms, as well as preserve critical areas along streams, rivers, and estuaries. For more information View the document: *The Cascade Agenda, 100 Years Forward* at <http://cascadeagenda.com>.

Is the Cascade Agenda simply a plan or is it something more?

The Cascade Agenda is a broad movement of public and private organizations who have joined the Cascade Agenda Coalition to promote specific implementation strategies as described in the Cascade Agenda Report. The Cascade Agenda Coalition provides resources, and creates strategies to deliver the vision. Cascade Land Conservancy is currently taking the lead in organizing the Coalition. Over time, other groups will play a strong role in supporting this work.

How was the goal of protecting 1.3 million acres set?

CLC convened 3,500 King, Pierce, Snohomish and Kittitas County business, civic, farming, timber, conservation, tribal and government leaders at a series of public forums, called the *Cascade Dialogues*, in 2004 and 2005. Along with these forums, a team of scientist and policy experts analyzed our existing land base and population growth trends and decided that in order to maintain our quality of life, natural ecosystems and economy, we must protect

- 85% of our region's current farmlands, for a total of 300,000 acres
- 93% of our working forests, for a total of 700,000 acres
- 265,000 acres of parks, shorelines, wetlands and wildlife habitat

Will it take 100 years to conserve 1.3 million acres?

The Cascade Agenda is not a 100-year work plan. It is a 100-year vision for the future of our region but we must act much more quickly to protect the lands and waters that we all cherish. Given the rising cost of land, we must protect 1.3 million acres of natural and working lands in the next 20 years so that they can serve our region for the next 100 years. In the next five years, we must refine and pilot a set of innovative, market-based strategies that will make large-scale conservation possible in our region.

Has anything like the Cascade Agenda been attempted before?

A. No, not such a long-term vision over such a wide regional scale. Looking out 100 years takes us beyond the usual four-year election cycle, or the typical shorter term planning horizon used by government and business. It is difficult to find large landscape models that demonstrate far-reaching and far-sighted planning. The Cascade Agenda's *100 Years Forward* provides a unique and visionary program that grew from grass roots.

How is *The Cascade Agenda* unique from other conservation efforts?

The Cascade Agenda is a market based approach to conservation as opposed to a regulatory approach. *The Cascade Agenda* considers challenges and solutions with a 100-year view, brings together a diverse coalition of interests to find common ground, emphasizes the link between vibrant cities and healthy rural lands and uses the creative new ways to protect land on a scale never seen before.

Impact of *The Cascade Agenda*

What impact will *The Cascade Agenda* have on climate change?

The Cascade Agenda advocates for the good planning and smart community development that can fundamentally change the way people live in our region. By encouraging more compact housing, better public transportation networks and more walkable communities, we can dramatically reduce vehicle miles traveled and construction of roadways. We can also protect forests, farms and natural areas that provide valuable services, including trapping carbon emissions. Taking into consideration that 65% of all carbon emissions in the U.S. are from cars, reducing our commutes is one of the most critical actions we can take to impact climate change.

What impact will *The Cascade Agenda* have on transportation?

The Cascade Agenda will enhance the livability of our cities. By increasing affordable housing choices and investing in parks and community spaces, CLC and our partners will make our cities magnets for population growth. As our communities become more compact and walkable and more people are attracted to living in urban areas, we will decrease our reliance on cars and ease our traffic challenges.

How can this region afford to pay for the Cascade Agenda?

The costs of sprawl and loss of future flexibility far exceed the cost of conserving the lands identified in the Cascade Agenda. We estimate the land value at \$7 billion in today's dollars to conserve the entire 1.3 million acres identified in the Cascade Agenda. We estimate that maintaining, or modestly increasing public funding could raise \$1- 2 billion dollars in the next 20

years. We estimate that access to inexpensive capital could finance conservation of an additional \$1-2 billion dollars. Finally we estimate that the creation of new markets for such emerging commodities as development rights, water recharge and storm water protection, or carbon sequestration could raise another \$2-4 billion dollars. These goals are ambitious, but we have identified a range of strategies to achieve landscape scale conservation for our region. A viable market in transfer of development rights is seen as the most ambitious, but most exciting of the possible options.

