

THE ISLAND AGRARIAN

NEWS FROM SAN JUAN ISLAND GRANGE #966

**GROWERS, MAKERS, AND KEEPERS WORKING TOGETHER
FOR MUTUAL BENEFIT AND COMMUNITY BUILDING**



**Bird's-eye view of the Orcas
Community Participatory Agriculture
garden at Kaj Dog Farm, Orcas Island**

BEAVERTON FARMS— SHARED LAND ACCESS

A Vision for the Future?

By Bruce Robinson

Currently local farmers and gardeners produce less than 5% of the food consumed on our island. Our food security is obviously very low, and with an aging farmer population, the high cost of land, escalating food

prices, and the potential of disasters (climate change, ferry disruptions, pandemics, seismic activity), it is hard to believe we could feed ourselves if we needed to.

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San Juan Island Grange #966 is a grassroots, non-partisan advocacy group supporting a resilient community on San Juan Island.

The Grange serves San Juan Islanders with legislative programs and community activities, such as talent and craft contests, scholarships, and more. You don't have to be a farmer to belong, though many are. Our elected officers are volunteers, and our "work" is done through committees. The heart of our mission is fostering community well-being, and we enjoy gathering to celebrate this.

We are a 501(c)(8) organization, accepting donations towards our programs and to maintain Grange Hall, in downtown Friday Harbor.

Officers of San Juan Island Grange #966 may be found at sanjuangrange.org/officers.html

Our bylaws and resolutions may be found at sanjuangrange.org/structure.html

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Beaverton Farms continued

To counter this insecurity we need to provide access to agricultural land for people to grow and raise food for themselves and for our community.

For the past several months the Grange Agricultural Support Committee has been discussing the possibility of the Grange taking the lead in leasing farmland owned by the San Juan County Conservation Land Bank to provide shared land access to community members for the production of food.

On December 10th, the Land Bank published a Request for Proposals for leasing a 35-acre portion of the Beaverton Marsh Preserve. This acreage, which is prime agricultural land, borders Roche Harbor Road, as seen in the photo below.



View of Beaverton Marsh from Roche Harbor Road, looking west, just after leaving the limits of the Town of Friday Harbor

Continued on page 4

Letter from the President

Grangers, 2023 was a year for the record books! Membership reached 245, a number that would have been unbelievable only a few years ago. The Grange Potluck is back, giving Grangers more opportunities to interact, talk, cook, and eat together. At the potluck on January 3, the Agricultural Support committee will present its proposal to lease Land Bank farmland near Beaverton Marsh on Roche Harbor Road. Winning this lease would require us to focus on our mission to support a local food community—a challenge I believe we can meet. Read more about the project in this newsletter.

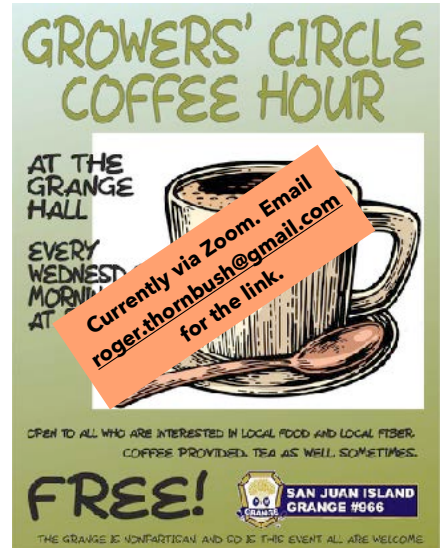
Our cider press saw yeoman service this past year, with all comers pressing tasty apple juice together and having fun doing it. Our dehydrator program was also a raging success, drying fruit for home use and the San Juan Island Food Bank.

Looking ahead, our 2024 Budget Special Meeting will be on Sunday, January 14, 11am to 5pm. Income from our Spring Street lease and Grange Hall rentals is at an all-time high, which will allow us to fund our committees, Grange Hall improvements, the Beaverton Marsh project, more food processing equipment, educational programs, and more.

Also looking ahead, we have made it easy to renew your Grange membership online. Individual memberships are \$68, family memberships (including 2 adults and children under 23) are \$136, and Life Memberships (no need to renew or pay dues ever again!) are \$500. You may renew here: <https://forms.gle/H7oDLSnFnTNzSRWDA>

Here's to a happy and prosperous 2024!

