Other Accomplishments

2019 FEATURE ACCOMPLISHMENT

Partnerships Support Local Farm Businesses and Farmland

Resource Challenge
Farmland conversion is an increasing problem on Whidbey Island. Agricultural lands are removed from Current Use at an average annual rate of 3 percent with a total of 20 percent removed since 2010. These lands are at risk of being converted and developed. While Whidbey Island Conservation District’s (WICD) programs and incentives help farmers maintain operations and steward natural resources, a larger network of partners is necessary for farms to ensure their long-term viability and capacity to withstand the pressures of development.

Project Summary and Results
WICD partnered with local farmers, businesses, and organizations to launch the “Whidbey Island Grown” brand and form the Whidbey Island Growers Association (WIGA) as a collective marketing, sharing, and leveraging cooperative for local agricultural based products. Whidbey Island Grown products are now found in local stores and WIGA membership is on the rise. WICD also partnered on a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) funded project to connect new and military veteran farmers with resources, mentors, and available farmland at risk of conversion. These efforts are expected to improve farming opportunities and reduce farmland conversion.

Key Partners
Island County Assessment; National Institute of Food and Agriculture/USDA; Washington State Conservation Commission; Organic Farm School; Washington State University Extension; Northwest Agricultural Business Center

Priorities for 2020...

▶ Carry out a grant-funded project to promote and support BMP implementation in the Penn Cove watershed.
▶ Coordinate development of an Algae Management Plan as an initial step toward minimizing toxic algae blooms in Lone Lake.
▶ Continue supporting a local homeowners’ association to explore options for addressing a derelict tide gate through estuarine habitat restoration.