9 What's next for Washington?

What will Washington be like 50 or 100 years from now?

Since about 1850, when settlers first started moving to Washington, five or six generations have been born, grown up, raised children, become elders, and passed away. (A generation is usually defined as about 30 years – the time it takes to grow up and have children.)

If people from 1850 came back to life and witnessed today's Washington, it's hard to imagine what they would think. They might be saddened by the loss of abundant salmon runs, and the disappearance of vast old-growth forests. They would be amazed that Washington is now home to nearly eight million very diverse people, and three million cars whizzing around on freeways. And if they walked into a supermarket, they probably wouldn't have a clue what most of the food products for sale are. Frozen yogurt? Macaroni and cheese in a box? Cake mixes? To people who hunted, fished, and farmed, these would seem really strange.

If we think ahead five or six generations – or seven generations, which is the traditional Native American measure for thinking about the future – it's equally hard for us to imagine what our state will be like. But today, population growth, pollution, and a changing climate challenge us to do just that. If we don't think about how the way we live will affect the people who come after us, we risk leaving them a state where salmon are extinct, the water and air are unhealthy, and climate change and a rising sea level have devastated many communities.

Sustainability

A United Nations commission defines sustainability as "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

That's why people are talking about *sustainability*. A United Nations commission defines sustainability as "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." And from the United Nations down to the smallest tribal or local government, finding ways to make our society sustainable presents huge challenges.

Democracy, citizenship, and our future

Because we live in a democracy, we all share responsibility for shaping the future. We can do this in many ways: by helping get laws passed, by volunteering for community projects, and by reducing the amount of resources we use. Citizens have been doing all these things for many years. For instance, many worked to get laws passed to help us preserve and protect clean water, clean air, agricultural lands and forests. Here in Washington, citizens worked to pass laws to clean up toxic waste, and to manage the way cities and towns grow so that they don't sprawl out into farmland and forests.

Thousands of citizens volunteer to plant trees, to protect and restore streams for salmon and other fish, and to reduce pollution in Puget Sound. And there are many citizen organizations that work to educate people about the changes we need to make to preserve our environment so that future generations can breathe clean air, drink clean water, and live in healthy communities.

But there is more work to do, and some of the hardest challenges will face your generation. Today's young people harvest the progress their parents' and grandparents' generations have made.

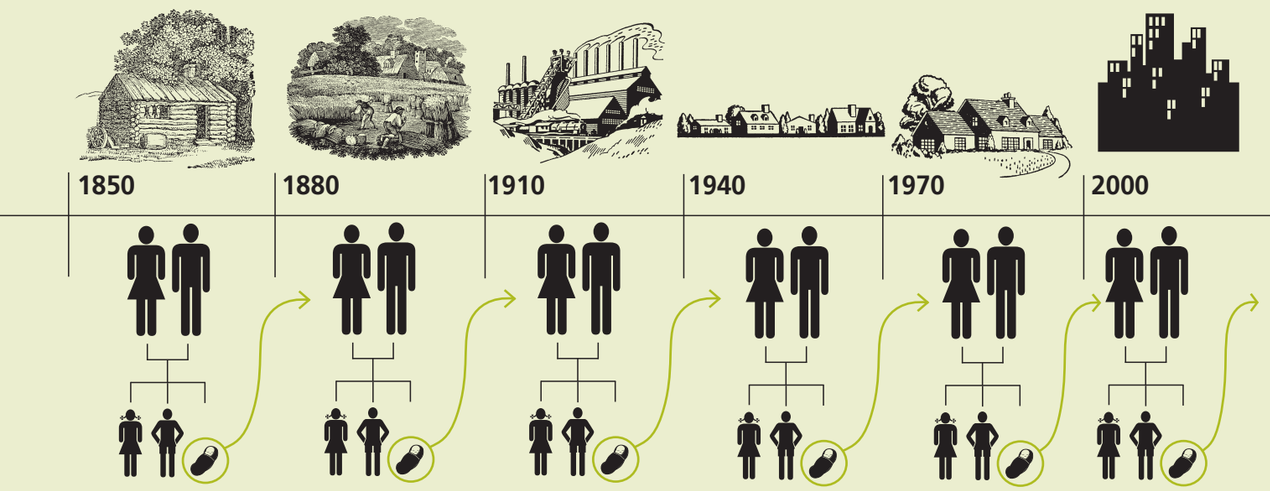
But the people who came before you have also created ways of living and using resources that *can't* be sustained, like driving cars too much, creating pollution, harming land and water, and using natural resources faster than nature can replenish them.

