



Snoqualmie Valley Preservation Alliance

Annual Report

2022



Our Mission & Vision

The SVPA is a community-based, 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting and improving the lives, livelihoods, and lands of the beautiful Snoqualmie River Valley.

The Snoqualmie Valley is a Pacific Northwest regional treasure. It is comprised of over 440,000 acres of forests, farms, and small towns in eastern King County. Dedicated to its preservation, the SVPA serves as a local voice for balanced, equitable, long-term planning for the Snoqualmie Valley that preserves the viability of its farms, residents, and businesses. Our goal is to find sustainable solutions for land use challenges, agricultural vitality, and floodplain management.

The SVPA advocates for farms, farmers, and landowners because we believe that all of King County benefits from a viable local food source, healthy ecosystems, sustainable small businesses and myriad recreation opportunities, just minutes from our urban centers.



Our Values

Accountability*Science-Driven
Honesty*Inclusiveness
Equitable*Thoughtful
Collaborative*Organized
Strategic*Transparency
Diversity*Respect
Ingenuity*Integrity
Impactful



Our Work:

- We passionately strive to prevent the loss of irreplaceable farmland in King County. We view these resource lands as a vital part of our regional food system. Agricultural lands are critical to our current and future food access and security as well as play an important part in climate change mitigation and resilience.
- We advocate for farmland protection, farmers, and landowners at the county, state, and federal levels.
- We lead initiatives for strategic watershed management, water safety, security, and access; frequently partnering with the Watershed Improvement District to increase commercial farmers' access to water and drainage.
- We collaborate with scientists, engineers, and environmental consultants to collect information, inform decision making, and educate the public.

2022 At A Glance

A Year of Transition

Lauren Silver joined the SVPA as the new Executive Director in March, 2022. She has an undergraduate degree in environmental science and a Master's in Conservation Ecology. Having relocated to Washington last year, she brings with her extensive experience in natural resource planning, watershed management, agricultural science, and farm technical assistance. She is thrilled to be leading the SVPA in its efforts to find long-term, balanced solutions to challenges facing the valley.



Regina Fletcher came on board in May of 2022 as our Floodzilla Field Scientist. She grew up in Western Washington and has an educational background in Urban Planning and Environmental Policy and a Master's in Biology. Her experience with water quality monitoring, community-based environmental solutions, and emerging conservation technologies has prepared her well for moving the Floodzilla Gage Network towards new and exciting directions.

Our board is growing!

This year, we welcomed **Cynthia Krass, Rick VanderKnyff, & Jim Shannon** to the SVPA Board of Directors.

In 2022...

Joined the King County Community Needs List Cocreation Team

Built 3 New Floodzilla Gage Structures

11% Increase in Floodzilla Users

Worked with partners to complete the Snoqualmie Valley APD Agriculture Strategic Plan



Began developing a Fish Rescue Volunteer Network

Represented the Snoqualmie Valley in the King County Comprehensive Plan Update Process

Engaged over 30 volunteers

What We Do

FLOODZILLA GAGE NETWORK

We employ a citizen-science tool for residents and landowners to track water levels in the valley. We make this data publicly available so the community can see when local roads have flooded.

A team of dedicated members of the Valley community, led by Floodzilla author Geary Eppley, has deployed remote sensed flood monitors. These sensors constantly measure the height of the water levels and are placed near roads, on bridges, and in fields throughout the valley. Data from each sensor is constantly uploaded to a website for users to view in real time.



How high is the water near you?

Check out floodzilla.com

Over the course of 2022, Floodzilla staff and volunteers have been working on strategic planning of new sensors to close gaps in river miles along the Snoqualmie River. The team has been collecting input and feedback from the community and analyzing water height and movement across the landscape to inform location selection and structure design.

Floodzilla Field Scientist, Regina, has been kept busy this year with site maintenance and preparations for new gages, improving network connectivity, and troubleshooting sensor issues to ensure accurate data is being displayed to the public at critical times.

