



COMMUNITY SURVEY 2020

DRAFT: A Summary of Takeaways & Opportunities

Executive Summary

In early 2020, the Port of Coupeville conducted a survey to which nearly 400 community members responded. The survey was comprised of three sections with questions on farm amenities, land use and recreation. Respondents were invited to comment during each section of the survey.

Good news. The survey assessment found that Greenbank Farm is highly valued by the community (79%) for open space and nature; and (74%) for recreation-trails. Most respondents clearly believe the farm is meeting its function as 'a site for scenic recreation.'

More good news. Most respondents believe the farm is meeting the function of 'a marketplace for local items,' though comments suggest more variety may be needed; as well as products that serve locals and tourists. A majority of respondents (73%) cited their main purpose for visiting the farm was 'to visit a business or shop.'

Respondents ranked events as a 'valued' function, and while many believe the farm is meeting this function, the desire for more public events was a frequent callout in the survey comment sections.

The Port should be pleased that of those **who currently use** the farm trails (81%) believe them to be very safe or safe. However, a related finding suggests that (52%) of respondents do not believe all public users 'can safely share the same trails accessible to off-leash dogs'; while (41%) said they can. Further, (51%) of respondents said they believe fencing the off-leash dog area is a '**critical component of safety**' for all farm users; while (41.5%) do not believe it is.

This polarization of viewpoints suggests an area where collaboration, planning and strong management will be required. *Ultimately, the challenge to preserve an engaged group of recreation and trail users at the farm must be considered in concert with the Port's obligation to comply with local zoning restrictions and laws; and ensuring the farm is accessible to all primary public users.*

Question 1.

Are you familiar with the Greenbank Farm Master Site Plan (2009-2026)?

(An objective of the question was to inform respondents that a master plan for the farm exists.)

Takeaways:

- More than half of respondents are aware a plan exists for the farm (63%), though the majority of those do not know specific plan details (41.7%).

Opportunities:

- ✓ Consider making the master site plan more widely accessible to the public via board meetings, website, newsletter and social media.
- ✓ Board could review the master site plan to determine if key elements are still current. Updating the plan could also provide an opportunity for publicizing.
- ✓ Feedback or consultation with experts/organizations, including some originally involved, could present an opportunity for prioritizing resources, improvements and fostering community engagement.
- ✓ Grassroots engagement through influencers will help drive the message of community involvement.

Question 2.

The plan states Greenbank Farm should serve multiple functions for the community. Please tell us if you believe the following are being met.

Takeaways:

The rating score was utilized of (1) yes; (2) no; (3) partly. The scores are listed in order of ranking:

- 1. A site for scenic recreation.** A significant majority of people (88%) believe the farm is meeting this function.
- 2. A marketplace for locally-made items.** A majority of respondents (70%) believe this function is being met.

3. **A center for community activities.** More than half of respondents (62%) believe the farm is meeting the function, though (36%) say it is not or only partially meeting this function.
4. **A vital working farm.** Two-thirds of respondents (68%) believe the farm is partially or not meeting this function.
5. **A site for sustainable agriculture.** (45%) of respondents said partly while the remainder were split no/yes.

Opportunities:

- ✓ Lean into strengths by promoting the farm as a destination for scenic recreation; locally-made items and events.
- ✓ Explore why these functions rated lowest: a vital working farm and a site for sustainable agriculture. Gauge prioritization.
- ✓ Seek counsel from local farm and agricultural organizations such the Whidbey Conservation District and WSU Extension Office to determine if the functions are viable parts of the master plan.
- ✓ Consider new efforts to promote farming and sustainable agriculture.
- ✓ Update soil and water analyses to determine if adequate; and activities to promote more farming and agriculture programs, including revenue generation.

Question 3.

If you answered partly or no to the items above, please tell us why or why not.

Takeaways:

1. A site for scenic recreation.

Of those who said partly or no, (14) said off-leash or too many dogs are a problem; or better land management is needed.

2. A marketplace for locally-made items.

Of those who said partly or no, (32) respondents said local goods are lacking, the farm should offer more/more variety; or that shops could be more appealing or better maintained.

(11) expressed interest in a local produce market.

3. A site for community events.

(50) respondents suggested that events are lacking, waning or more are needed; or Port could do more to support them.