As our population grows, more and more people will need houses, schools, food, clothing, transportation, and jobs. They will also need clean air and water, and ways to adapt to a changing climate. These challenges will require a higher level of knowledge about what needs to be done to meet the needs of future generations. They will also require a higher level of citizen involvement to make sure that our government, our communities, and our families work together to solve the problems we face.

Population growth, pollution, and climate change

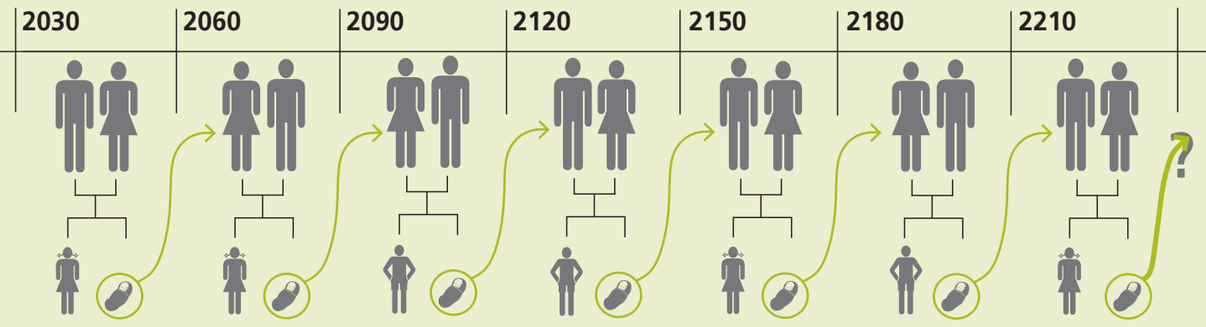
In 1853, the first census in Washington counted 3,965 white settlers. They didn't count Indians, so we will never know how many more Indians than settlers lived here. But neither Indians nor settlers alive in 1853 could have imagined today's population of nearly eight million.

It is equally hard for us to imagine how many more people will live here a century or more from now. Most efforts to forecast population growth only extend 30 years into the future. For



Seven generation thinking: *If we define a generation as about 30 years, seven generations would be about 210 years. What can we do now to ensure that people born seven generations from now will have clean water, fresh air, enough food and a healthy earth?*

use your imagination!



instance, Thurston County, which is now home to about 250,000 people, forecasts that in 25 years, it will add 120,000 people. King County will add about half a million. Some rural eastern Washington counties won't grow very much, but the state's urban areas will grow a lot, especially those around Puget Sound.

If all these people live as most of us do today – driving cars and living in single-family houses – it will mean more land used for new housing developments, more cars, and a lot more air pollution. In fact, if we keep adding more people and more cars and pollution, by 2050, experts predict that King County alone is likely to have 132 additional deaths per year between May and September from bad air quality.

Climate change will make these problems even worse. In the years since 1850, our economy has been fueled by oil, gas, coal — all of them fossil fuels that come from deep inside the earth. Burning these fuels produces large amounts of carbon dioxide and other gases. These "greenhouse gases" form a shield that traps more and more heat from the sun. (This is called the "greenhouse" effect because that's how greenhouses work: the glass lets all the sun's heat in, and traps it inside so most of it can't get out.)