Floodzilla Inundation Mapping

In 2022, Floodzilla staff and Floodzilla Advisory Council members partnered with 4 senior students at Seattle University to develop a real-time inundation map for the Snoqualmie River Valley. This project will result in improvements to the Floodzilla website to provide more reliable flood information to residents of the valley and a better view of what the flooding looks like on the ground.



Watch for gages like this one around the Valley!

HOWCANWEHELP Hotline

We operate this helpline program as a service to landowners and residents who want assistance with understanding regulations impacting their property. Through this tool, we are able to connect citizens with the appropriate authorities or departments that serve them. We are at your service!

Email your questions to howcanwehelp@svpa.us.

Fish Rescue Volunteer Network

We are working to develop a Fish Rescue Volunteer Network, comprised of community partners and interested volunteers, that will work together to rescue fish that are stranded in valley farm fields and other areas, with no way to return to their natal stream without intervention, after major flooding events. In this effort, the SVPA and its Fish Rescue Volunteer Network commits to using the best available science to inform our fish rescue procedures and to following all relevant local, state, and federal laws and regulations guiding fish handling and handling of species listed under the Endangered Species Act .

Beaver Management

With our first beaver notch exclusion fence installation underway at Cherry Valley, we are meeting and learning from partners like Beavers Northwest, the Tulalip Tribe, the WID, and King County about how we might better assist landowners in finding the right resources and tools for beaver management.

Healthy Soils Collaborative

Not only do we at the SVPA advocate for our farmers, but also for the critical working resource lands upon which we all rely to support our regional food system. Healthy soils, rich in organic matter, are a vital part of these working resource lands and they provide crucial services to both people and the environment.

- Agriculture relies on healthy soils to produce food and fiber for all people. There is no food security without it.
- Healthy, productive soils are home to countless microorganisms that act as “natural soil engineers” – regulating nutrients, detoxifying pollutants, fixing nitrogen, and so much more.
- Healthy soils help purify our water, protect against flooding, and combat drought.
- Healthy soils are critical for carbon storage and sequestration, and therefore, combatting climate change.

Scientifically-backed agricultural and land management practices have the ability to protect, conserve, and improve soil health – *a living, finite resource*.

In 2022, the SVPA launched a new initiative called the Snoqualmie Valley Healthy Soils Collaborative (SVHSC). The ultimate goal of the SVHSC will be to support Snoqualmie Valley farms in implementation of agricultural management practices that protect agricultural soils, build soil organic matter, and reduce production costs. This, in turn, helps our community combat climate change, protect water resources and water quality, and create a more sustainable, more secure, and more resilient local food system. To complete this work, the SVPA is bringing together organizations, agencies, institutions, agricultural professionals, and others together to work towards developing a comprehensive, localized support network for Snoqualmie Valley farmers and land managers that is equitable, inclusive, and accessible to all.

The support network will offer much-needed decision-making information and tools that can help farms meet individual farm conservation and production goals. The overarching goals of the Healthy Soils Collaborative are to:

1. Identify outstanding needs, barriers not yet addressed, services not provided, and resources not available to Snoqualmie Valley farmers.
2. Create an action plan to fill these gaps through community partner collaboration.
3. Enhance educational support and opportunities for conservation management practices to protect and enhance soil health and increase access to information, locally-available resources, tools, and financial and technical assistance.
4. Augment existing technical and financial resources for farmers, especially those from underserved communities.



Watershed Resilience Study

The Snoqualmie Valley Preservation Alliance (SVPA) and the Snoqualmie Valley Watershed Improvement District (SVWID) have partnered on a Watershed Resilience Study to better understand the economic impact of worsening flooding in the lower Snoqualmie Valley. This information will provide a more comprehensive dataset that can be utilized for a cost-benefit analysis that could catalyze the prioritization of water storage implementation and investment by key decision-makers on the local, state, and federal level. This study intends to comprehensively evaluate economic impacts on virtually all facets of the lower valley - agriculture, residential homes, businesses, real estate values, school systems, roads and transportation, public services, emergency services, and much more. However, due to current limitations in staffing and resources, the first phase of this economic evaluation will focus on economic impacts to agricultural operations as much of the lower valley is within the Agricultural Production District. The first step of this study will be to gather data and information from farmers to craft a "high level" summary of these impacts to be shared with partners, King County staff, elected officials, decision makers, and stakeholders in order to prioritize flood mitigation and prevention efforts into the future. This information will provide much needed data for conducting cost-benefit analyses of flood mitigation/prevention strategies. The SVPA has partnered with the University of Washington's ACORN program to be paired with graduate students or post-docs to assist with this investigation.

