



Farm-to-Consumer
Legal Defense Fund®

Farm Stand Forced to Close

By Kristen Michaelis – January 5, 2012

FoodRenegade.com

San Juan County in Washington State did the indefensible. They closed a farm stand that had been in operation for more than two and a half years. Was it because health inspectors found unsafe food being sold? No. Perhaps it was because the farm didn't have the proper permits to sell food? No.

It's because the county recently decided that since the farm stand was "open to the public," it had to meet commercial building requirements. Of course, when the [Jones Family Farm](#) first erected their on-farm stand, they were told by the county planning department that they were exempt from commercial building requirements.

Under the new interpretation of the law, any artist studio, home church, or any private building that is advertised as open to the public is also in violation of the law. But is the county going after them?

Nick and Sarah Jones believe the county is singling them out because of the caprice of individual code enforcement officers.

According to a [press release](#) the couple issued on November 18th:

Compliance would cost us tens of thousands of dollars, as well as consuming vast amounts of time. However, neither Mr. Laws (the code enforcement officer) nor Mr. Geniuch (the building official) is willing to tell us what exactly we need to do in order to comply before we submit a permit and commit to carrying out all required improvements. Our elected officials inform us that they have no capacity to protect us from these officials. We have neither the financial ability nor the desire to write a blank check to conform to pointless standards.

So, on November 30th, the Jones Family Farm was open to the public for the last time.

The farm stand was a quaint, 200-square foot building located near the road, a self-service facility selling pasture-based meats and freshly caught seafood on the honor system. For nearly two and a half years, the system worked smoothly and made neighbors feel welcome.

This is not the first time the farm has faced harassment by local officials.

The Jones' report:

We have been criminally prosecuted for having livestock escape (finally dropped after 10 lost work days and \$2000 in lawyer fees), informed by Paul Turner, deputy fire marshal that we need to mow standing grass to avoid "fire risk" (standing grass is otherwise known as cow food, and as such is an economic asset for us), turned in for placing a travel trailer on our own property (not, actually against the law), we are continually harassed by Betsy Wingren, the county health inspector, mostly with pointless, time consuming demands to replicate and triplicate documentation we already provide to state and federal health authorities (Ms. Wingren provided the complaint to the planning department that has resulted in our farm-stand closing), just as a sampling.

In closing the stand [the farm continues to sell its products at other venues], the Jones' family lost a significant portion of their income, but they felt it was better than continuing a losing battle with county officials.



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We operate an organic farm, we produce, award winning, healthful, carbon neutral food. We employ between 5-10 people year round. We bring hundreds of thousands of dollars into the county annually. We pay all our taxes, we donate to community organizations, we sit on committees, commissions and boards, we collaborate with environmental groups to address real resource issues, we innovate to address real safety and health issues, we host regular free, open houses, pig roasts and farm tours. In turn we are treated as criminals, earth rapers and endless piggy banks by San Juan County, Washington State and the federal government.

Even though the Jones family has closed its farm stand, they have issued a challenge to fellow citizens to "express [their] views on these issues loudly, politely, insistently and indefatigably to our elected officials."

Is it fair for laws to be interpreted so arbitrarily? Is it fair that individual code enforcement officers have enough authority to single-handedly shut down the public face of a family farm?

Watch the [video](#) for a look inside the story; it's posted at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XTgVWs4QNVs>

If you want to take Nick Jones up on his challenging call to action, you may contact the local officials below.

Contact Information:

Jamie Stephens
County Council Member for Lopez Island
(360) 378-2898
jamies@sanjuanco.com

Other San Juan County Council Members:
<http://www.co.san-juan.wa.us/council/AboutTheCouncil.aspx>

Kristen Michaelis (aka "Food Renegade"), a wife and homeschooling mom, is also a nutrition & wellness coach and developer of the online course, Beautiful Babies. As a rebel with a cause, she created the Food Renegade Blog and organized "Fight Back Fridays". Visit www.foodrenegade.com and Facebook Fan Page; you can also follow Twitter [@FoodRenegade](#).

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Hyperlinks for the PDF

Jones Family Farm – farm website = <http://jffarms.com/>

press release – *Orcas Issues*, “Guest Column: County Shuts Down Jones’ Lopez Farm Stand”,
18 November 2011 = <http://orcasisues.com/guest-column-county-shuts-down-jones-lopez-farm-stand>

video – “Lopez Island: Jones Family Farm”, YouTube post 7 December 2011 =
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XTgVWs4QNVs>

<http://www.co.san-juan.wa.us/council/AboutTheCouncil.aspx> – webpage, San Juan County Council

nutrition & wellness coach – Food Renegade webpage, “Coaching” =
<http://www.foodrenegade.com/about/coaching/>

Beautiful Babies – homepage for online = <http://www.foodrenegade.com/babies/>

Food Renegade Blog – website = <http://www.foodrenegade.com/>

Fight Back Fridays – Food Renegade webpage =
<http://www.foodrenegade.com/about/fight-back-fridays/>

Facebook Fan Page – Food Renegade wall =
<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Food-Renegade/136268393083419>