Will the 1.3 million protected acres come off tax roles?

For the vast majority of the land, no. One million acres will be protected from future development, but will primarily be privately owned and managed for timber and farm revenue, which will be taxable. About 300,000 acres of particularly sensitive land will be acquired outright and held by government or non-profit entities for parks and habitat protection purposes.

How does the Agenda fit with business interests?

Increasingly businesses are taking a "triple bottom line" approach, and seek to address financial, social, and environmental goals through their operations. The Cascade Agenda embraces the idea of a triple bottom line – successful businesses and plentiful job opportunities, vibrant communities and important lands conserved for future generations. The Cascade Agenda provides both direct and indirect benefits to business. Timber companies and forest land managers can directly benefit from The Cascade Agenda's goals to conserve working forests. Indirectly, businesses that depend on skilled workers will benefit from the maintenance of a strong quality of life in the region, thereby increasing their ability to attract the foot-loose workers they need.

How do regulatory issues fit with the Cascade Agenda?

Many strategies and projects proposed in the Cascade Agenda work in concert with state and local regulatory frameworks. The Cascade Agenda recommends strategies to conserve land for the benefit of all. The Cascade Agenda advocates a cooperative, market-based approach that supports landowners that benefit all residents in the region through good stewardship of their land. The Cascade Agenda bases its assumptions on the current regulatory framework.

The conservation community is experienced with using successful tools to conserve land. For example, in September 2004, the Cascade Land Conservancy, working with King County and Hancock Timber Co., negotiated the placement of the 90,000-acre Snoqualmie Tree Farm into conserved working forest status. This means the land can remain working forest, thus providing jobs and raw material for the timber industry; however, it cannot be developed.

Does the Agenda address the Critical Areas Ordinance?

The Cascade Agenda operates within the existing regulatory structure. The Cascade Agenda program will work with rural landowners to create market-based mechanisms and voluntary, alternative performance-based regulatory pathways that support rural property owners in their efforts to provide the benefits of good stewardship to the region.

Does the Cascade Agenda require new legislation?

The Cascade Agenda calls for laws that allow for new voluntary market-based strategies and funding mechanisms for conservation, rather than traditional restrictive regulatory legislation.

For example, a region-wide Transfer of Development Rights (TDRs) program to compensate landowners for keeping their property undeveloped could require enabling legislation in local jurisdictions.

Our Lands

How do you decide what land to conserve?

Rather than reinvent the wheel, the Cascade Agenda relies on existing science to identify target areas for conservation. During the Cascade Dialogues, CLC convened scientist and other experts to discuss the existing science and inform decisions about conservation goals for CA.

What are your innovative, market-based conservation strategies?

Examples of our conservation strategies include:

- Delivering existing conservation strategies, such as mitigation banking and conservation development, to a broader market and expediting their full-scale implementation.
- Creating a robust, regional market for transferring development rights from farms, working forests and natural lands to areas more appropriate for development.
- Developing and implementing public and private financing mechanisms to keep farming and forestry financially viable, including Public Conservation Authorities, a state revolving fund, community forest bonds and securitized financing.
- Creating new revenue streams for foresters and farmers and ultimately protect our resource lands through such strategies as stream corridor stewardship incentives, a carbon credit market place and leasing development rights and ecosystem services.
- Partner with affordable housing groups to develop three new showcase residential communities that create housing choices, conserve surrounding natural and resource lands and provide new parks and open spaces.

Aren't 'market based strategies' just another way to say 'perks for business and developers'?

No, market-based conservation strategies make it profitable for business to make good environmental and conservation decisions. This approach doesn't encourage or discourage business; it merely promotes business practices that generate profit and environmental good simultaneously. For example, a developer will build houses to sell and turn a profit as long as there is a demand for houses—this is the market. If, however, the developer has the economic incentive to build houses in a city rather than in a forest he/she will do so. Conversely, if a developer can make more profit by building in a forest that is what he/she will do. The trick is to ensure that the profit incentive leans towards conservation.

