



# Agricultural Conservation Easements Update



Kate Delavan, Farmland Preservation Coordinator  
May 19, 2021 Conservation Commission Meeting

# SCC's Role

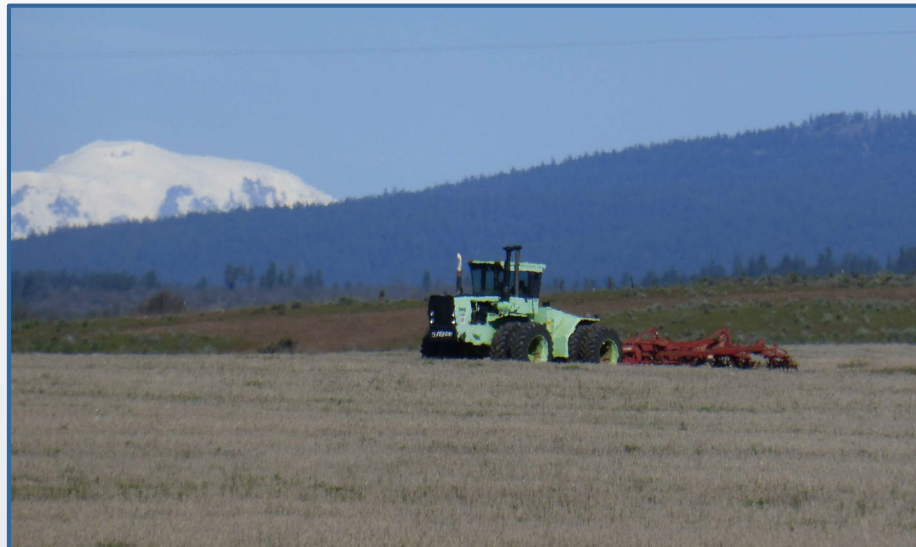
- Responsible for implementation of Office of Farmland Preservation (RCW 89.10)
- Recognizes ag easements as an important tool to assist in farmland protection and advancing conservation with willing landowners
- Authorized to hold conservation easements (RCW 64.04.130)
- Eligible to apply to RCO's Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP) (RCW 79A.15)
  - Districts are not eligible entities under WWRP program guidelines
- SCC [Policy #19-02](#) "Agricultural Conservation Easement Sponsorship and Liability"
  - For WWRP funds, SCC "...will be the primary holder...and assume legal obligation to monitor and enforce the terms of the easement."

# What does it mean to hold an easement?

- Perpetual responsibility and obligation to ensure the purpose, intent, and terms of the conservation easement are honored over time.
- Real property interest with power to enforce consistency with the easement's conservation objectives
- Management responsibilities include:
  - Annual monitoring and landowner relationship building
  - Maintaining permanent records including documentation of any changes relative to the baseline
  - Responding to landowner requests regarding consistency of proposed activities with easement (i.e. if something is allowed)
  - Determining if completed or ongoing activities align with easement purposes and negotiating a remedy, if necessary
  - Determining how/if proposed amendments impact conservation values (amendments are rare)

# Schuster Ag Conservation Easement

- Developed by the Central Klickitat Conservation District
- Funding secured in 2016 WWRP grant round
- Transaction completed in April 2021
- SCC holds the easement, RCO is a 3<sup>rd</sup> party beneficiary, CKCD is subcontracted to support due diligence and landowner correspondence



