

Agricultural Resource Lands and SJC's Comprehensive Plan Update

What are Agricultural Resource Lands?

"ARL" is a zoning label for parcels of land with high quality soils that are designated for long-term use for farming and other agricultural uses. Washington's Growth Management Act instructs every county to designate enough ARL to support the long-term viability of agriculture in their county. Zoning a parcel as ARL helps prevent its conversion to denser residential development or other commercial activities.

Is it really necessary to designate Agricultural Resource Lands?

Yes. Without protective zoning and lower densities, farmlands can be subdivided for residential and commercial development. Washington State's population is booming, and development pressures are higher than ever in San Juan County. We need ARLs so that our County can support our current agricultural economy, for future food security, and to support our rural character.

How much Agricultural Resource Land do we need in San Juan County?

How much ARL is needed to support existing agricultural activities? How much ARL will be needed in the future? The Comp Plan update process is supposed to include an assessment to answer these questions, but the County isn't currently planning to do that. SJC's Agricultural Resources Committee recommends that there be no net loss of ARL, but our County has not yet created a no net loss standard and has de-designated ARLs in the past.

But aren't Rural Farm Forest lands also zoned for farming?

Yes, for small-scale farming, but that name can be deceptive. RFF mainly provides for rural residential development and allows many more kinds of uses than just farming and forestry. Most RFF parcels are 5 acres or smaller. There are some farming operations that can be productive on 5 acres, but as you can see from the list on the back, RFF lands allow for many more types of development than ARLs do, including uses that can conflict with agricultural activities.



The ARL designation protects farmlands for farming today – and for the future.

What can I do?

Let the County Council know that you support local agricultural jobs and eating local foods that don't have to be transported long distances; reducing our carbon footprint. Tell the County Council that you support the rural character, open space, aquifer recharge, carbon sequestration, and the future food security benefits that ARL provides. Request that the Council designate enough ARL to support a sustainable farming economy in the islands. With so many development pressures, tell the County Council that we need to designate more, not less ARL in this Comp Plan update.

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What's the Difference Between ARL & RFF?

	What Can Occur on RFF Land?	What Can Occur on ARL Land?
Maximum developable area for non-agricultural use	100%	20% but not less than one acre
Maximum area of impervious surface	30% not including driveways	10%
Vacation Rentals	Yes	No
Bed and breakfast inns	Yes	No
Hangers	Yes	No
Multi-family residential units	Yes	No
Rural residential cluster development	Yes	No
Playing fields	Yes	No
Indoor swimming pools	Yes	No
Animal shelters and kennels	Yes	No
Veterinary clinics	Yes	No
Any commercial use with permit	Yes	No



Friends *of the*
San Juans

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