Conservation Easement Stewardship Plan

Short's Family Farm

Google Earth image, 2016

Prepared by:

Erik Kingfisher, Stewardship Director, Jefferson Land Trust

Conservation Easement Acquisition Date: June 30, 2016

Plan Date: December 15, 2016

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Contents

INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE OF STEWARDSHIP PLAN

The Short's Family Farm conservation easement was established on the approximately 253 acre Short's Farm property in Chimacum, WA on June 30, 2016. The conservation easement was purchased by Jefferson Land Trust with funds provided by the Federal Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program, Jefferson County Conservation Futures Fund, the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, and Jefferson Land Trust. The stewardship funding to complete the project will be provided by the landowners, Roger and Sandy Short over the next five years.

This plan has been prepared to provide stewardship guidance in relation to the values, rights and uses specified in the Grant Deed of Conservation Easement (CE) on Short's Family Farm. The property is an approximately 253-acre farm consisting of Jefferson County Assessor's Parcels 901262002, 901262003, 901233010, 901233002, 901232008, 901233011, and 901224001[1] (the "Protected Property", also referred to as "Short's Farm", and further described in Exhibit A of the conservation easement). This stewardship plan is meant to serve as a tool for the landowner and the land trust to ensure compliance with the terms of the CE and to establish guidelines for land use that maintain the conservation values of the protected property in perpetuity. The stewardship plan should be reviewed in conjunction with the conservation easement document when making land use decisions. As designated in Section 3.2 of the CE:

> To further the Purpose of this Easement, Grantor and Grantee may develop and agree in writing upon a written plan for stewardship of the Property (a "Stewardship Plan"), a copy of which will be kept on file at the offices of Grantee and incorporated herein by this reference, effective as of the date of such plan…

This stewardship plan is not comprehensive and may be revised, supplemented, or replaced at any time with written approval of Jefferson Land Trust. Upon a change of ownership, or in anticipation of a change of ownership, changes could be made to the stewardship plan to incorporate new information and ensure that the purpose and intent of the CE continues to be met under new owners.

LAND TRUST MONITORING

The conservation easement on the Protected Property permanently affects the way in which the land may be used. The Grantor (landowner) and Grantee (Jefferson Land Trust) have the obligation to ensure the terms of the conservation easement are honored over time. The landowner fulfills this obligation in several ways, and primarily through their land management choices that favor the ongoing health and productivity of the land. Jefferson Land Trust fulfills its obligation in several ways as well, including thorough record keeping, regular communication with the landowner, on-the-ground stewardship support, and regular site visits.

Jefferson Land Trust will perform a site inspection no less than annually, specifically documenting any changes that have occurred since the conservation easement was established, or since any previous monitoring visit. These monitoring visits will result in a written monitoring report, with photographs and written descriptions documenting any significant changes. The written reports will also be reviewed by the Conservation Projects Committee chair to help determine if activity on the property is consistent with the protection of the conservation values of the property, and consistent with the purpose and terms of the conservation easement.

Monitoring Goal:

[1] Note that the conservation easement document also incorrectly lists parcel number 901233005, which was associated with the farm land area until a boundary line adjustment was finalized – survey recorded under AFN 597569

The overall goal of conservation easement monitoring by Jefferson Land Trust is to verify conservation values of the property are being maintained consistent with the purpose, intent, and specific terms of the conservation easement over time.

Monitoring objectives:

- Document significant changes that occur on the property over time
- Maintain regular communication about the conservation easement terms, and land use with the landowner and land managers
- Ensure compliance with purpose and terms of the conservation easement

Stewardship

Stewardship of the property in a way that is consistent with the purpose, intent, and terms of the conservation easement is the responsibility of the landowner, as stated in the conservation easement Section 5 and copied here for convenience:

> 5.2.3. All Agricultural Activities shall be carried out in accordance with applicable law and in compliance with the Purpose and terms of this Easement. Unless otherwise agreed as part of a Stewardship Plan, Grantor retains discretion over the specific character and content of the management decisions and practices necessary to identify, protect, preserve, maintain and conserve in perpetuity and to enhance, restore, or improve the Agricultural Conservation Values consistent with the Purpose and terms of this Easement.