4. A vital working farm.

(74) respondents said it is not a working farm; there is little or no farming; or that farming has decreased over time.

(21) comments suggested there is a lack of planning or maintenance; that the farm needs to be better managed or that more should be done to realize the farm's agricultural potential.

(15) indicated they would like to see more farming.

(12) said the farm has poor soil; a lack of water; or is not viable as a working farm.

5. A site for sustainable agriculture.

(Note: most respondents did not comment specifically on 'sustainable' agriculture.)

(27) said they would like to see more agriculture, fencing, better land management or vision.

Opportunities:

- ✓ Hedge against recent shop closures that threaten the marketplace by seeking new tenants with wide and all-season appeal; provide stronger support/collaboration to existing tenants
- ✓ Comments suggest more needs to be done to attract, support or host events. Given the added benefit that events can be revenue-generating, the Port should explore a strategic marketing plan, track event data, offer more options including hosting low/no cost community events in off-season.

Question 4.

How often do you visit Greenbank Farm?

Takeaways:

- Nearly half (45%) of respondents who visit the farm daily or weekly are the users most highly engaged with the farm.
- The second largest group (34%) visit the farm occasionally during the year.
- (6%) visit monthly; while 4% visit seldom.

Opportunities:

- ✓ Engage the group (45%) of high-use respondents. This is a priority audience of stakeholders for future communications and collaborations.
- ✓ Prioritize converting monthly/occasional users (50%) to weekly/daily.

Question 5.

If you seldom or never visit the farm, please tell us why?

Takeaways:

- The most common reason (25) for not visiting more frequently was lack of events; nothing draws me there; absence of marketing.
- (12) cited distance/location as too far from their home.

Opportunities:

- ✓ Develop more collaborations with tenants and community to increase events and activities that draw locals and tourists.
- ✓ Improve marketing of farm as an events venue, community outreach and replace outdated/poor signage.
- ✓ Identify areas where unleashed dogs are not permitted, ie. playground, commercial zone. Better enforce dog regulations, consistent with Island County.

Question 6.

If you have visited the farm in the past year, what was your purpose? Please select all that apply.

Takeaways:

- The most cited reason (267) (73%) of respondents said they visited the farm was to **visit a business or shop**.
- The second most cited (244) (66%) was to use the trails.
- Events was cited third at (41%).
- 82 respondents, (22%) cited 'other' reasons than those listed

Opportunities:

- ✓ Increase/cultivate new ‘high-frequency’ tenants that have widespread appeal and products suitable for locals and tourists, e.g. Whidbey Ice Cream.
- ✓ Trail usage is a key attraction for those currently utilizing the farm. However, the farm does not offer any trails for **those who do not want to** encounter off-leash dogs. Providing recreational options for non-dog walkers could potentially increase farm and trail traffic.
- ✓ Events clearly attract visitors to the farm. Supporting more frequent events will likely increase traffic and sales.

Question 7.

Please tell us how much you value the following farm amenities.

Takeaways:

Farm amenities were rated on a scale from 1 (not valued) to 4 (highly valued). Ratings were calculated on a weighted average, and ranked as follows:

1. **Open space and nature (3.7)**
2. **Recreation and trails (3.6)**
3. Community events (3.2)
4. Shops and businesses (3.1)
5. Farming and gardening (3.0)

Opportunities:

- ✓ The farm’s most valued amenities are open space and nature; followed by recreation and trails. Capitalizing on management and improvements in these areas will help sustain and potentially increase traffic and use.
- ✓ Community events ranked third in value with respondents. Currently, few events take place at the farm that are open to the public. Increase traffic and business by hosting, collaborating and improving marketing for more public events.
- ✓ Farming and agriculture are cited by respondents as ‘valued’, though it ranked last among the amenities with respondents.

Question 8.

How can the Port improve the overall experience at Greenbank Farm?

Takeaways:

- The most cited improvement was to expand/bring back festivals, events, markets and classes (58 comments.)
- (40) suggestions to improve maintenance/safety of the farm. Concerns ranged from noxious weed control; poor signage, need for improved fencing, building maintenance, etc.
- (40) suggestions to improve farm management, vision, marketing, revenue generation; or planning.

