

## Sustainability and Community

Lopez Island, located in the Pacific Northwest, is a place to be. I moved here at the age of six with my older sister and parents. Now, twelve years later, we are farmers of Sweet Grass Farm and practicing the sustainability our island needs. It is hard to be on an island. We rely on outside importers; our local market is the main source of groceries for many families. However, our community goal is sustainability. We have fertile land, capable farmers and workers alike. We try to focus not only on island-grown food, but also sustainable housing, water systems, and garbage disposal.

Our neighbors, Horse Drawn Farms, are a produce and meat-producing farm. We ourselves raise and grass feed Wagu cattle. The Jones Family Farm provides some produce, meat, and seafood. The English teacher at our school runs a family farm with her husband: S&S Homestead Farm, where they provide almost 100% of their own food and farming materials, and teach classes in sustainability. There are still more farms and family gardens spread over the island. From a young age, islanders have grown up around sustainable agriculture, healthy food, and conscious living, all embodied in a strong sense of community. I feel more than fortunate to have had this upbringing. I will be graduating in June, 2012, and heading off into the world. I will carry a sense of self and belonging with me that our environment and community helped form. It is a gift to be around such conscious and caring people.

For years there have been small housing communities developed by the Lopez Community Land Trust for low-income families. These projects have created housing and support for many families. Recently, a new housing community was built, called Common Ground. I had the opportunity to help with the building process one summer. It is a community that is based on a net-zero goal. Their goal is to be able to produce 100% of the energy. They use sustainable architecture, solar panels, thermal hot water heaters, a wind turbine and deliberate living choices. The families are dedicated to living modestly and with the smallest environmental impact possible.

Though all this action is happening and new ideas are constantly in circulation, I fear a decline in our sustainable goals. The modern world is advancing and with it taking the foundation of homesteading, of living a modest and practical life, and understanding the impacts each individual has on the environment. It is important to our island's environment to keep our thinking clear and our future in mind as the industrial world advances and takes so many people with it. Living on Lopez has taught me the important role we all play in our communities and environments. If there is one thing that I will take away with me next year to college, it is that whatever I find and wherever I find it, my true values lie in the land, on the earth we walk on.