A Climate Impacts Group of scientists at the University of Washington produced a study in 2009 that describes what climate change will mean for our state. The study predicts that temperatures will rise by 2.2 degrees Fahrenheit by the 2020s, and by 5.9 degrees by about 2080. The authors also say we will have wetter winters and drier summers, more severe storms, and earlier melting of snow on the mountains. For Western Washington, they predict much heavier rain in the winter. These changes will affect everyone in Washington.

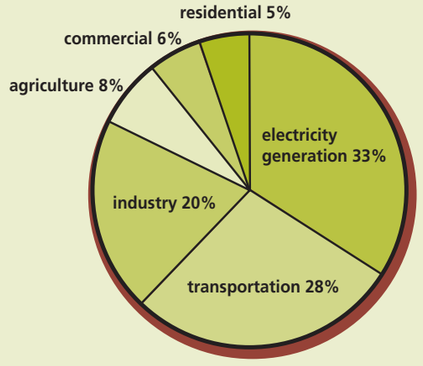
The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) website has information on climate change at http://climate.nasa.gov/causes

Here's how they explain it: "Most climate scientists agree the main cause of the current global warming trend is human expansion of the "greenhouse effect" – warming that results when the atmosphere traps heat radiating from Earth toward space. . .

Certain gases in the atmosphere block heat from escaping . . .

Over the last century the burning of fossil fuels like coal and oil has increased the concentration of atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO2). This happens because the coal or oil burning process combines carbon with oxygen in the air to make CO2. To a lesser extent, the clearing of land for agriculture, industry, and other human activities has increased concentrations of greenhouse gases."

Sources of greenhouse gases in the U.S.



US Department of Transportation

The largest sources of transportation gases in 2006 were passenger cars and light duty trucks, which include SUVs, pickup trucks, and minivans. With motorcycles, they made up about 63% of transportation gas emissions. The next largest sources were freight trucks (20%) and commercial aircraft (7%).

Fuel consumed in international travel by aircraft and marine sources is not counted in national greenhouse gas tallies. But, international trade has been growing rapidly, increasing the role of transportation as a source of global emissions.

When snow in the mountains melts earlier, it may cause rivers to flood in the spring, and then run low in the summer when farmers need water for irrigation and cities and towns need water for people. Low water in late summer is also harmful to fish.

And there's another problem with low stream flows in late summer: In Washington, we rely on a lot of hydropower – that is, electricity that comes from harnessing the power of water rushing over dams in rivers. When rivers run low in the summer, the dams can't produce very much power. And if it gets hotter in the summer, there will be more demand for electricity to power air conditioning. Although the dams will be able to produce more power in the winter and spring, when rivers run high, there is no way to store that power so it can be used later.

The Climate Impacts Group study also predicts other problems from a warming climate: forest fires will double by the 2040s and triple by the 2080s, and rising temperatures in streams and rivers will harm salmon and other fish that need cold water.

The oceans will also be affected by climate change. As the water in the oceans warms up, it expands. At the same time, a lot of ice near the north and south poles is melting, adding more water to the earth's oceans. All this means that the sea level will rise somewhere between two and thirteen inches by the end of this century. (Some scientists predict higher sea level rises.) A rising sea level will erode bluffs and beaches and destroy buildings close to the shore. At the same time, increasing greenhouse gas emissions are making the oceans more acidic, which makes it harder for creatures such as crabs, oysters and clams to form shells.

Two communities plan for a sustainable future

The Thurston County Regional Planning Council and the Spokane Tribe both won special grants from the federal government to create plans for making their communities sustainable.

In both places, leaders held many meetings and events to involve people in conversations about their hopes and dreams for their community's future. The Spokane Tribe took a year and a half to create their plan; the Sustainable Thurston plan took almost three years.

The two plans address a lot of the same problems, but in very different ways. The Spokane Reservation is mostly rural, and has a population of just over 2,000 people. Thurston County has about 250,000 people. (Olympia, the state capitol, is located in Thurston County.)