Opportunities:

- ✓ Create an updated business plan for the farm.
- ✓ Explore ways to increase events and community collaborations.
- ✓ Plan/address the maintenance/operational concerns such as 'noxious weed control' with current Port staff/resources.
- ✓ Continue to seek and obtain grant and community funding for large-scale improvement projects.
- ✓ Continue to expand volunteer opportunities for projects such as painting, gardening, fencing, etc. Explore feasibility of dedicated volunteer coordinator.
- ✓ Revive a volunteer board of 'Greenbank Farm Friends' to support an updated vision for long-term improvements, fund-raising and community collaboration.
- ✓ Consider improvements that provide access for all members of the public including non-dog owners. Ensure plan complies with Island County zoning and land-use requirements.

Question 9.

Do you use the trails at Greenbank Farm?

(This question helped transition to a more specific line of inquiry related to the trails and recreation area.)

Takeaways:

- More than three-quarters (77%) of respondents said they use the trails.

Question 10.

If you answered yes, how often do you use the trails?

Takeaways:

- More than half of respondents (64%) said they use the trails daily, weekly or monthly.
- (36%) of respondents said they seldom use the trails; or did not reply.

Question 11.

How safe do you consider the trails for the public?

Takeaways:

- The majority of those who responded to this question said they considered the trails 'safe or very safe,' (81.6%).
- (19%) said they considered the trails 'fairly safe or unsafe.'
- (51) did not respond to the question.

Question 12.

What suggestions do you have to improve the farm's recreational experience? (ie. better signage, maps, fencing).

Takeaways:

- The majority of suggestions (80) specified providing maps, improved kiosks, signage; or interpretive information on history, wildlife.
- (33) suggested better fencing on the highway, perimeter; or farmed areas.
- (22) suggested fencing or separating the off-leash area from public areas; or to enforce stricter controls of off-leash dogs.

Question 13.

Do you use the farm's off-leash area for dog walking?

Takeaways:

- 62% of respondents said yes.
- 38% said no.

Question 14.

If you have used the off-leash area, please rate the quality of your overall experience?

Takeaways:

- Of respondents who use the off-leash area, 90% rated the quality as excellent or good.
- 10% rated the quality as fair or poor.
- 113 respondents did not answer the question.

Question 15.

Do you believe all public users, including bikers and equestrians, can safely share the same trails accessible to off-leash dogs?

Takeaways:

- (197) (52%) of respondents said no.
- (154) (41%) said yes.
- (27) (7%) did not respond to the question.

Question 16.

Do you believe fencing the off-leash dog area is a critical component of safety for all farm users?

Takeaways:

- A majority of respondents said yes (193) (51%).
- (157) (41%) said no.
- (21) respondents did not answer the question.

An additional (184) respondents provided comments about the topic:

- Separate or fence the off-leash area from public recreation areas or trails (41).
- Improve off-leash area controls including access, gates, signage, docents or bans on unsafe animals (34).
- Keep the recreation area as it is, limit fencing, or no area reduction for off-leash dogs (34).

Opportunities (Applies to questions 13-16.)

- ✓ Review the master site plan to consider original intent for the recreation area.
- ✓ Confirm with Island County the regulations required for farm land zoning; including those of the farm's special review district.
- ✓ Seek counsel from experts/organizations involved in recreation, including off-leash dog activities e.g. Island County Parks, FETCH, etc.
- ✓ Seek community input on plan to accommodate the use/potential use of the recreation area by all public members.
- ✓ Consider low-investment improvements to recreation area signage, kiosks, maps, etc.
- ✓ Recruit volunteers to assist with enforcement of rules for off-leash dogs.
- ✓ At a minimum, protect farmed areas from off-leash dogs with adequate fencing.

Question 17.

Invitation to provide further comment or suggestions.

Takeaways:

- Thankful-appreciate the farm, survey, etc. (23).
- Improve Port presence, management, planning, collaboration at farm (21).
- Leave the farm; or off-leash dog area as it is (19).

Opportunities:

- ✓ Prepare survey summary and results for public distribution.
- ✓ Invite community input at future public meeting.
- ✓ Determine next steps from opportunities presented in the survey summary.

(5.12.20)