The Purpose of the conservation easement is stated in Section 3, and is copied here for convenience:

> **Purpose**. It is the purpose of this Easement to protect the Agricultural Conservation Values and assure that the Property will be retained forever for agricultural productivity and use, to maintain the opportunity for agricultural activity upon the Property pursuant to RCW 79A.15.130(1), to ensure no net loss of agricultural lands, to protect prime and important agricultural soils, and to prevent any use of, or activity on, the Property that will impair or interfere with its agricultural values, character, use or utility. To the extent that the preservation and protection of the Habitat Values of the Property referenced in the above Recitals is consistent with the primary purpose of protecting the agricultural soils, agricultural viability, and agricultural productivity of the Property in perpetuity, it is also the purpose of this Easement to assure protection of critical areas, wetlands, and fish and wildlife habitat on the Property, and to prevent any use of, or activity on, the Property that will significantly impair or interfere with the Habitat Values. Grantor intends that this Easement will confine the use of, or activity on, the Property to such uses and activities that are consistent with the purpose described above (the "Purpose").

AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION VALUES

The Agricultural Conservation Values of the property will be managed consistent with the purposes of the federal, state, and county programs which provided funding for this conservation easement. In general, the Agricultural Conservation Values will be managed to maintain the opportunity for agricultural activity, and limit nonagricultural uses.

Goal: To maintain and enhance the Agricultural Conservation Values over time

The Agricultural Conservation Values identified in the conservation easement (paragraph 1.2) are addressed individually below:

Agricultural Productivity

Agricultural productivity of the farm could be compromised or impacted in several ways, including excessive flooding, overgrazing, lack of available water, and invasive weeds. To maintain the qualities of the property that contribute to its agricultural productivity, the stewardship of the farm addresses these potential impacts in the following ways:

Excessive flooding management

The lower pastures of the farm are very low gradient, and show only a 24" elevation difference from the upstream/south (119 feet above sea-level) to the downstream/north (117 feet above sea-level) end of the farm. Therefore, the water moves slowly through this flat portion of the property, and portions of the fields experience regular flooding during the months that have more precipitation (typically November-April). Some flooding of the pastures contributes to the soil health and productivity, but if flooding drowns the pasture grasses for more than a week or so, some of the grass population will die and the affected pastures will have less robust growth and recovery after flooding. Flooding is exacerbated by downstream constrictions in the stream channel between the farm and Hwy 19/Rhody Drive, including the growth of reed canarygrass, and aquatic weeds such as elodea and milfoil. Controlling these invasive plant populations will protect the grass forage and grazing capacity of these pastures. To support the continued drainage of the pastures, the landowner has conducted regular creek-channel cleaning with an excavator on the farm, and on downstream farms, for several decades. Creek-channel and on-farm drainage channel cleaning has been the primary way excessive flooding is managed on the property, so that continued productivity of the farm's lowland pastures is maintained. Other efforts made on downstream farms include the planting of creek-side trees and shrubs, which improves in-stream habitat by shading and cooling the stream, and which also reduces the in-stream vegetation that has the potential to slow down the flow of the water out of the valley.

Objective:

Continue manually clearing excessive vegetation from the slow-moving portions of the creek and ditch channels as needed to prevent excessive flooding

Grazing management

The current grass-fed beef cattle operation is managed to limit impacts associated with overgrazing by rotating the cattle through the different pastures of the farm during the year, and limiting the number of cattle in the herd. Rotation of cattle through pastures is based on seasonal grass growth, and underlying soil saturation. During the wetter winter months the cattle are restricted to the western slopes and upper pastures of the farm to reduce physical impacts to the Prime Farmland Soils that make up the lowland pastures. When the heavy animals walk on poorly-drained rain-saturated pastures, muddy hoof pits increase potential wind and water erosion of the soils. During these winter months the animals are fed silage, and hay, stored from the previous spring and summer harvest.

Objective:

Continue rotational grazing of cattle, and limit herd size, to support productive pasture conditions.

Water management

Access to adequate water supplies is, and will continue to be, a critical factor in the overall productivity of the farm. The property has a water right associated with a well that services the agricultural needs of the farm. It also provides residential water to the farm, and other nearby properties. The well pump has its own power meter, which provides an adequate form of documentation (through power bills and utility company records) to demonstrate use and maintain the Certificate of Ground Water Right.

