

Announce of Opportunity (AOO) Funding for Pasture Soil Health, Rotational Grazing, and Agroforestry

PURPOSE

WSU Extension Thurston County is advertising an opportunity for landowners and agricultural enterprises to receive direct assistance to build resilience into agricultural grasslands in the South Sound and Chehalis Basin. On-farm practices that will be funded include soil testing and amending, rotational grazing enhancement, and agroforestry plantings for livestock and habitat.

INTRODUCTION

Agricultural lands in Thurston County are disappearing. These economically and ecologically critical working landscapes suffered an estimated loss of 20% between the years 2012-2017. Similarly, the range of glacial outwash prairie ecosystems and the populations of their resident species have been significantly reduced over the last 150 years of land use conversion and development. Existing pressures on the agricultural community and grassland ecosystems, which often serve as the last remaining repositories for native prairie species and species assemblages, are currently being compounded by new climate challenges. In response to these trends, Southwestern Washington landowners and agricultural producers are invited to join in on a host of activities aimed at addressing the intertwined futures of these landscapes and livelihoods.

WSU Extension, in partnership with the Ecostudies Institute, Agroforestry Northwest, and Thurston Conservation District, is coordinating a funding and technical assistance opportunity which will integrate agricultural land management with conservation and habitat enhancement efforts. These projects are aimed at increasing the resilience, health, and long-term agricultural viability of grasslands in the south puget sound which will protect against farmland loss to development.

Financial and technical assistance is available for projects aimed at improving soil health, increasing pasture productivity and diversity, and supporting habitat and ecosystem services. Projects could include soil testing, mineral and biological amendments, installation of rotational grazing infrastructure, and the establishment of appropriate

woody plantings for habitat and livestock. Applications are welcome from anyone with an interest in grassland resilience. Applicants are encouraged to share their broader goals even if specific approaches to meeting these goals are not yet clear. Our team is available for pre-application dialogue and assisting farmers and other applicants in developing a plan for proposal.

Assistance Offered

This program will pay for remote consultation, site visits, testing, project design work, material acquisition, installation, and/or short term maintenance for projects related to building soil health, enhancing rotational grazing, and incorporating agroforestry practices on agricultural grasslands in and around Thurston County.

Specifically, fundable projects can include:

- Soil testing
- Soil amendment (mineral and biological) purchases
- Amendment application
- Paddock design
- Fence materials
- Fence construction
- Movable fence materials
- Livestock water system design, materials, and installation
- Design and integration of agroforestry plantings into livestock pasture systems including: hedgerows, riparian buffers, wind breaks, silvopasture, and non-timber harvestable woody crops
- Plant material purchases
- Mulching
- Tree protection
- Irrigation design, materials, and installation
- Monitoring of plantings
- Other assistance as needed

Technical and financial assistance is also available for soil health, agroforestry, and rotational grazing features and activities not contained in the description above. If the specific features or activities related to the proposed project for your site are not listed here funding may still be available.

Farmer Contributions

Farmers are expected to request assistance, participate in design processes, install or assist in installation to the extent of their ability, and monitor and maintain installations. No direct financial contributions are required from applicants. However, documentation of

applicant's time and material contributions to the project is necessary and. The ability for a farmer to install and/or maintain infrastructure and plantings will be considered in the selection process. Assistance will be provided for installation however requested projects need to be scaled to the farmer's ability and equipment.

The farmer/applicant shall act as a **Cooperator** for the projects proposed. As an applicant for these funds, cooperators should expect to participate in the following ways:

- A. complete an application detailing their proposed projects and assistance they can provide.
- B. work with WSU staff and partners to coordinate site visits
- C. work with WSU staff and partners to develop design plans and timelines for their execution.
- D. contribute and document ongoing labor for the implementation, maintenance, and monitoring of projects to the extent of their ability.
- E. utilize their available equipment for the installation and maintenance of infrastructure and practices.

Timeline

Proposals will be accepted from February 1, 2026 through December 31, 2026.

Applications will be reviewed according to when they are received, and will be selected on a quarterly basis.

WSU Contact/ AOO Coordinator

AOO COORDINATOR	Sierra Smith, WSU Thurston Co. Extension Agricultural Specialist
CONTACT INFORMATION	sierra.smith1@wsu.edu
	360-867-2165

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

EVENT	SCHEDULE
Announcement of Opportunity (AOO) issued	February 1st, 2026

Applicants selected and notified	By April 30, 2026; July 31, 2026; October 31, 2026; or January 31, 2027 depending on the quarter in which the application was submitted
Phone consult with applicant	within 4 weeks of approval
First site visit	within 8 weeks of approval
Design Process	Estimated 4 months
ESA and Cultural Resource Compliance	Estimated 4-6 months from design completion
Installation of improvements	Within 18 months of applicant selection
Applications close	December 31, 2026

Washington State University reserves the right to revise the above schedule. Process review and notification timeline is subject to change.

Application Process

Farmers interested in this funding opportunity must fill out an application that describes their operation, their proposed project, and the assistance they are seeking. Application questions are available below.

