

## Crissy Impero

As a lifelong resident of Whatcom County, Realtor and a member of the Whatcom County Cattlemen's Association, I am writing to strongly oppose the Department of Ecology's effort to remove voluntary incentives for farmers who invest in environmental improvements.

Washington's family farmers-including cattle/dairy producers- have spent decades adopting better practices that protect water, soil, and habitat. From installing stream buffers and off-channel watering systems to implementing nutrient management plans, these actions were taken in good faith, based on the promise that voluntary, productive stewardship would be recognized-not punished.

Now, Ecology's move to remove these incentives sends a troubling message: that farmers who step up to do the right thing will be treated no differently than those who do nothing. Worse, they may even face stricter scrutiny or penalties because they've participated. This undermines trust, erodes progress, and risks setting back the very environmental goals the department claims to support.

If the Department of Ecology is serious about improving water quality and habitat health, it must partner with-not punish- the people who are actively working the land. One-size-fits-all mandates and top-down regulations do not reflect the diverse, site-specific conditions of farms in Whatcom County. Incentives are not loopholes-they are tools that build bridges between farmers and regulators.

I urge the Department of Ecology to reverse course and reaffirm its commitment to collaborative, incentive-based conservation. Family farms are not the problem-they are central to the solution.

Respectfully, Cristine "Crissy" Impero

Concerned Citizen, Realtor & active member of the Whatcom County Cattlemen's Association  
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