Objective:

Maintain documentation of water use through separate power meter records for the well pump.

Invasives management

Pasture management includes monitoring for and removing noxious weeds, to maintain the best feed conditions for the cattle over time. Noxious weeds emerge mostly in areas that don't receive regular mowing or grazing. Currently the rotational grazing approach of the farm, along with regular treatment of emerging invasive populations, has kept plants that could reduce pasture productivity in control.

Objective

Continue regularly monitoring and removing populations of noxious weeds that pose a threat to productivity of pastures

Prime, unique and important agricultural soils of regional and State-wide importance

As stated in the Baseline Conditions Report:

> 70% percent of the agricultural acres on the Property consist of soils that qualify under NRCS as farmland of statewide significance or prime farmland if drained. The prime farmland if drained also consists of the largest portion of the farmland and the lowest-lying ground around Chimacum and Naylor creeks. These soils include two variants of Semiahmoo muck (the large lowest portion of Property around Chimacum and Naylor creeks) and a variant of Snohomish silty clay loam. The farmland of statewide significance consists of Cassolary sandy loam, Kitsap gravelly loam, Kitsap silt loam, Sinclair gravelly sandy loam, and two variants of Alderwood gravelly sandy loam. These soils are associated with the main portion of the property that includes Chimacum and Naylor creeks and the majority of the grazing activity.

These soils, including their living microbiota, are the foundation of the farm, and could be compromised through several factors, including erosion, nutrient cycles, and certain invasive species. With the current operation, the rotational grazing and invasives control helps ensure the soils are not unnecessarily impacted in these ways. The above Agricultural Productivity objectives adequately support and address the sustainability and health of the soils. More specifically, there are no highly erodible soils or slopes on the property, as determined by NRCS. While the threat of erosion is low, all activities that have the potential to contribute to any significant erosion or removal of these important soils is prohibited by the conservation easement. To prevent wind and water erosion on the pastures, management includes rotational grazing as outlined above, which also minimizes the amount of soil left exposed without grass-cover.

Objective

No further clarification needed

The suitability of the Property for Agricultural Activities

The Property has been an active farm since the late 19th century, and has an infrastructure layout conducive to a wide range of agricultural activities. The suitability of the Property for agricultural activities is based largely on the water, existing infrastructure, healthy soils, and drainage. Maintaining these features supports this conservation value, all of which have been addressed above, except infrastructure. Infrastructure that contributes to the suitability of the Property for Agricultural Activities includes the extensive fencing, agricultural roads, and structures.

Objective

Maintain current infrastructure as needed to support current and potential future agricultural activities

The size of the agriculturally productive portion of the Property

Short's Family Farm is the largest permanently protected farm in the county to date, and its large size allows the landowner to leverage efficiencies of scale. The only areas not associated with the agricultural productivity of the farm are the forested areas (addressed in the Habitat Values section below), Building Envelope 2 and portions of Building Envelope 1 for residential purposes, the wetlands and creeks (addressed in the Habitat Values section below), and the sand mine. The sand mine is currently an approximately 1-acre area directly

east of Building Envelope 3, where sand is regularly extracted for use on the property roads, and for use in farm compost consistent with section 6.9.1. of the conservation easement. The sand mine extraction operation is also being conducted to increase the flat well drained lowland pasture area, with an eventual closure of the sand mine to result in additional area suitable for grazing. A revegetation plan will be developed at the time of closure.

Objective

Limit extraction of sand area to 2-acres, and revegetate promptly once extraction is complete to limit noxious weed invasion.

Existing and potential economic productivity

Agriculture is an important economic driver in Chimacum, and with the property permanently protected for agricultural purposes, the economic productivity as it relates to agriculture is also protected. The farm currently supports the grass-fed beef operation, a compost business, and a hunting lease. Additional business ventures may be explored by the landowner to realize the existing and potential economic productivity of the Property, as long as they are consistent with the purpose of the conservation easement.

Objective

Nor further clarification needed

The viability of the site for continued agricultural production, including farm-to-market access, proximity to roads, utilities, and water availability

The site is particularly well suited for long-term agricultural production. Local demand for products produced on the property is increasing.