Roger Ellison, 2024 President



Notices

Save This Date!

Second Annual Seedy Sunday

February 25, 1-3pm
at Grange Hall

Seed Swap and Give Away

Bring seeds you have saved or extra commercial seeds.

Bring your friends, bring you seeds;

Go home with your friends' seeds!

Beaverton Farms continued from page 2

The Agricultural Support Committee is developing a proposal to lease this land along the lines of the following draft mission statement:

Beaverton Marsh Farm is a commons where San Juan Islanders work and learn together to grow food to feed the community using the principles of regenerative agriculture.

If this proposal is supported by the Grange membership and subsequently accepted by the Land Bank, it would allow island farmers and gardeners to produce food in a variety of ways:

- market gardens (either commercial or cooperative)
- pea-patch garden plots
- livestock grazing
- community orchards and food forests
- seed production of crops suited to our maritime climate

While increasing food production, participants will improve the quality of the soil and water through Best Management Practices that embody regenerative farming principles (no or minimal tillage, cover cropping, rotational grazing) to increase the health of the soil, sequester carbon, and protect the watershed.



Beaverton Farms conceptual map by Bill Severson

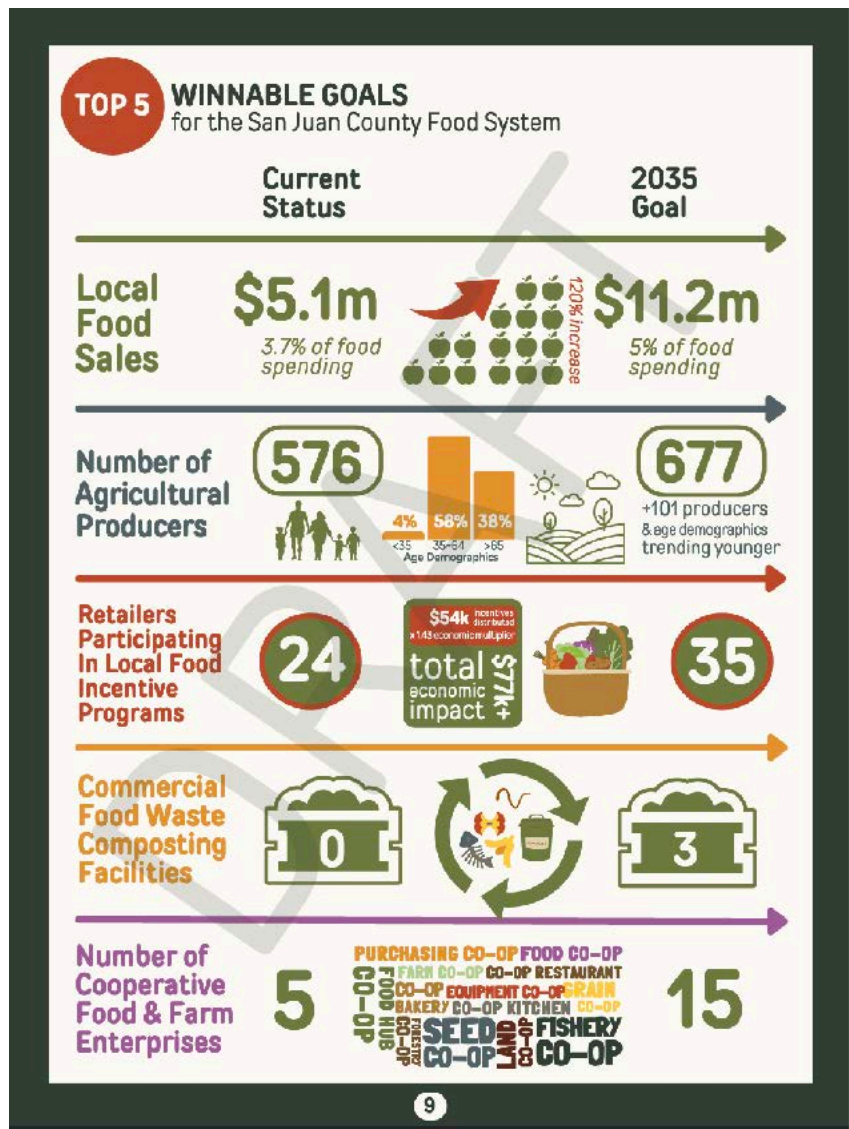
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A Food System Plan for San Juan County

The Food System Plan is a comprehensive, practical, and intentional resource designed to relocalize the San Juan County food system. Guided by the Food System Team—an *ad hoc* body of local food-system leaders—the plan was developed over several years through a process of research, input, and community feedback. The result is a road map to address critical needs and opportunities associated with the food system of the San Juan Islands.

