Land and Water Legacy

Commonly Asked Questions

What will the county accomplish with this dedicated funding?

Washington County will use the funds to improve water quality of rivers, lakes and streams; protect drinking water sources; complete parkland acquisitions; protect high quality natural areas such as wetlands, woodlands, and prairie; and help preserve the county's rural landscape.



How will the county do this?

The county would acquire land or enter into land preservation agreements to permanently protect strategic lands, and would provide grants to local governments to protect lands that are important to local communities.

What are the county's priorities?

The county will give priority to lands located within already established county parks and along water bodies. Further priority will be given to lands adjacent to already protected lands, land providing multiple public benefits including public access, and projects that leverage non-county resources.

Where would the lands be located?

Land in all communities will be eligible for consideration.

How many acres could be protected with this funding?

The county expects to protect between 1,200 and 5,000 acres. The actual amount will depend on land values, payment plans, and the availability of other funds. With leverage from matching funds and landowner donations, more land could be protected. Based on past experience in Washington County and similar programs elsewhere, the county should be able to match every dollar spent with at least \$3 from other organizations.

Why would a landowner want to participate in this program?

The program would give landowners an opportunity to realize some or all of the market value of their land without selling it for development. This would be an option for landowners who don't want to see their land developed but want to protect it for the enjoyment of future generations.

How long will these properties be protected?

The land will be permanently protected.

How much will property taxes increase to fund this program and for how long?

A property owner will pay about \$12 per year for each \$100,000 of assessed property value for 10 years. The annual tax impact is expected to decrease in future years due to growth in the county's tax base.

Will all property owners be required to pay this tax?

No, state law exempts agricultural land and seasonal property from taxes used to repay all referendum debt.

How will the county ensure the program is effective?

A citizen advisory committee will review spending and program expenditures will be audited annually.

Does the county have any experience with this type of program?

In February 2000, Washington County established a program for the purpose of preserving the rural landscape and high-quality natural areas that make Washington County a special place to live, recreate and do business. The **program** has operated for six years with limited funding from a state grant and county levy. During the past six years, the county partnered with several organizations on **seven projects** to protect 203 acres. The county was very successful in attracting matching funds, leveraging nearly \$5 of non-county funds for every \$1 of county investment.