Objective

No further clarification needed

HABITAT VALUES

The Habitat Values of the property will be managed consistent with the purposes of the federal, state, and county programs which provided funding for this conservation easement. In accordance with the Purpose statement of the conservation easement, land use on the Property must not significantly impair or interfere with the Habitat Values

Goal: To maintain and enhance the Habitat Values over time

The Habitat Values identified in the conservation easement (paragraph 1.3) are addressed individually below:

Riparian corridors associated with the West fork of Chimacum Creek and with Naylor Creek

The conservation easement states that both riparian corridors "contain, and will support the enhancement of, features that afford safe passage and suitable habitat for coho salmon, steelhead, cutthroat trout, and other species of fish." Both creeks have been significantly altered from their original conditions generations ago, as the farm was first being established. A small buffer planting on the east-west reach of Naylor Creek was established in the early 1980's for mitigation purposes, and provides shade on the creek along this stretch. The north-south reach of Naylor Creek was planted with a narrow riparian hedgerow in partnership with the Jefferson County Conservation District less than 10 years ago. Naylor Creek generally does not require much regular maintenance or dredging due to the more significant gradient and ability of the creek to maintain flow down slope to its junction with Chimacum Creek. Maintaining habitat conditions on Naylor Creek include the protection from impacts by cattle accessing the creek, and protecting the channel from other farm operation impacts. Chimacum Creek has been almost entirely fenced to prevent impacts from cattle entering the creek and eroding the banks. There has been no significant stream-side planting along this creek channel due to the low-gradient nature of the valley on the Property mentioned earlier, although there are some poplar trees along the upstream pasture banks. There is concern that planting along this stretch of the creek could

potentially exacerbate the flooding on the Property by restricting access to the channel for regular dredging and clearing of vegetation build-up, and eventually adding more organic matter to the channel as planted trees and shrubs mature and drop leaves and twigs. Maintaining habitat conditions on Chimacum Creek include maintaining the flow of water, protection from impacts by cattle accessing the creek, and reducing vegetation build-up and decomposition (too much of which contributes to low dissolved oxygen levels). The landowner has a permit with the WA Dept. of Fish and Wildlife for the creek flow clearing work, which requires the clearing to occur only during months with no significant salmonid presence – typically late June to September.

Objective

Maintain exclusion fencing on creek channels to prevent impacts from cattle, and perform any flood-control dredging along Chimacum Creek at times least likely to encounter migratory, rearing, or resident fish

Wetland habitat

The Property supports six open-water wetland ponds that support a wide range of waterfowl and other wildlife. They are all fenced to prevent access by cattle, and are largely left alone. Vegetation such as cattails and bull rush are growing robustly in from the edge in some of the wetlands. The open-water condition of the wetlands, allows waterfowl to land, rest, and feed on them. Preventing total encroachment by cattails and rushes will allow this open-water condition to persist. The wetlands also provide excellent habitat for amphibians, insects, and other birds. No new pond creation or wetland restoration is planned at this time.

Photo 1. Bufflehead utilizing the open-water wetland (Pond 1) with thick wetland vegetation on edges

Objective

Maintain exclusion fencing around open-water wetlands, and manage exclusively for wildlife by maintaining open-water conditions

Migratory bird habitat and forage areas

Each winter the property hosts an impressive number of migratory waterfowl and foraging geese and swans. The animals congregate both on the open-water wetlands, and the lowland pastures. The wildlife focus on pastures that provide the best grass feed. Grazing management includes removing the cattle from the lowland pastures during the time these migratory birds visit, which supports this wildlife habitat value of the property. Current management of the farm as pasture for grazing animals directly contributes to the number and health of the migratory Trumpeter Swan population, and other foraging ducks that use the lowland pastures in the winter months.

Hunting is permitted on the property, and provides one of the only handicap accessible waterfowl hunting sites in the county. Hunting is currently limited to Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays only.

Photo 2. Several hundred migratory geese and ducks foraging on flood-prone southern pastures in February

Objective

Maintain rotational grazing patterns that allow migratory geese and ducks access and use of lowland pastures during winter months

Other fish and wildlife habitat

In general, the property is used by many different forms of wildlife, on the fields, in the wetlands, and in the forested areas. Most notably, the forested areas of the property on the southwest slopes, the eastern property boundary, and a small area on the southern boundary of the western-most upland pasture, all provide additional wildlife habitat. These forest areas are not managed for agricultural or forestry purposes primarily, and experience little regular disturbance, making them valuable nesting and foraging habitat for a variety of native wildlife species.