The Spokane Tribe's plan was guided by this definition of sustainability: "Seven generation planning and sustainability are the application of knowledge passed down to us by our ancestors to take control and direction of our community through cultural traditions, relevant economic development, and environmental stewardship."

The Thurston Regional Planning Council's description of its work was "Sustainable Thurston is a community conversation that will result in a vision for a vibrant, healthy and resilient future, as well as the actions and responsibilities to achieve it."

photo courtesy of the Spokane Tribe

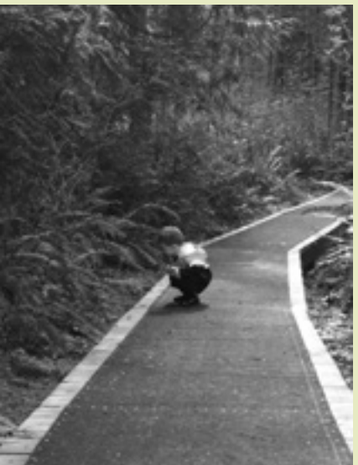
The Spokane Tribe has a long waiting list for housing, and is struggling to build more.

Reservation, this means real hardship for people who live in poverty because there aren't enough jobs, and, equally important, too few jobs that pay enough to support a family. So both places want to find ways to build more housing that is closer to where people work, shop and go to school, but the emphasis in the Spokane plan is more on reducing poverty, and the Thurston County plan has more emphasis on reducing energy use and pollution.

Thurston County expects that by about 2035, the population will grow by about 120,000 people. That's a lot of growth, and it will take a lot of careful planning to avoid more suburban sprawl that takes up more land, requires more roads and sewers, and requires that people drive longer distances and use more gas. Denser, more compact development will mean that more people will need to live in apartments or townhouses or other types of housing that use less land.

The Spokane Reservation has only added about 500 people in the last 20 years, so population growth isn't a big issue there, but the Tribe has the added challenge of planning for the needs of both people living on the reservation, and tribal members who live in other communities.

Both plans talk about the problem of people living far from stores, services and schools, so that they have to drive more, spend more money on gas, and use more polluting fossil fuels. On the Spokane



When people live in denser neighborhoods, it leaves more open space for trails and parks.

photo courtesy of Thurston Regional Planning Council

These projected effects from climate change assume that we will reduce the amount of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases released by human activity in the years ahead. That means if we ***don't*** reduce those emissions, the results will be even worse.

What can make our communities sustainable?

The Washington state legislature and some tribal and local governments are working hard to figure out how to reduce the amount of greenhouse gases we produce. They are also starting to think about how we can adapt to a growing population and a changing climate. Many citizen organizations, student groups, and ordinary people are working on these issues, too.

Here are some of the specific problems we need to solve to make our way of life sustainable. You will see that in many cases, solving one problem requires solving other problems at the same time.

Most cars on the road have only one person in them, but a bus can carry dozens of people. When people ride the bus it saves gas and reduces pollution.

Transportation

Everyone agrees we need to burn less oil and gas to reduce greenhouse gases and air pollution. One way to do that is to reduce the amount we drive, since driving cars accounts for 28% of the greenhouse gases we produce. (This doesn't include energy use or pollution involved in making and repairing cars, and it doesn't include energy used by trucks or buses.)

photo courtesy of Thurston Regional Planning Council

Many city, county and tribal governments are working to improve bus service, and to provide bike lanes and walking paths to make it easier for people to get around without driving cars. In the Snohomish-King-Pierce County urban area, a new light rail train system now makes it possible to move people even farther and faster. But the freeways are still full of cars, and more freeway lanes are still being built. And most cars on the freeway have only one person in them.

