

AGRICULTURE

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture refers to all methods of livestock, crop, vegetation and soil management. These include but are not necessarily limited to the related activities of tilling, fertilizer application, soil preparation and maintenance, harvesting and the control of weeds, plant diseases and insect pests. Also included are animal husbandry practices associated with the feeding, housing, maintenance and marketing of animals such as beef cattle, milk cows, breeding stock, horses and poultry and their by-products. Facilities contained within this category include, but are not limited to, storage, feed lots, fences and ditches. Also included is local or minor farm product processing as contained in the zoning code, Title 18, SCC.

Many of these practices require the use of agricultural chemicals, most of which are water soluble and may wash into contiguous land or water areas causing significant alteration and damage to plant and animal habitats, especially those in the fragile shoreline areas. Also large quantities of mineral and organic sediments enter water bodies through surface erosion when proper land management techniques are not utilized. These policies and regulations are especially important in Snohomish County because agriculture constitutes the primary use by land area of the County's human modified shoreline areas. Uses and activities associated with agriculture which are identified as separate use activities in this program, such as Commercial Development, Ports and Industry, and Shoreline Stabilization and Flood Protection, are subject to the regulations established for those uses in addition to the standards established in this section.

POLICIES

1. Encourage the maintenance of a buffer or permanent vegetation or other soil erosion control measures between tilled areas and associated water bodies which will retard surface runoff, protect water quality, improve habitat, and reduce siltation.
2. Comply with control guidelines prepared by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and State and local agencies, for regulating the location of confined animal feeding operations, retention and storage ponds for feed lot wastes, and stockpiles of manure solids along the County's shorelines so that water area will not be polluted.
3. Encourage the use of erosion control measures, in conformance with standards established by the Soil Conservation Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture.
4. In the planning and construction of manure lagoons and livestock flood sanctuaries, adjacent farms should be encouraged to combine plans and construction.

REGULATIONS

General

1. Buffer zones of permanent, **native** vegetation or other suitable soil erosion control methods shall be established and maintained between associated water bodies and tilled or grazed areas, **manure lagoons, and livestock flood sanctuaries**. The type and extent of buffers or methods shall be determined on a case-by-case basis and shall be of a width and character sufficient to retard surface runoff and reduce siltation.

Manure Lagoons and Associated Permanent Transmission Systems

2. Manure lagoons shall be designed, constructed and operated to county, Department of Ecology, U.S. Soil Conservation Service, and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency standards.
3. Manure lagoons may not be built within a marsh, bog or swamp unless all of the following conditions apply:
 1. The marsh, bog or swamp had been converted to agriculture use prior to (date of adoption of this amendment);
 2. No other location is available that is not a marsh, bog or swamp; and
 3. Full mitigation is provided to replace the functions of the marsh, bog or swamp.

Unless the above conditions apply, the toe of the dike of a manure lagoon shall be set back from water bodies used for recreation as much as possible, and at a minimum shall maintain a 30 foot setback from any water body, river, creek, marsh, bog or swamp.

4. Manure lagoons shall comply with all other county regulations, including but not limited to grading provisions of Title 17 SCC and flood hazard provisions of Title 27 SCC.
5. Elevation of the top of the dike of manure lagoons shall be determined according to standards established by the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) and Department of Ecology (DOE). When located within the floodplain, manure lagoons shall be elevated one foot above the one-hundred year flood level, or as close to such height as is feasible and consistent with SCS and DOE design standards.
6. Manure lagoons of earthen construction shall be mulched and/or seeded with grass on all exterior faces, and vegetation shall be maintained to prevent erosion or slippage.
7. If environmental review has shown that there are adverse unmitigated impacts related to ground and/or surface water contamination, habitat, wildlife, recreational uses, public access, and/or aesthetics, then setbacks greater than minimum and/or additional mitigations may be required.
8. Permanent pipelines for transmission of manure shall be properly supported and utilize a single piece of pipe or double piping when crossing water bodies.

Livestock Flood Sanctuaries

9. A permit to build livestock flood sanctuary mounds will be granted to property owners only when the applicant clearly demonstrates that the denial of such construction will threaten the viability of the applicant's commercial livestock operation.

10. The maximum size of the mounds shall not exceed 50 square feet per animal unit (1000 lb.) plus the area created by adding a ramp of fourteen feet of width along two sides to be used for farm vehicle access. An additional area no greater than 25% of the calculated area will be allowed in order to accommodate future herd growth.
11. Mounds shall be constructed in a manner that does not impact flood elevations, impede flow, or cause significant adverse effects upstream or downstream. Mounds are prohibited in floodways. In floodplains, mounds shall be oriented to the flow.
12. Mounds shall be constructed using non-compressive material (as defined in the USDA Soil Conservation Service standards for such mounds) that is obtained from an approved borrow site.
13. Site preparation and mound construction and maintenance practices shall be conducted according to the recommendations of the Soil Conservation Service or best management practices approved by Snohomish County.
14. Mounds shall comply with all other county regulations, including but not limited to grading provisions of Title 17 SCC and flood hazard provisions of Title 27 SCC.

Natural Environment

1. Only passive agricultural uses such as pasture and grazing lands shall be permitted in the natural environment PROVIDED that no clearing, construction, or other operations which measurably change the character of the environment occur.
2. Manure lagoons and their permanent transmission systems are prohibited in the Natural Environment.
3. Livestock flood sanctuaries are prohibited in the Natural Environment

Conservancy Environment

1. Agricultural uses shall be permitted in the Conservancy Environment PROVIDED that no construction which substantially changes the character of the environment occurs except as otherwise provided in this Master Program.
2. Manure lagoons and their permanent transmission systems are permitted in the Conservancy Environment only upon issuance of a conditional use permit.
3. Livestock flood sanctuaries are permitted in the Conservancy Environment only upon issuance of a conditional use permit.

Rural Environment

1. Agriculture is permitted in the Rural Environment subject to the General Regulations.
2. Manure lagoons and their permanent transmission systems are permitted in the Rural Environment subject to the General Regulations.
3. Livestock flood sanctuaries are permitted in the Rural Environment subject to the General Regulations.

Suburban Environment

1. Agriculture is permitted in the Suburban Environment subject to the General Regulations.
2. Manure lagoons and their permanent transmission systems are permitted in the Suburban Environment only upon issuance of a conditional use permit.
3. Livestock flood sanctuaries are permitted in the Suburban Environment subject to the General Regulations.

Urban Environment

1. Agriculture is permitted in the Urban Environment subject to the General Regulations.
2. Manure lagoons and their permanent transmission systems are permitted in the Urban Environment only upon issuance of a conditional use permit.
3. Livestock flood sanctuaries are permitted in the Urban Environment subject to the General Regulations.