

PETERSEN FARM ON CLEAR CREEK

The future of the largest farm in Central Kitsap County was in question at the end of 2009, with the passing of Gerald Petersen, longtime owner, in September at the age of 94. Speculation about the 167 acres of farm and forest he worked with his wife Dorothy, who passed away many years ago, started to spread. The land likely could sprout houses, stores, and office buildings due to its prime location just outside of Silverdale. However, Mr. Petersen expressed a strong desire throughout his life and in his will for the land to remain as a working farm. As a result, Great Peninsula Conservancy is now leading a partnership with the Petersen Estate, farm interests, and community organizations to raise funds to purchase a conservation easement on the farm. This protection will allow generations of farmers to continue to produce livestock and crops for the local community for years to come. Conservation of the Petersen Farm, with its history, size, and central location, is vital to sustaining Kitsap County's resurging local farm economy.



Agriculture & Conservation Goals

Preservation of the Petersen Farm will help ensure that our community has a source of local agricultural products in the future. The project will positively affect the environment too because native forests grace the hillsides, filtering water before it converges in the valley and runs into Clear Creek. A historically significant farm, the homestead is a linchpin in preserving rural lands and farm history in Central Kitsap County.

This momentous conservation effort will:

- Protect the open pastureland and promote good farming practices
 - Conserve the freshwater that passes through the farm, including a salmon stream and emergent wetlands, while allowing restoration of the stream corridor
 - Preserve the mature forests and woodland habitat on the property
 - Maintain the scenic viewshed of the Clear Creek Valley from State Route 3
 - Preserve the history and tradition of the farm while allowing for an extension of Clear Creek Trail through the valley
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History

In many ways, the Petersen Farm still stands as it has for well over 100 years. The Petersen family has run it as a dairy, cattle operation, and local source of hay since 1948. However, its roots go back even further! Indigenous Suquamish used the Valley as a winter camping ground for centuries before then. By 1855, lumber mills had moved into the area, bringing loggers and mill workers, many of whom settled here and started a new life. Around 1880, this section of the Clear Creek Valley was homesteaded by the Levin, Holm, and Schold families.



For a time, the farm was the highest producing dairy in the Kitsap Farmer Cooperative. And for people who grew up in the area, Gerald and Dorothy were known to sell good beef at a fair price. In the 1970s, the family adamantly opposed construction of SR 3 that eventually appropriated several hundred acres of farmland in the Clear Creek Valley including more than twenty acres of the Petersen's pasture and forest. Through it all, the legacy of this historic farm continues, in part, because of the passion of the local agricultural community and the determination of the Petersen Estate to keep the land as a working farm. Together, we will make sure it stays farmland forever.

The Time to Preserve the Petersen Farm is Now

The incredible loss of farmland and open space is a national phenomenon. The Great Peninsula has witnessed this unfortunate trend as well. Today, we may purchase food products that come from far outside the region, but the preservation and stewardship of local working farms is crucial to creating sustainable communities and protecting dwindling community greenspaces. For these reasons, GPC has launched a fundraising campaign to purchase a conservation easement on the Petersen Farm. This voluntary legal agreement between the landowner and GPC takes away the rights to develop the farm forever, while allowing responsible farming practices that protect the watershed. *Read an article about the Petersen Farm in a recent issue of the [Kitsap Sun](#).*

To Learn More or To Make a Contribution to the Petersen Farm Campaign

At an estimated cost of over \$1 million, the Petersen Farm Campaign is one of the biggest challenges Great Peninsula Conservancy has ever faced. In addition to seeking grants, donations of all sizes are needed and are tax deductible. Checks can be made out to Great Peninsula Conservancy, with 'Petersen Farm Campaign' noted in the memo line, and mailed to Great Peninsula Conservancy, 3721 Kitsap Way #5, Bremerton, WA 98312. For more information, please contact our office at 360-373-3500, email us info@greatpeninsula.org, or visit www.greatpeninsula.org.



Great Peninsula Conservancy (www.greatpeninsula.org) is a private, nonprofit land trust working to preserve forever the natural habitats, rural landscapes, and open spaces of the Great Peninsula – a region encompassing Kitsap, Mason, and western Pierce counties, Washington. Great Peninsula Conservancy has protected over 2,000 acres of this spectacular region of west Puget Sound, including magnificent forests, untouched shorelines, salmon streams, wildlife-rich estuaries, and working lands. New members are welcome and enjoy visits to conserved lands, hands-on opportunities to steward protected lands, as well as inspiration from the many beautiful places they help to protect. Please join us!