One strategy for reducing the need to drive is for people to live within walking distance from where they work, shop, and go to school. Many towns and cities are thinking about this and figuring out ways to cluster housing, jobs and schools in "walkable communities,"

photo courtesy of Thurston Regional Planning Council

Bicycles are low-cost, efficient ways to travel and get exercise at the same time. Many cities and towns are making more streets with bike lanes to make bicycling safer.

which means you can get to all the places you need to go by walking, riding a bike or using public transit. This is an uphill battle, since there are already many suburbs that are so spread out and so reliant on cars.

But many younger people and many older, retired people now prefer to live in smaller apartments or town-homes with easy access to shopping, movies, school, jobs and transit service. And many cities and towns are developing ways to make these denser, more compact housing choices more available.

In rural areas where bus service or other alternatives to driving aren't available, it's much harder for people to drive less. And it's a bigger hardship not to have a car if you live in a rural area where cars are the only form of transportation available.

photo courtesy of Leslie Hoge Design

This walkable community has a grocery store and other shops on the ground floor, and apartments above. It also has a handy bus stop and bike lanes so people who live here don't need to own cars.

Land use and urban planning

Transportation is closely linked to the problem of "suburban sprawl" – that is, the practice of building more and more suburbs that are farther and farther from jobs, shopping, and other places people need to go. In cities and towns across Washington, local governments are working to limit urban sprawl.

They have been guided by a state law passed in 1990 called the Growth Management Act. That law requires most cities to create "urban growth boundaries" and to encourage building inside those boundaries. More compact, denser cities would not only help reduce driving; they would also save money and preserve land. Ever-expanding suburbs require miles of expensive new roads and water and sewer systems, and local taxpayers have to pay for them. Suburbs also eat up a lot of land – land that used to be forests, farmland, or other natural areas that provided wildlife habitat. Having people spread out over a large area also means that it's more expensive for local governments to provide emergency medical and fire services.

photo courtesy of the Spokane Tribe

The Spokane Tribe is building more housing closer to shopping, schools and services because it is more sustainable and more convenient.

When the Growth Management Act was passed, a lot of people were against it. They thought people should be free to build wherever they wanted, and that the government should support their choice with the services (like sewers and roads and fire protection) they expected. Over time, though, public opinion has shifted.

Although a big house with a big yard used to be thought of as "the American dream," people are starting to see that the suburban lifestyle is both costly and isolating. When people have to drive long distances to get to work, they have less time with family, and less time to get to know their neighbors or volunteer in their communities. And as the price of gas goes up, driving a car gets more and more expensive.

Slowly, the trend towards denser, less car-dependent communities is growing stronger. But the vast suburbs we've already built will be with us for a very long time.

Water, stormwater and wastewater management

Thinking about water – where it comes from, how we use it, and where it goes – might seem boring, but if we didn't have clean water, we would be so thirsty we wouldn't be able to think about anything else.

Today, thinking about water is more important than ever, because providing clean water to a growing population – and water for irrigating farms – is a big problem for many Washington communities on both sides of the Cascades. Some communities have had to stop building new houses until they could find more water to serve them. In some streams and rivers, so much water has been taken for human use that there isn't enough left for fish, and state lawmakers and regulators have had to pass new laws and regulations to protect rivers from overuse.

photo courtesy of Thurston Regional Planning Council

Where our water comes from is just half the problem; the other half is where it goes.

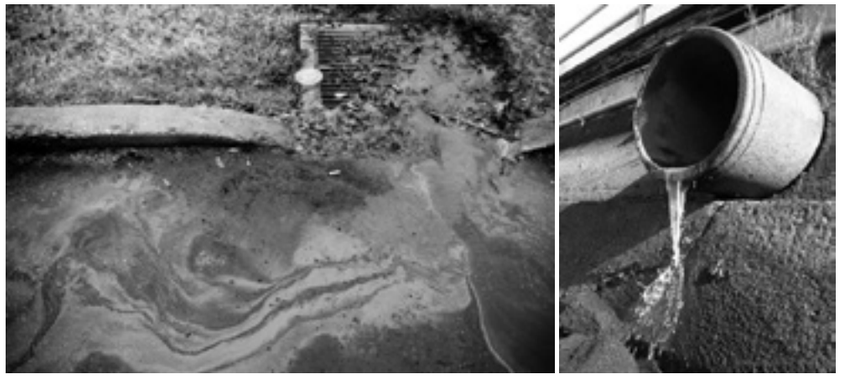
Wastewater – the water that goes down the drains in our houses and businesses – is treated by various complex processes that remove solid waste and other pollutants before it is piped into streams, rivers, or Puget Sound. In rural areas, people use septic tanks to collect household wastewater and disperse it into the ground. However, in areas close to rivers, lakes or saltwater, there have been problems with older septic tanks that don't work properly. When private septic systems fail, pollution can seep into the water.

