

Attracting and Supporting Farmers in Washington County: *Farmland Access, Availability & Resources*

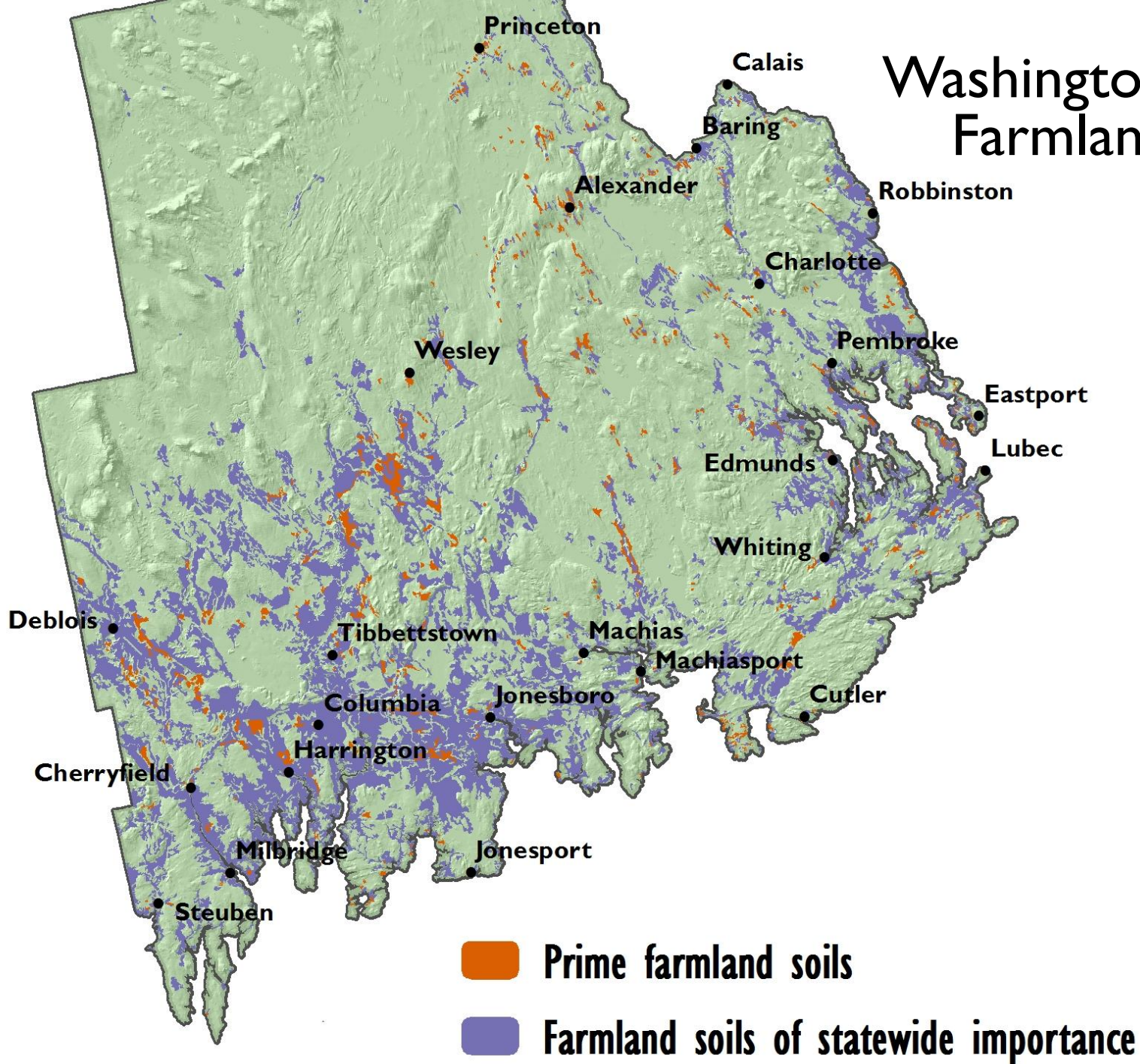
Washington County Food Summit – March 8, 2014
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Washington County's Agricultural Landscape

- 227,000 acres of farmland soils (13% of county)
- Of those soils, 9% are Prime Farmland
- Additional “unique farmland” = blueberry lands
- Total acreage of annually tilled soil is small

Washington County Farmland Soils



Washington County's Agricultural Landscape


Agricultural land uses:

- Wild blueberries
- Hay and pasture
- Tree fruits, cranberries, potatoes , mixed vegetables

Challenges

- Seasonally high water tables, thin soils, shallow depth to bedrock, acidic soils
- Lack of agricultural infrastructure
- Cost of farmland