What is the incentive for landowners to protect their land?

Foresters and farmers are the original environmentalists. They love their land but the real estate market makes selling their land to development an attractive opportunity. *The Cascade Agenda* finds creative ways to provide financial incentives to landowners for keeping their land in farming or forestry. One example of these financial incentives is transferring development rights

from a farm or forest to an area more suitable for development, such as a growing city with appropriate infrastructure. The landowner is financially compensated for the loss of their development rights, the land continues to benefit our region by providing timber and food products and our cities become more vibrant and lively.

Does a conservation easement change the resale value or reduce property tax revenue?

Generally, the removal of development rights will reduce the resale value of the property because the landowner has been compensated for the development value they have given up, and the future buyer is purchasing the property only as working forest or farmland. If the property is enrolled in current use taxation as a working forest or farm, the taxes would not change, because its current tax status is based on its use as working land rather than as potential development land. If a property were not enrolled in current use taxation, and the landowner sold development rights, the tax assessment on the property would be reduced to reflect the land's limited development potential. One virtue of a transfer of development right program is that there would be an increase of property value and an increase in property taxes assessed on a property that receives development rights and benefits from the increase in development potential.

How does *The Cascade Agenda* affect the Growth Management act?

GMA and other regulations that protect our natural resources are critical but they don't go far enough to protect our lands. Also, the GMA is only a regulation and can be changed by a simple ballot initiative, whereas, the *Agenda's* approach is permanent. We have a monumental land conversion problem. Current population growth projections show that our region's population will double in the next 100 years and these estimates may be far too conservative. We are losing farms, forests and remaining open rural lands to large lot mega homes. In a few decades, all open rural lands will likely be consumed by inefficient development patterns allowed under the GMA. In short, our region needs both *The Cascade Agenda* and the GMA.

Our Lands: Transfer of Development Rights

The Cascade Agenda proposes Transfer of Development Rights (TDRs) on a scale never done before. How will this be accomplished?

The Cascade Agenda program will work with local communities to create and implement Transfer of Development Right programs that are specifically designed to meet local needs. The Cascade Agenda program will ensure that developers, landowners, neighbors and community leaders have an opportunity to work together to make sure their local program protects key lands and brings development to the area with the economic drivers necessary to motivate developers to purchase the development rights. The Cascade Agenda program will seek to develop programs that allow both large landowners and ordinary rural residents to sell development rights for a fair price.

Where has TDR been used?

There are over 130 TDR programs in the country, 15 programs currently in Washington State. TDR examples close to home include programs in Black Diamond, Redmond, and Issaquah, as well as an intergovernmental program allowing transfers between King County and the City of Seattle.

What is the legal basis for TDR?

Washington State law provides general authority under the Growth Management Act, (“GMA”) for local governments to adopt TDR programs. The GMA states that local comprehensive plans “should provide for innovative land use techniques” such as TDR in carrying out the purposes of the act. TDR can also help meet the core goals of the GMA by focusing growth in already urbanized areas and protecting valuable resource lands from development. In legal challenges to individual TDR programs at the national level, TDR has been upheld by both state and federal courts.

How do landowners benefit from TDR?

Landowners receive compensation for selling their development rights; developers in receiving areas gain the option of building bigger or denser projects.

What is allowed on properties under TDR?

When a landowner agrees to sell their development rights, a conservation easement is applied to the property; this easement only restricts the right to develop.

How can I learn more about TDR?

The Cascade Land Conservancy is working with cities and counties throughout the Central Cascades region to support the development of TDR programs. The Cascade Land Conservancy’s website is a great resource for learning more about TDR:

<http://www.cascadeland.org/cascade-agenda/communities/tdr/transferofdevelopmentrights>

Our Communities

Why does a land conservancy care about communities?