photo courtesy of Leslie Hoge Design

A small community well in Jefferson County provides water to about 40 families.

Some local utilities are working to treat wastewater so thoroughly that it can be reused – if not to drink, at least for irrigating golf courses and parks. But just in the last few years, scientists are developing more advanced ways of measuring pollutants in wastewater. They are finding traces of the medicines we take, the personal care products we use, and even the caffeine we consume in coffee and soft drinks. Even in trace amounts, some of these substances may harm the health of fish and other creatures.

Stormwater is different from wastewater; it's the water that runs off roofs, roads, sidewalks and parking lots. The term stormwater is confusing, because it doesn't really have much to do with storms. Stormwater is created any time it rains or snows, even a little bit.



Stormwater that goes directly into rivers, streams, lakes and saltwater is a big source of water pollution that can be very harmful to fish and other creatures.

Most stormwater is piped directly into streams and rivers without any treatment to remove pollutants. This is a problem because stormwater contains pollutants such as copper that runs off roofing, and pollutants from brakes, tires, and cars that leak oil or other fluids. Untreated stormwater is the leading source of pollution in Puget Sound. When there is a heavy storm, great gushing quantities of water run off roofs and paved surfaces. The sheer quantity of it disrupts the natural flow of rivers and streams, and can wash away fish eggs and other aquatic creatures.

As our population has grown, we've had to create more regulations about stormwater. New developments – both for business and housing – are now required to keep stormwater on their property, rather than piping it into nearby lakes or rivers. To do this, new developments create ponds to collect the water that flows off roofs, sidewalks, streets and parking lots. The water then soaks slowly into the ground under the pond. Pollutants from roads and roofs are filtered by the ground under the ponds. These ponds may be completely dry during the summer, but they do their work when it rains or when snow melts.

Although new buildings are generally required to keep stormwater on site and let it soak into the ground, no one has solved the problem of all the stormwater from older developments that is still piped directly into streams and rivers.

Sustainable agriculture

Apples, cherries, pears, wheat, potatoes, hay, hops, grapes, dairy products and beef are among the many major crops in Washington's agricultural economy. The climate change forecast by experts at the University of Washington predicts that although planting times will change and water for irrigation may be challenging, farmers will be able to keep growing most of these crops for the next twenty years or so.

In fact, increases in carbon dioxide in the atmosphere can actually increase plant growth, and that may benefit farmers for some time. In the long term, though, the Washington State Department of Ecology predicts crop losses of 25% by the end of this century due to climate change – a serious problem since there will be more people to feed.

Climate change will also affect farming in other areas of our country and the world, and those changes are likely to be so big it's hard to imagine. Once the climate really starts changing, it will keep changing for a long time, so food production will have to keep moving around. Areas of the earth that are too cold to grow food now may warm up enough to be good croplands for a while, but they might also eventually get too warm, or run short of water. Whether all this happens – or how much of this happens – will depend on whether countries all over the world succeed in reducing greenhouse gas emissions soon enough to prevent massive, long-term global warming.

photo courtesy of Leslie Hoge Design

When people buy fresh food from local farmers, the food hasn't been trucked long distances. That means less gas was burned and less pollution was created.