Assets

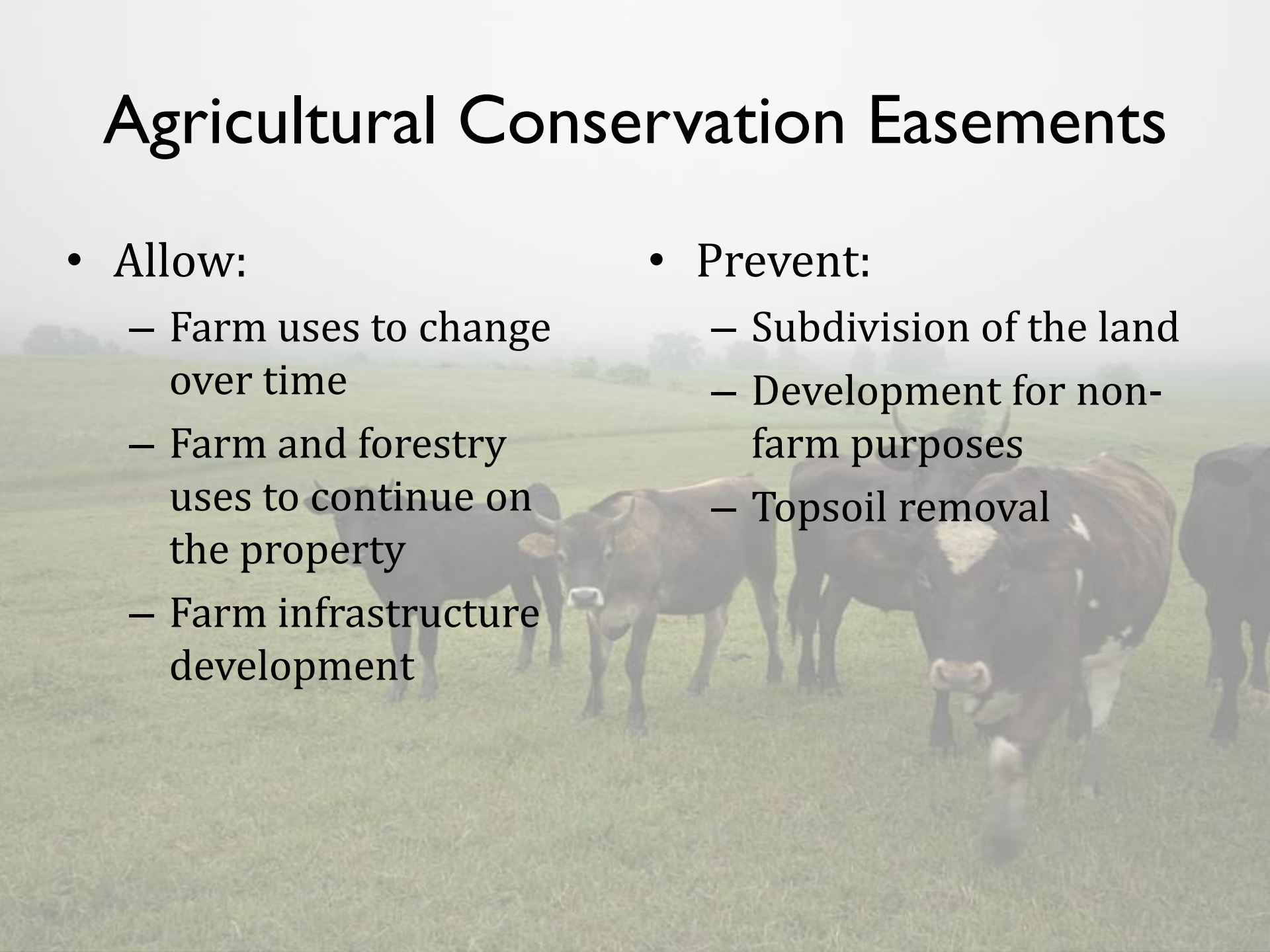
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- Community demand for locally grown food
 - Great potential to produce more local food
 - Aquifers replenish each winter



Farmland Access Programs & Resources

- Ag Easements
(Donated & Purchased)
- Buy/Protect/Sell
- FarmLink
- Farm Viability
- Maine Farms Realty
- Beginning Farmers

Agricultural Conservation Easements

- Allow:
 - Farm uses to change over time
 - Farm and forestry uses to continue on the property
 - Farm infrastructure development
 - Prevent:
 - Subdivision of the land
 - Development for non-farm purposes
 - Topsoil removal
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- A herd of cows is grazing in a green field. The cows are of various colors, including brown, black, and white. The background is a soft-focus landscape with trees and a clear sky.

Benefits to Landowners

- Preserve farmland for future generations
- Continued use of land (& ability to sell, lease, etc.)
- Can help farms grow by providing cash for investments in equipment and marketing
- Keep farmland available at appropriate farmland value



Buy/Protect/Sell

- Purchase farms, protect them, and then re-sell to farmers at 'farmland' value
- Criteria:
 - Vulnerable to development or otherwise going out of agricultural use
 - Active and viable farmland
 - Good agricultural soils
 - Size
 - Financially feasible

FarmLink

- A linking service that helps connect people who are seeking farmland “Seekers” with farmland “Owners”
- Over 100 links to date
- In Washington County - currently 7 active farmland owners (out of 124 statewide) and 59 seekers looking for land in the county (out of 195 seekers statewide)
- Washington County FarmLink “Mixer”

Alternative Tenure Options



- Short-term lease (1-5 yrs)
- Long-term lease (> 5 yrs)
- Cooperative ownership