The Cascade Agenda recognizes that conserving great lands and creating great communities is inextricably linked. To save our old-growth forests, salmon-bearing streams and productive farms and forests, we must avoid sprawl, but that this is possible only if we have vibrant cities and towns that are magnets for population growth.

What is CLC doing in the cities to make them more vibrant?

CLC is will partnering with neighborhood councils, civic clubs, affordable housing interests, elected officials and other community leaders to create and sustain parks, trails, community gathering spaces and art, culture and education centers. We recently launched the *Cascade Agenda Cities program* to develop new partnerships with cities and towns to create vibrant, walkable and livable communities. CLC is collaborating with Enterprise Community Partners to develop three new showcase residential communities that create housing choices, conserve surrounding natural and resource lands and provide new parks and open spaces.

Measuring Success and Expanding Efforts

How will you measure whether *The Cascade Agenda* is successful?

The Cascade Agenda is a 100-year vision and action plan that will require long-term evaluation and necessary adjustments. CLC will develop a set of measurable results to track our progress toward the *Agenda's* goals of protecting nearly 1.3 million acres of critical lands and enhancing our communities. We will release our Measurable Benchmarks Plan in summer 2008 at the *Great Places Conference*, held in Seattle and sponsored by CLC. We will compile data over the past decade and note changes since releasing the *Agenda* for factors such as (1) acres of working forest and farms converted and conserved; (2) miles of shoreline protected; and (3) acres of new parks and open space created. We will release Measurable Benchmark reports every 3 years.

If we wait 100 years, won't a large amount of land be developed?

Yes, excellent point. Most of the land protection strategies promoted by the *Cascade Agenda* need to be accomplished within the next 20 years.

How will the *Cascade Agenda* adapt to changing conditions during the 100-year period?

The *Cascade Agenda* Leadership Team will reconvene the Coalition every three years to review progress and determine how well goals are being met. Strategic adaptations will be developed as necessary to improve success, and adjust to external changes such as oil supplies and global warming.

Will *The Cascade Agenda* expand to serve other counties?

Since releasing *The Cascade Agenda* in May 2005, CLC has expanded our conservation efforts to include Mason County and an estuary program in our state's coastal counties. In the coming years, we will begin Phase II of *The Cascade Agenda* by working with business, community and government leaders in Mason and other counties to set goals for protecting their lands, economy and communities.

Will *The Cascade Agenda* be replicable in other parts of the state and country?

Together with our partners, we will develop the market-based conservation strategies that can be used to protect any type of landscape, at any scale. Community, government and nonprofit conservationists will use our conservation models for generations to come.

What has the *Cascade Agenda* done so far?

We have:

- Built the coalition of support necessary for the *Cascade Agenda* vision, approach and strategies.
- Convened work groups to refine strategies designed to protect farm and forest land.
- Continue to support the important work of other groups that fulfill the CA mission (e.g., Puget Sound Initiative, Puget Sound Regional, Council VISION 2020 + 20)
- Are working with local and state government to establish policy frameworks that will allow us to advance our work in conservation and in cities.

CLC and *The Cascade Agenda*

Why is CLC the right organization to lead *The Cascade Agenda*?

CLC is Washington's largest independent regional land conservation and stewardship organization. Our innovative conservation methods have earned us a national reputation for far-reaching programs, savvy thinking and ability to partner with diverse groups. Since 1989, we have led efforts to conserve nearly 120,000 acres of forests, farms, shorelines and parks. We used many of the *Agenda's* market-based conservation methods, such as transferring development rights and conservation development, on a small scale. Now, we are ready to refine these strategies to protect land on a scale our region has never seen before.

Is *The Cascade Agenda* part of CLC?

CLC is leading implementation of *The Cascade Agenda* but the *Agenda* is much larger than our organization. To advance the *Agenda's* bold goals, we will partner with a Leadership Team of 30 of our region's influential leaders and a Coalition of more than 650 individuals, organizations and businesses.