One way people try to help reduce the danger of climate change is to consider the "carbon footprint" of the food we eat. That means thinking about how much fossil fuel it takes to get food on our tables. If we eat bananas from the Philippines, for instance, we know that they had to be shipped here from a long distance, thus increasing the amount of fuel and pollution it took to get them to us. We also need to consider how much energy went into growing, processing and packaging foods. We can reduce our carbon footprint by driving less, buying less, and recycling more.

Fertilizers, pesticides and antibiotics, when used carefully, can be a big boon to food production, but they can also be a big problem when they seep into rivers and streams, or when traces of them remain in the food we eat or in our environment.

Saving Local Farmland

photo by Scott Haydon photography, courtesy PCC Farmland Trust

Cheryl the Pig Lady and Friends farm 56 acres in the Puyallup Valley that was saved from development by PCC Farmland Trust in 2010. She produces pork, sausage, steaks, lamb, chicken and blueberries.

Your parents and grandparents can probably show you suburban housing developments or shopping areas that were farms or forests when they were kids. That's because over the years, many towns and cities have spread out, eating up farmland to make way for houses, grocery stores, schools, and gas stations.

Here's the basic problem: A farmer at the edge of a city can sell his or her land for a lot of money to someone who wants to break it up into small lots and build houses. If the farmer chooses to sell to someone who wants to farm, he will get much less for his land. The developer who builds hundreds of houses can make a lot more money than the person who wants to grow food.

This is called "development pressure," and it's led to the loss of a lot of farmland (and forests). But there are many important reasons to keep local land in farms and forests. Both provide habitat for wildlife, and open space that can absorb rain or snow. Local farms mean fresher food, and food that doesn't have to be shipped long distances using fossil fuels. Perhaps most important, farmland and forests are finite – what we lose can never be replaced. Farms and forests are also part of our state's way of life, and provide many jobs to Washington residents.

That's why our state and local governments are working to preserve farmland. There are several ways to do this. One is to buy "development rights" from farmers. This means farmers get a cash payment in exchange for a commitment to keep (or sell) their land only for the purpose of farming. Another way to preserve farmland is to create zoning that defines certain areas for agriculture only.

In many towns and cities, non-profit organizations are helping local, small, organic farmers get started and sell what they grow. There is also a lot of research at universities, and a lot of conversation between citizens and elected officials about what more we can do to preserve farmland, and include agriculture in our planning for sustainable communities.

There is more information on this topic at: www.mrsc.org/subjects/planning/farmland.aspx

This farm is in the Snoqualmie Valley in King County, and volunteers sometimes come to help with special projects or to learn how to grow food themselves.

photo by Melissa Thompson Photography, courtesy PCC Farmland Trust

photo by Melanie Conner, courtesy PCC Farmland Trust

"You have to be able to offer a future to the next generation. And you can't do that without land." – Nash Huber of Nash's Organic Produce and Delta farm.

All these issues have given rise to a movement for "sustainable agriculture," but there is a wide range of opinion about exactly what that means. Some people insist that all their food be grown without any chemical fertilizers or pesticides, and that all or nearly all of their food be grown close to where they live. They might also avoid processed food that comes in packages. While most people still don't eat that way, there is a growing recognition that the basic idea of reducing the carbon footprint of our food and reducing the amount of fertilizer and pesticides in our environment is a goal worth pursuing.

Many communities are working to preserve local farmlands. They are also encouraging community gardens, and even passing "urban agriculture" ordinances that allow people in cities and towns to keep chickens, ducks and other small livestock. These are all steps that encourage people to eat more food that is healthier for us and healthier for our environment.

More and more people grow vegetables and raise chickens in their yards because they like having really fresh food right outside their door.

photo by Leslie Hoge Design courtesy of Cat Fox

Energy production and use

About 70% of the electricity used in Washington comes from hydroelectric dams on the Columbia and Snake Rivers. These dams changed our state's landscape dramatically, and flooded the sites of many traditional Indian fishing villages. Because building dams has such a big impact, we're not likely to build any more of them, even though hydropower is considered "clean power" because it doesn't generate greenhouse gases.