East Boundary Forest: This forest has an overstory of Douglas fir with an approximate 70+ year age class, mixed with big-leaf maple, and western redcedar . The mature condition makes it particularly valuable to the birds, insects, and non-vascular plants that require tall and large trees in their life cycles. The forest is adjacent to Center Road, a county road, adding to the scenic value of the property. Just across Center Road from this eastern boundary forest is an area that is the focus of a local protection effort meant to establish the areas first community forest in the foreseeable future. The adjacency of this eastern boundary forest with the community forest focus area adds to its conservation significance – it acts as a kind of buffer for wildlife and for scenic values, between the farmland features, and the upland forests across the road.

Objective

Allow the older forest to continue develop complexity and add to the habitat and scenic values of the property by only removing hazard trees as needed

Southwest Slope Forest: This forest has an approximate age class of about 20 years, and is dominated by Douglas fir, and mixed with some red alder, big-leaf maple, and western redcedar. The forest was originally planted to create an extreme weather refuge for the cattle once the forest achieves a more mature state. The area currently receives little disturbance, and is adjacent to an older forest to the west on an adjacent property, again providing a buffer for wildlife between the farmland features and the upland forest to the west on adjacent land. This forest is fenced off from the lowland pasture, and does not experience significant grazing impacts.

Objective

Manage for generation of mature forest conditions and wildlife habitat values by maintaining exclusion fencing

Upper West Forest: Set in a small drainage dip on the slope, this forested area includes some approximately 50+ age class Douglas fir, among broadleaf trees such as red alder, big-leaf maple, and Scouler's willow. A property boundary bisects this forest, following just south of the base of the drainage contour, but the forest conditions appear the same on both sides. This forest is fenced off from adjacent pastures, and does not experience grazing impacts, adding to its wildlife habitat values.

Objective

Manage for natural forest conditions and wildlife habitat values by maintaining exclusion fencing

SECTIONS OF CE WHERE STEWARDSHIP PLAN IS SPECIFICALLY REFERENCED:

5.6 Pond Creation and Wetland Restoration.

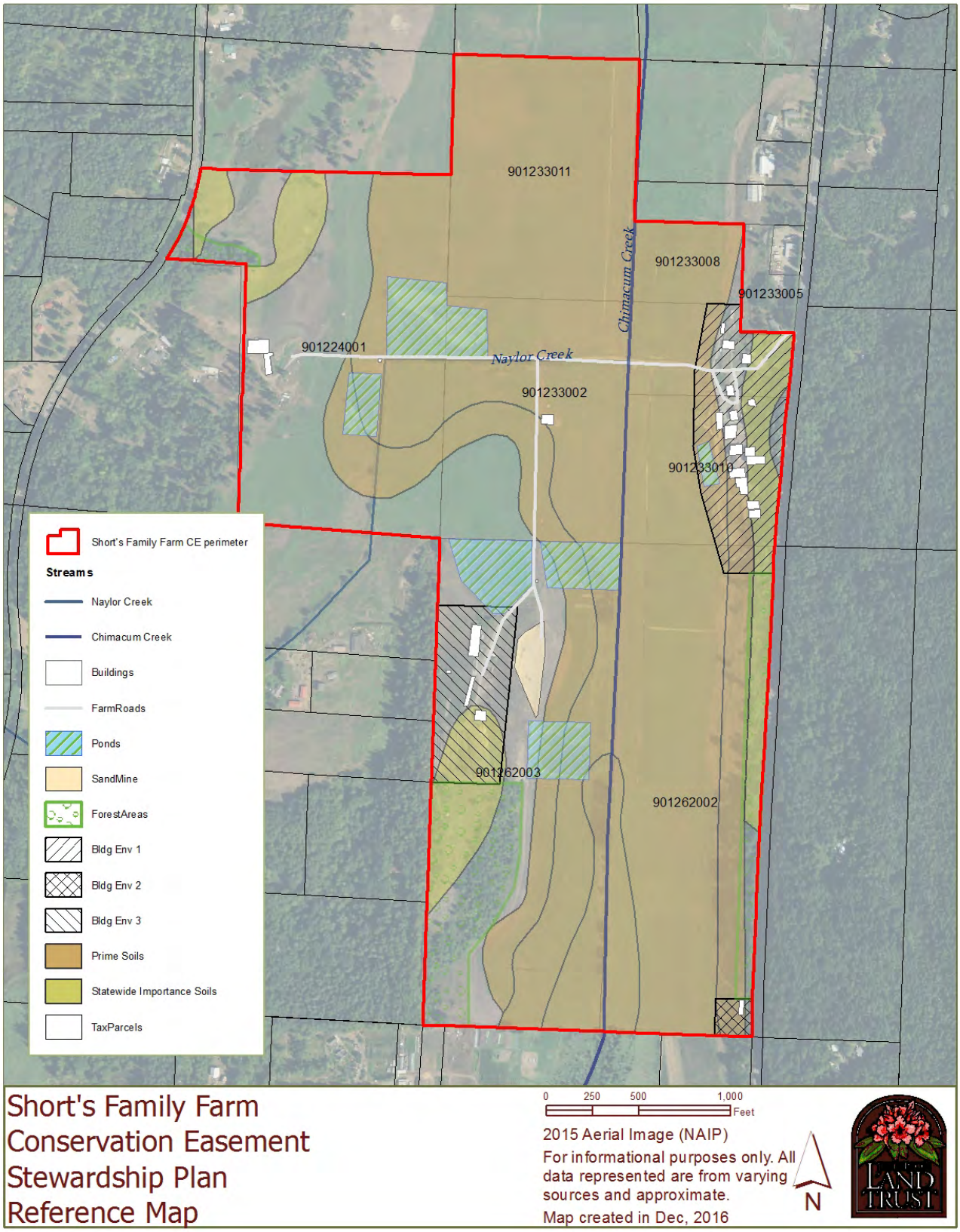
No pond creation or wetland restoration is planned or necessary at this time.