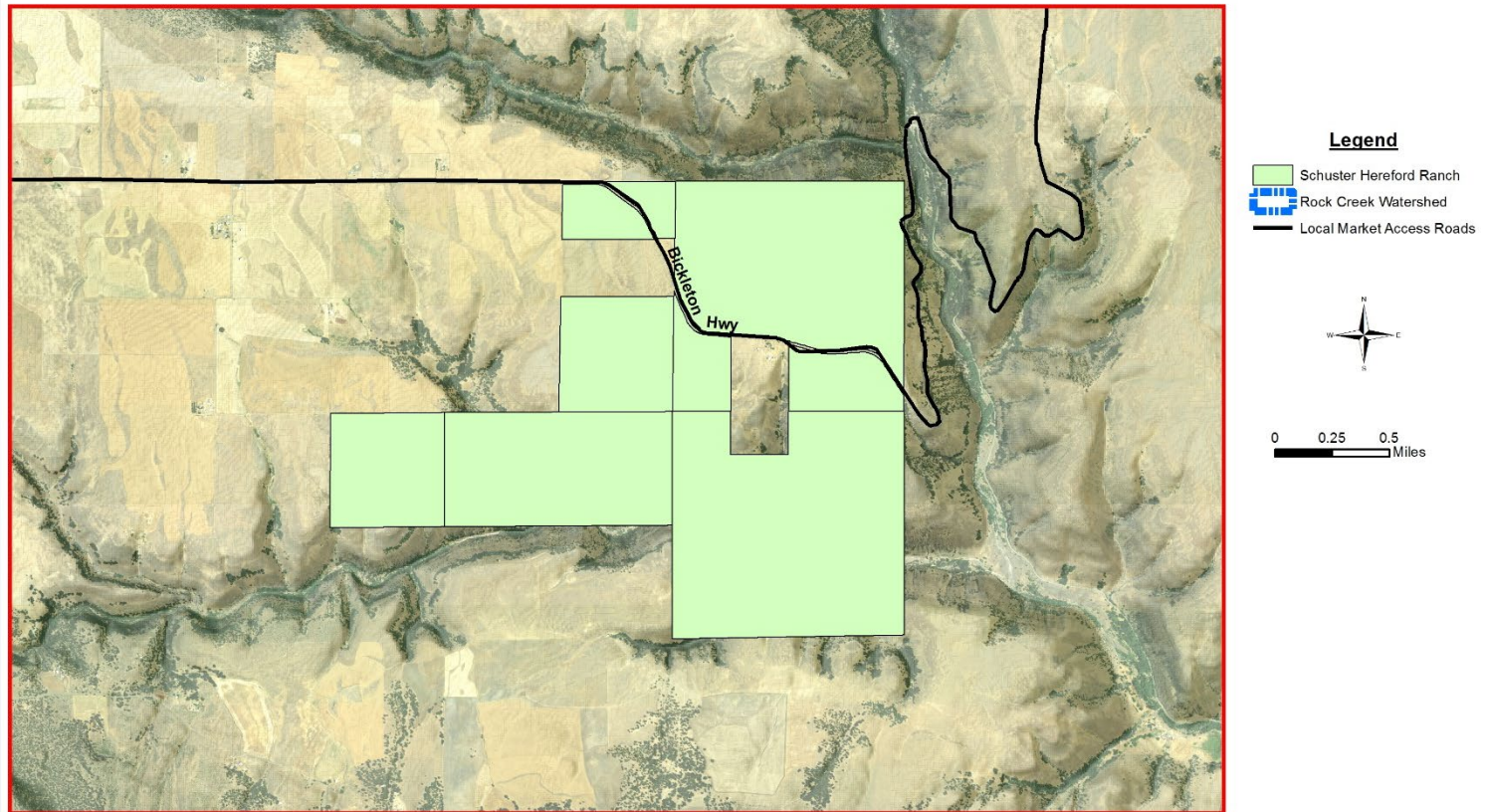


# Project Overview



- 1,849 acre property
- Beef cattle and dryland wheat
- Farm business established in 1900



# Project Site: Schuster Hereford Ranch



# Easement Portfolio and Pipeline

RCO Project #	Project Name	Easement Holder	County	Acres	Status
20-1546	Thornton Ranch	SCC	Yakima	108	Funding secured, grant agreement pending
20-1547	Hoch Farm	SCC	Benton	26	Funding secured, grant agreement pending
16-1923	Lazy Cross Ranch	SCC	Klickitat	4,194	Funding secured, due diligence in process
16-1922	Blain Ranch	SCC	Klickitat	1,925	Funding secured, due diligence in process
16-1924	Schuster Ranch	SCC	Klickitat	1,849	Completed 
19-1527	Stevenson Ranch	SCC	Yakima	98	Completed 
	Lust Farm	NYCD	Yakima	285	Completed, SCC has 3 <sup>rd</sup> party rights



# Resource Alignment with Growing Easement Portfolio

- Identifying ongoing costs for stewardship
- Developing and implementing easement project record keeping procedures:
  - Secure (fire safe, locked) storage with restricted access
  - Checklists
  - Required documentation
- Updating monitoring templates and procedures
- Developing monitoring agreements with local conservation districts





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