



## SnoValley Tilth 2015 Annual Report

Hello SVT Members and Supporters,

If I had to pick a theme for 2015 at SnoValley Tilth, it would be ***growth***. Starting with 2 employees at the beginning of 2015, we are looking to have 6 staff members in 2016. With successful grant writing and fundraising efforts, our budget has more than doubled. We secured grant funds to hire a farm manager for the Experience Farming Project and plan to expand the program in 2016. The Carnation Farmers Market continued under the guidance of our market manager and added new programs emphasizing food access. We partnered on a Local Food Promotion Program grant, under which we will be supervising an employee to work on GAP certification and Farm to School efforts. With these program expansions, administrative time is at a premium so we look to make two exciting changes in 2016: add an administrative assistant and contract out event planning and some outreach work, allowing me to focus on the work of managing the staff and the organization.

In the New Year, I am excited that SnoValley Tilth will be working on programs that directly support farmers in our service area. Some of these are new programs and some develop our existing programs, but all of them aim to address key areas where we can better develop a thriving local food system. In 2016 I look forward to hearing from you and finding new ways to collaborate as we continue to see more farmers on more farmland growing more sustainable food and fiber for our community.

Sincerely,

Melissa Borsting  
Executive Director

**Mission:** SnoValley Tilth supports organic and sustainable food and fiber production throughout the Snoqualmie and Snohomish watersheds. We bring together farmers and the community to build a thriving local food system.

## 2015 – Key Results

*Carnation Farmers Market:* We were very proud to finally be able to offer a program to accept SNAP/EBT payments at the market and partner on a successful grant to offer a FreshBucks matching program in 2016. In our ongoing partnerships, we continued to facilitate the donation of food from our vendors and shoppers to Hopelink and other area foodbanks. Our market manager supervised 2 interns in 2015 who supported the children's program, SNAP/EBT, and outreach. Our market manager also worked as part of a team to develop promotional graphics available for use statewide by farmers markets and vendors. The market was open every Tuesday, May through October with an additional fourth annual harvest market on November 24<sup>th</sup>.

*Experience Farming Project:* we were delighted to be able to hire a farm manager in 2015 and the program hosted seven participating farm businesses. As the current site is nearly full, we successfully sought funding to support expansion to a new location. The farm manager is working to both identify participants and an ideal site for expansion in 2016. The drought forced us to juggle irrigation between farm sites and ultimately buy a pump to utilize temporary water rights acquired with the help of Snoqualmie Valley Preservation Alliance. Additional funds secured in 2015 will allow us to diversify our irrigation solutions in the future.

*Livestock:* SVT formed a new committee to reflect member requests. The Livestock committee meets monthly and has brought together a broader group of local farmers. The committee hosted Animal Welfare Approved and poultry processing informational sessions for members and is a partner on a grant awarded to King County to establish a location for a mobile slaughter unit to be able to serve King County on a regular basis.

*Membership:* in 2015 we continued to refine our tools to keep our membership informed of what we are doing and encourage involvement. We hosted 12 educational membership meetings with topics including soil pest management, raising pastured pigs, distillation using local produce, elk and other wild animal management. In the summer months we met on local farms and participants toured the farms and learned directly from the farmers. We published monthly e-newsletters, an online and printed directory, and revised our member map. We continued the committee structure with board and community member participants, and look forward to strengthening this model in 2016. We piloted the Tilth Happy Hour as a purposeful community building event and seek feedback on interest in continuing these. The Carnation Farmers Market Steering Committee spearheaded a wonderful Carnation 4<sup>th</sup> of July float which won first prize in the "float" category.

*Farm Advocacy:* in 2015 we expanded our role as advocates for farmers and farmland at local and regional levels. We supported the successful formation of a local Watershed Improvement District and will sit on the steering committee, participated in developing a strategy to improve outreach to farmers and landowners in the Farm Fish Flood process, and we provided feedback to the county regarding their RFP process for the Tall Chief Property. We continued our role on the Regional Food Policy Council and organized and

facilitated the first annual Agricultural Summit, bringing together 8 organizations active in our service area.

*Community Partnerships:* we participated in several efforts organized by other groups or agencies. This included participating on the planning team for the 2015 Snoqualmie Valley Seed Exchange, participating on the planning team for the sustainable tourism branding effort (SnoValley United group) led by Mountains to Sound Greenway, connecting Oxbow Native Plant Nursery staff with local farmland to collect native seeds, including the Stuart Landing Property, home of the Experience Farming Project, and funding a scholarship to a Cedarcrest FFA student.

## **2016 – Looking Ahead**

*Our approved 2016 budget continues all existing SVT programs. The following describes new efforts, objectives driven by grant commitments, and expansion of existing programs.*

*Experience Farming Project Expansion:* SVT received grants from the Specialty Crop Block Grant program, King Conservation District, and the Satterberg Family Foundation to support EFP expansion. These are all multi-year grants that will provide salary for our farm manager, administrative support for the program, and much needed infrastructure improvements and additions at new sites.

*FreshBucks/FINI Grant:* in partnership with the State Department of Health, we have funding to offer a matching program for EBT customers at market (double their money for the first \$10 spent at market each week). In 2016 we will be refining our systems for managing the transaction data as well as increasing outreach to let potential participants know about the program.

*Events:* Our annual auction is becoming a popular annual event and we were delighted to have a significant increase in attendance and double our income from 2014 to 2015. In 2016 we will host the benefit auction and two farm dinners. We will also continue to present Farm Faire and Pig Roast as a community event and outreach opportunity.

*Branding/brochures/outreach:* SnoValley Tilth will be rolling out new, professionally designed brochures and other collateral in 2016. This seemingly small item is a key part of us better defining and describing our message in an effort to respond to members' needs and interests. We were awarded a matching brand grant from Causality (a design agency) to double the impact of funds we already had set aside for this work. In addition, we are part of conversations about branding in the Snoqualmie Valley at multiple levels. We laid the groundwork for a SnoValley Grown Brand in 2015 and are exploring interest, opportunities, and benefits of this type of endeavor.

*Farm to School/GAP Certification:* we will have a staff member who will provide hands-on working sessions with local farms to work towards GAP certification. In addition, this staff person will collaborate on developing systems and relevant relationships for local farms to be able to sell to school districts as well as other institutions.

**2015 Financials.** *Draft until end of the year.*