With its companion document, the [San Juan County Community Food Assessment](#), the plan offers five goals with objectives and strategies for a resilient food future.

Following the public comment period, the Food System Team will incorporate feedback and publish the finalized plan in early 2024. Islanders interested in getting involved in the work ahead—creating Action Guides for each goal—are encouraged to reach out to the Food System Team at foodsystem.sjc@gmail.com to learn more.



Summary of goals from the San Juan County Food System Plan (<https://sjiagguild.com/sjc-food-system>)input process

Overheard at the Potluck...

By Roger Ellison

Our first Grange Potluck since covid was a success! Attendance was good, the food was great, and the discussion was terrific! Our dinner topic was about why and how to increase the amount of locally grown food.



The discussion was wide-ranging and included the following points:

- Individuals and families can help by growing and preserving their own food and buying from local farmers.
- Education can play a big part in encouraging the community to grow its own food, especially through teaching basic gardening skills, how to eat seasonally, how to preserve food, and how to reduce food waste.
- Families can team up with others in buying clubs, community gardens, and cooking parties at the Grange.
- Infrastructure investments—community gardens and orchards, municipal composting programs, and community kitchens—can help increase local food production.
- Grange leadership is important in these efforts, especially in working on changes to local laws, zoning rules and neighborhood codes, covenants, and restrictions that can act as barriers to our self-reliance.

Our next potluck will be before the regular Grange meeting on January 3 at 5pm. The Agricultural Support Committee will present their ideas for community gardens and orchards at Beaverton Marsh (see article on page 1).

Notes from the Growers' Coffee Hour

By Roger Ellison

Potatoes are a good staple for the small grower. You do not even need land and can grow spuds in bags! We talked about offering a potato-growing class for beginners. Last year, many of us ordered seed potatoes through the Orcas Food Co-op. Roger found that Red Norland, Amarosa, Purple Majesty, and Yukon Gem did well. If you participated in the group purchase, how did things go for you? Bruce Robinson recommends this Oregon State University presentation on dry farming potatoes: https://media.oregonstate.edu/media/t/1_aei6nrhw

What are people harvesting now? As it turns out: cilantro, kale, green onions, cabbage, napa cabbage, Brussels sprouts, beets, radicchio, bok choy, chard, carrots, parsnips, rutabagas, kohlrabi, and collards.

What a year for acorns! A mast year, in fact. [If it seems like there are a lot of acorns this fall, you might be seeing a 'mast' year | AP News](#) Much of our island was in oak savanna at the time of first European contact. Several projects are working to restore oak savannas, while others are working to establish savanna analogs with chestnuts, which give more human food sooner than oaks do. [Savanna Institute | Laying the groundwork for agroforestry in the Midwest](#)

How about a heritage orchard on the island? Maybe at the Beaverton Marsh Farms project site? We could establish a repository of fruit genetics for breeding and grafting—like a seed bank for fruit trees as part of a community orchard. [Inspiring Community Orchard Projects Across North America \(orchardpeople.com\)](#)

And while we are at it, we can build a **honey/cider house** next to the orchard. [What is a Honey House? Is it time?- Carolina Honeybees](#)

Beaverton Farms continued from page 4

The project will include needed infrastructure (e.g., fencing, an outhouse with a composting toilet, a farm stand, a composting facility), create educational opportunities for both participants and the community at large, and provide passive recreational opportunities with trails that adjoin public land.

There are a number of potential partners on the project, and as the project progresses, more partnerships will undoubtedly be formed. Our dream is to see this project replicated across San Juan Island. To hear more about Beaverton Farms, join the Grange potluck this Wednesday, January 3, where the Steering Committee will provide an overview and answer questions.