

Subject: Whidbey Island Farm Tour – the Next Decade



Dear Friend of the Farm Tour,

As of September 2015, the Farm Tour Committee, in concert with the Whidbey Island Conservation District, has hosted 10 increasingly successful annual farm tours. Through the years, the tour has successfully raised awareness about our local farms and their farming practices, including the implementation of many best management practices that protect our natural resources for future generations of residents and farmers. Additionally, the tour has assisted our local farms with marketing and promoting the benefits of locally grown food, fiber, and other products, thereby improving the economic sustainability of the Whidbey farms.

During this time, our local agricultural community has been evolving, with more small farms coming on line each year. Many farms are focusing on truly local agriculture, selling to local customers through arrangements with stores and restaurants, at markets, through CSAs, and at individual roadside stands. Some farms raise a diversity of crops and livestock and some are focused on one or two products. And, of course, Whidbey has farms of all different sizes with different levels of commercial interests and production. Relative to participating on the Farm Tour, some farms are naturally set up for large events while others are more suited to a smaller crowd.

In response to the diversity of farm characteristics within the local agricultural community and the dynamic and exciting changes that are taking place, the Farm Tour Committee has concluded that now is a great time to take a hiatus from the current format of the tour and initiate discussions among farmers to identify the best ways to move forward into the future to support the continued growth of the farm community. We are also seeking to engage our Farm Tour partners and sponsors in this process as we look forward to identifying roles all interested parties can take to make the best and most efficient use of each entity's skills.

The Committee will keep you informed as the future of the Farm Tour takes shape and will be soliciting input as to ways in which you may be interested in partnering in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Karen Bishop".

Karen Bishop, WICD Manager
Whidbey Island Farm Tour Committee

www.whidbeyfarmtour.com

Whidbey Island Conservation District (WICD)

www.whidbeycd.org