Leadership & Engagement

Fish, Farm, Flood

SVPA continued their active engagement with local partners as a member of the FFF Implementation Oversight Committee and FFF Agriculture Task Force. It was a busy year for this collaborative effort and SVPA stepped up as consistent, committed voice to represent the interests of Snoqualmie Valley farmers, landowners, and residents. This year, SVPA...

- Assisted in developing the *Snoqualmie Valley Agricultural Strategic Plan* outlining needs, challenges, and potential solutions to maintain a thriving Agricultural Production District.
- Served on the FFF subcommittee to advise King County on the *Comprehensive Plan Update*, resulting in progress towards balancing farmland protection with salmon habitat recovery.
- Joined the reassembled *Buffer Task Force* to begin working towards minimum buffer widths and incentive programs for landowners.

King County Flood Hazard Management Plan

In fall of 2022, SVPA joined the King County Flood Hazard Management Partner Planning Committee to assist King County in updating and shaping the plan's goals, objectives, and guiding principles. Additionally, the Partner Planning Committee is helping to define the strategies to address anticipated flood risks, including identifying options for projects and programs to mitigate flood risks. The committee is currently working on the following key components:

- The plan's goals and objectives
- The problems caused by flooding in King County
- Key topics such as equity and climate change
- Strategies for achieving other community benefits while addressing flood hazards

In conjunction with broad plan development, SVPA and other community partners are participating in related planning workshops to address tributary flooding and solutions, a challenge frequently seen in the valley.

King County Comprehensive Plan and Subarea Planning

SVPA was consistently at the table throughout 2022 to ensure that the interests of Snoqualmie Valley residents, landowners, and farmers were considered in King County's Comprehensive Plan Update and the Northeast King County and Snoqualmie Valley Subarea Plan. Productive conversations and collaborative work sessions yielded several key results and high priority actions to help balance agricultural, salmon recovery, and flood hazard mitigation interests including:

- Ensuring R-649 remains as a policy in the plan, protecting agricultural lands
- Commitment from King County to continue supporting implementation of FFF 1.0 recommendations.
- County support of the Snoqualmie Valley Agricultural Strategic Plan and its implementation.
- Development of an accounting system to monitor and track conversion of farmland to habitat to ensure we are in line with agreed upon acreage targets.
- Implementation of a transparent process of the county-staffed Multidisciplinary Review Committee and inclusion of expert/stakeholder voices outside the county to guide decision making with regards to habitat projects that will take farmland out of production.

SVPA joined the **King County Community Needs List Cocreation Team** to help develop a model for engaging community members in the 11 unincorporated areas across the county. The cocreation team has been successful in characterizing the values, guiding principles, and goals of this process. and continues its model building work into 2023.

House Bill 1838

SVPA took the initiative to reach out to Governor Inslee's office to offer guidance in collaborative work between fish and farming interests as they work to redraft House Bill 1838, otherwise known as the "Buffer Bill." This effort resulted in staff policy advisors working to learn from existing models, such as Fish Farm Flood, that ensure all stakeholders across Washington are considered in buffer initiatives.



Thank you to our generous donors!

The SVPA welcomes gifts of all sizes and would like to extend our deepest gratitude to all who have given to the SVPA through donation, in-kind services, sponsorship, and volunteer time. Thank you for helping us protect the Snoqualmie Valley for the next generation! We are proud to recognize our Seed, Sprout, and Bloom Founding Members who have dug deep to support the mission of the SVPA.

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- Tom Alberg & Judi Beck
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BLOOM Founding Members

- Wayne & Carol Gullstad
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Thank you to our incredible volunteers!

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