To complete the application online, use this application portal:

https://wsu.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_eKaQi3bDw1oiNCK

The application can also be downloaded, completed, and submitted via email. Fillable form available on the WSU Extension Thurston County Webpage here:

<https://extension.wsu.edu/thurston/rep-i-grant/>

Completed questions on the online portal will be submitted automatically upon completion. Paper or electronic applications can be submitted to WSU at the following addresses:

DELIVERY ADDRESS FOR RFP RESPONSES	DUE DATE AND TIME
sierra.smith1@wsu.edu	Accepted through December 31, 2026. Reviewed quarterly beginning March 31, 2026
Attn: Sierra Smith Washington State University Extension 3054 Carpenter Rd SE Benoschek Building Lacey, WA 98503	Accepted through December 31, 2026. Reviewed quarterly beginning March 31, 2026

Application Questions

1. Operator name
2. Farm name
3. Washington State Universal Business Indicator (UBI number)
4. Email
5. Phone
6. Site Address
7. County
8. Parcel Number (if available)
9. Farm website
10. Type of agricultural business (Select all that apply)
 - a. Vegetables
 - b. Tree fruits, tree nuts and berries
 - c. Dairy products
 - d. Chickens, ducks, other poultry (including eggs)
 - e. Meat production
 - f. Nursery, greenhouse, floriculture, and sod
 - g. Herbs (including medicinal products)
 - h. Hay or other forage
 - i. Timber and non-timber forest products
 - j. Christmas trees
 - k. Grains, oilseeds, dry beans, dry peas
 - l. Honey
 - m. Agricultural cooperative
 - n. Agricultural nonprofit
 - o. Other (include text entry)
11. Please provide a brief description of your business.

12. What's motivating you to adopt pastureland resiliency practices to incorporate soil health, planned grazing, and/or agroforestry? (Please check all that apply)

- a. Diversifying farm production
- b. Increasing farm production
- c. Growing crops for personal use
- d. Enhancing habitat for fish, pollinators, birds, and other wildlife
- e. Enhancing soil health and stability
- f. Enhance grazing system/benefits to livestock
- g. Aesthetic enhancement
- h. Agritourism opportunities
- i. Carbon sequestration
- j. Enhancing climate resilience
- k. Other (please describe) _____

13. What practices are you interested in implementing with this funding? (please check all that apply)

- a. Soil Health
 - i. Soil testing
 - ii. pH adjustment
 - iii. Macronutrient additions
 - iv. Micronutrient additions
 - v. Biological soil enhancements
 - vi. Organic matter additions
 - vii. Other
- b. Rotational Grazing
 - i. Paddock design
 - ii. Permanent fence installation
 - iii. Water trough placement
 - iv. Electrical fence installation
 - v. Other
- c. Agroforestry
 - i. Silvopasture
 - ii. Alley cropping
 - iii. Forest farming
 - iv. Riparian buffer
 - v. Windbreak
 - vi. Other

14. For each selected practice, please tell us as much as you can about what you are specifically proposing. If you have interest but need technical advice, tell us what problems you are hoping to solve. As much as possible, include goals and objectives, acreage/size, and existing site conditions. For agroforestry projects include desired tree and shrub species, expected products, livestock integration (if applicable), and anticipated inputs (ex: site preparation, fencing, soil amendments, etc.) Please tell us the anticipated infrastructure needs for the proposed projects.

15. Please identify your on-farm capacity for the field work required by the project. For each category below required by the project, please describe the available equipment, labor, and familiarity with the tasks.

a. Soils health

- i. Tractor _____
- ii. Spin spreader _____
- iii. Manure spreader _____
- iv. Ability to unload bulk fertilizer _____
- v. Ability to load fertilizer into spreader _____
- vi. other _____

b. Fencing

- i. On-site utility vehicle (truck, side-by-side, ATV) _____
- ii. Augur _____
- iii. Fencing tools, experience, crew _____
- iv. Other _____

c. Agroforestry

- i. Planting tools, experience, crew _____
- ii. Irrigation _____
- iii. Ability to load and haul mulch: Front loader, trailer, etc. _____
- iv. Ability to manage weeds around plantings _____

16. Please tell us what maintenance you anticipate for the proposed project and how you plan to accomplish that maintenance. What maintenance will you need assistance with in the short term?

17. What kind of support are you seeking to implement this project(s)? Select all that apply.

- a. Brainstorming/visioning
- b. Technical assistance and design
- c. Financial assistance to cover material costs (amendments, plants)
- d. Financial assistance to cover infrastructure costs (fencing, irrigation)

- e. Labor for site preparation and planting
- f. Labor for maintenance and monitoring
- g. Other (please describe) _____

18. What is the best way to reach you?

- a. Phone
- b. Email
- c. Either

19. Do you self-identify as a member of an historically underserved community?

- a. Yes
- b. No

20. Anything else you would like to share about your proposal or the questions above?

Proposal Review Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated according to 4 broad categories described as eligibility, feasibility, equity, and anticipated environmental impact. Specific considerations include:

- The relevance of the proposal to building the resilience of agricultural grasslands
- Demonstrated understanding and willingness to conduct maintenance for the proposed project
- Likelihood of success
- Financial and social need of the farmer
- Integration of projects with other programs
- Specific ecological benefits anticipated

In some cases, a pre-evaluation site visit will be necessary. A member of the review team will reach out to the applicant to arrange this visit before proceeding with the application review where this is required.