No further guidance is needed.

6.8.2 Impervious Surfaces created by NRCS-approved conservation practices

No current NRCS-approved conservation practices are currently creating impervious surfaces on the property.

No further guidance is needed.


901233011
901233008
901233005
901224001
Naylor Creek
Chimacum Creek
901233002
901233010
901262003
901262002
Short's Family Farm CE perimeter
Streams
Naylor Creek
Chimacum Creek
Buildings
FarmRoads
Ponds
SandMine
ForestAreas
Bldg Env 1
Bldg Env 2
Bldg Env 3
Prime Soils
Statewide Importance Soils
TaxParcels
Short's Family Farm Conservation Easement Stewardship Plan Reference Map
0 250 500 1,000 Feet
2015 Aerial Image (NAIP)
For informational purposes only. All data represented are from varying sources and approximate.
Map created in Dec, 2016
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LAND TRUST

Acknowledgements

DECLARATION OF RELIANCE AND CERTIFICATION OF RECORD

Grantee

Acting as the Stewardship Director of the Jefferson Land Trust, I declare that the Jefferson Land Trust adopts, has relied upon, and will rely upon the information contained within this Stewardship Plan to ensure compliance with the purpose and intent of the acquisition of the conservation easement. Further, I certify that the preparation of this document complies with our general procedures for creating and maintaining business records, and specifically with our procedures for the creation of Stewardship Plans. This document was prepared in the regular course of our business for the purpose of fulfilling our conservation easement obligations.

In compliance with applicable law, I declare that the foregoing is true and correct and that this declaration was executed on Jan 7, 2017, 2016.

Erik Kingfisher

Stewardship Director
Jefferson Land Trust

DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE

Grantor

I, Roger Short, am the current owner of the SHORT'S FAMILY FARM, described herein, subject to the Conservation Easement conveyed to the Jefferson Land Trust. I have read and independently reviewed this Stewardship Plan of 12 pages (including cover page, table of contents, and acknowledgements). I declare that this Stewardship Plan accurately reflects my management goals and objectives for the property as they relate to the conservation easement and the conservation values of the Property.

In compliance with applicable law, I declare that the foregoing is true and correct and that this declaration was executed on 1-4-2017, 2016.

ROGER SHORT

Owner
SHORT'S FAMILY FARM