Washington is also a leading producer of clean wind energy, and the number of wind turbines on hillsides in eastern and central Washington continues to grow.

But our state does still rely on some natural gas and coal to produce electricity – and, of course, gas and diesel fuel for nearly all our cars, trucks, trains, lawnmowers, farm equipment, buses and boats. Many people also burn natural gas, wood or other polluting fuels to heat homes and businesses. Older homes and buildings generally use more energy than newer ones, because newer homes are built with more insulation and windows that hold in more heat in winter and keep out more heat in summer.

Our greenhouse gas emissions in Washington are lower than the national average because we have a lot of hydropower and wind energy. Still, we use more fossil fuels and create more pollution than people in many other countries.

photo courtesy of Erik Bakke

Windy places in eastern Washington are perfect sites for windmills that produce electricity.

Creating a sustainable economy

A sustainable economy has two main features: first, it doesn't use up resources faster than nature renews them, and second, it provides the means for all people to sustain themselves – that is, to meet their basic needs for food, housing, transportation, education and health care. These are very hard tests to pass, especially with a growing population and an economy with chronic unemployment, more and more low wage jobs, and a lot of people who are stuck in part-time jobs.

photo courtesy of Leslie Hoge Design

Solar panels on the roof of this house use sunlight to produce electricity with no pollution and no monthly electrical bill.

No one has really figured out how to create an economy that meets these tests of both family and environmental sustainability – at least not yet. Local communities are working to develop new industries that create good jobs close to where people live, and encouraging people to start small businesses and to buy more locally produced goods and services. And of course people have been working for many years to improve our schools, so that more people have the education and skills to qualify for better paying jobs that can sustain a family.

But the fate of our state and local economy depends on the bigger picture of what's happening nationally and globally. We can't solve all these problems in Washington state alone, because our economy is part of a national economy and a world economy.

What we can do is keep working to find ways to make our local economies strong, so that even if bad things happen in the national or global economy, communities can rely on our own farms, businesses and consumers.

photo courtesy of Washington State Department of Ecology

Washington has one coal-fired plant that produces electricity, but it is going to change from coal to natural gas in a few years because the coal it burns causes 10% of all greenhouse gas emissions in our state.

Sustaining our heritage and cultures

In 1850, Native Americans might have suspected that the influx of European settlers would bring big changes. But it's doubtful they could have anticipated that settlers would make policies that tried to wipe out their identity as a people. Yet when Indian kids were forced to go to boarding schools and punished for speaking their own language, and when tribal religions were banned, Indians – often in secret – protected their heritage. They handed their stories and their skills down from one generation to the next for well over a century, and now their culture is experiencing a comeback. It's true that over time, a lot was lost, but the core values and ways of seeing the world survived because Indian people never let them go. Even when it would have been easier to fit in by shedding their unique identity, Indians kept being Indians. And now our whole society benefits from the insights of Indian culture, with its emphasis on "seven generation thinking" and the tribes' deep experience in how to live in harmony with the natural world.

Today, there are many cultural groups in our state and nation that also have their own languages, skills, and unique ways of seeing and caring for the earth. Like Native Americans, Latinos, Asian-Americans, African-Americans and many other cultural and ethnic groups have felt the pressure to let go of their own cultures in order to fit in with mainstream culture. But that would be a terrible loss.

It's hard for people to "walk in two worlds," as Indians call the practice of living in both their own culture and being part of mainstream culture. But challenging as it is, the people who do this have a special gift that benefits everyone. It is going to take the cultural insights and knowledge of all of us to relearn how to live in harmony with the earth. If we lose the heritage of any of our diverse cultures, we will have only a fraction of the wisdom we will need to create a truly sustainable society.

Photo courtesy Puget Sound Educational Service District

Washington is rich in cultural diversity, and that's a resource we all need to protect and value.