

Methow Conservancy Mazama Farmland Opportunity - Request for Proposals

Overview

The Methow Conservancy desires to sell or enter into a long-term lease for the 87-acre farmland opportunity currently known as the “Woodward” property to a local farmer, for whom the opportunity represents access to secure land tenure and the long-term economic sustainability of their farm operation. The Methow Conservancy is inviting applicants until February 1, 2022 and will select the farmland lessee/buyer that best meets the organization's criteria (below), by March 15, 2022.

Property Description

Location & Parcel #'s:

Kumm Road, Mazama, WA

3520090056, 3520090057, 3520090058, 3520090059

<https://okanoganwa-taxsifter.publicaccessnow.com/Search/Results.aspx>

Historical Use: The Woodward property has been in the Woodward family since the 1950s and has been used as pasture for their horses and cattle. The Kumm Road neighborhood was homesteaded in the late 1890s by prospectors-turned-farmers. Like all of the Methow Valley, this area is located within the traditional homeland of the Salish-speaking Methow Tribe. In 1886 the land was opened, without consent of the Methow Tribe, to white settlers. In the early 1900s, the first irrigation ditches were developed, and the once-timbered valley floor was converted to pastures for beef and dairy cows, as well as row crops like potatoes. Pesticides or synthetic fertilizers have not been applied to our knowledge in the property's recent history.

Soils/site description: The predominant soil type on the 87 acres is Muckamuck silt loam (nearly 90%), as well as lesser amounts of Boesel fine sandy loam. Sun exposure is somewhat restricted during the late and early season, due to a large bluff to the southwest. Due to orientation and elevation, some annual row crops may not thrive here. However, perennial plants and pasture grasses do well. The property is flat and open, with a few clusters of aspens and deciduous shrubs that enjoy the property's relatively high water table. The land has not been actively managed for several decades, and currently suffers from an infestation of knapweed, which is relatively easy to eradicate under more active management.

Water rights: The property's senior water rights are sufficient to irrigate 80 acres. Additional information can be provided upon request to serious applicants.

Existing and planned infrastructure: The property is irrigated by two drilled wells, with 15 hp (3 phase) pumps that can be run separately or simultaneously. Three aging wheel lines and several sets of hand lines currently irrigate the property. The Methow Conservancy is currently seeking funding to install one or two center pivots to replace the aging irrigation system. The property has aging barbed wire fence on the southern and easterly boundary, a new livestock fence on the northern boundary, and no fence on the western boundary (a distance of appx 2,900 feet).

Restrictions under easement: The land will be subject to a farmland conservation easement that runs with the land in perpetuity. This means that the property is restricted to an agricultural use even when it changes ownership in the future. Permanent agricultural buildings, including barns, corrals, or greenhouses, will be permitted within a designated building envelope. If the property is sold to a farmer based upon its agricultural value, the Methow Conservancy will retain an "Option to Purchase at Agricultural Value" which ensures that the future sale of the property is made to a farmer earning a significant portion of his or her income from farming. This legal tool is used to keep the land affordable for farmers into the future.

Sale or Lease Price.

- The lease price, while subject to negotiation, will at a minimum include electric utility, property tax costs, and general infrastructure maintenance costs. The cost of major repairs or infrastructure improvements, including but not limited to the center pivot(s), will be negotiated depending on the infrastructure's expected lifespan and suitability for agricultural operations. The suggested minimum lease term is 10 years.
- The purchase price of the property is subject to negotiation; however the Methow Conservancy's starting position will be informed by an appraisal of the agricultural value of the property and related improvements, either with or without a homesite, depending upon the agreed upon preference of the parties.

Additional Obligations:

Any farmer lessee or landowner will be obligated to follow the terms of the conservation easement, maintain the agricultural water rights, control invasive weeds, limit the use of pesticides when feasible and manage the property in accordance with a mutually agreed upon stewardship plan.

Documents Available On Request: map, example farmland CE document, CE primer, option to purchase at agricultural value information

Criteria

The intent of Methow Conservancy is to be transparent and fair in offering this farmland opportunity, and to select a farmer who is likely to be successful on the property. The following criteria will be used to evaluate the degree to which a potential farmer is a good fit for this farmland opportunity:

- Income qualification: You must be a commercial farmer who has a business plan and the experience to operate a commercial farming operation suitable to the farm property.
- Finances: A farmer wishing to purchase the land is willing and able to meet the offered price on a reasonable timeline. A farmer wishing to lease the land is willing and able to make regular lease payments and invest in the infrastructure needed for their operation.
- Farm Enterprise Suitability: The proposed farm operation is suited to the soils, aspect, property size, micro-climate, and existing farm infrastructure. The business is economically feasible and well-adapted to local or regional markets.

- Experience in the Methow Valley: The farmer has the demonstrated experience and expertise to be successful in the Methow Valley growing region. Preference will be given to established farmers or ranchers in the Methow Valley, but candidates with at least 2 years of experience farming in Eastern Washington, and at least 5 years of management-level farming experience will be considered.
- Need: Preference will be given to applicants for whom the opportunity would ensure the long-term viability of their current farming operation.

Timeline

The Methow Conservancy will accept applications until February 1, 2022. Applicants may expect a response on or before March 15, 2022. Date of possession of the property or initiation of the lease will be negotiated by both parties, but farmers should generally plan to begin activities in the spring. Farmers wishing to purchase the land should plan to have financing available by fall of 2022.

Required Documents:

To be considered for this opportunity, farmers must submit the following to Methow Conservancy staff (jeanne@methowconservancy.org) by February 1, 2022:

A brief cover letter (1-2 pages), describing:

- applicant's farming background and scope of experience;
- a description of the farmer's current farming operation;
- an explanation of how this opportunity would impact the ability of the current farm operation to succeed or to grow, or an explanation of why the applicant would be giving up their current farm situation in exchange for this opportunity.

A land use plan for the farm (1 page), including:

- short and long-term uses;
- anticipated infrastructure improvements;
- stewardship goals for the soil, water, or wildlife.

A tenure proposal, identifying:

- if the applicant would like to purchase the property, and whether they would like to retain a homesite development right (must include proof of ability to finance purchase, such as a farm business balance sheet, a statement of assets/net worth, or letter from a bank).
- OR, if the applicant would like to lease the property, their preferred lease term, proposed lease payments, and any cost-sharing proposals for critical infrastructure improvements.

Three farming references, including 2-3 sentence description of farmer's relationship and contact information.

Site Visits

The Methow Conservancy invites and encourages interested farmers to reach out and schedule a site visit to the property. jeanne@methowconservancy.org

Disclaimer

This request for proposal is intended solely as a preliminary expression of general intentions and is to be used for discussion purposes only. It is not intended to create any

agreement or obligation by the Methow Conservancy to negotiate a definitive lease or purchase and sale agreement and imposes no duty whatsoever on the Methow Conservancy to engage in negotiations with any particular party. The Methow Conservancy reserves the right to waive all or part of the eligibility criteria if it believes that an applicant has demonstrated the experience and qualifications necessary to successfully farm the property.