



Washington State Conservation Commission

Meeting Packet

May 19 & 20, 2021

****Held virtually due to COVID-19****

Lacey, WA, 98503

*“To conserve natural resources on all lands in Washington,
in collaboration with conservation districts and partners.”*

Agency 2022-2027 Strategic Planning Session

May 19, 2021	8:30 am – 2:00 pm	Hosted on Zoom: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86503945510?pwd=TFBXVXhPZEVldlZKSzI0OTZ2ejFzUT09 Meeting ID: 865 0394 5510 Passcode: 355968
Meeting objective: Finalize goals for our long-range plan.		

	Start	Min	Topic	Process/Activity	Who
1	8:30	5	Welcome and Call to Order	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roll call 	Chairman Longrie
2	8:35	5	Opening Comments and Planning Timeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overview of where we are in our planning process and objective for today 	Carol Smith
3	8:40	10	Setting Our Course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review today's agenda Quick recap of planning terminology 	Laura Johnson
4	8:50	45	Voluntary Conservation of Natural Resources – Proposed Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation of goals proposed by staff Discussion, questions, and potential revisions Suggested stakeholders to engage for feedback? 	Jon Culp Commission members
5	9:35	45	Agricultural and Working Lands Viability and Food System Support – Proposed Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation of goals proposed by staff Discussion, questions, and potential revisions Suggested stakeholders to engage for feedback? 	Kate Delavan Commission members
6	10:20	15	BREAK		
7	10:35	45	Climate Resiliency – Proposed Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation of goals proposed by staff Discussion, questions, and potential revisions Suggested stakeholders to engage for feedback? 	Alison Halpern Commission members
8	11:20	45	Governance and Accountability – Proposed Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation of goals proposed by staff Discussion, questions, and potential revisions Suggested stakeholders to engage for feedback? 	Shana Joy Commission members
9	12:05	30	BREAK		
10	12:35	45	Leadership, Partnership, and Collaboration – Proposed Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation of goals proposed by staff Discussion, questions, and potential revisions Suggested stakeholders to engage for feedback? 	Ron Shultz Commission members
11	1:20	20	Final Review of Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recap and discussion 	Laura Johnson Commission members
12	1:40	10	Next Steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review work ahead in our planning process 	Laura Johnson

13	1:50	45	Information: Policy & Programs	2a. Legislative Update 2b. Update on Sustainable Farms and Fields Shellfish Grants Program 2c. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Work Plan 2d. Schuster Conservation Easement Update	Ron Shultz Allison Halpern Kate Delavan Kate Delavan
14	2:35	45	Information: District Operations	2e. Regional Manager Report 2f. CAPP Preliminary Report 2g. Center for Technical Development Update	Mike Baden Shana Joy Meeting packet item
15	3:10	10	Closing Comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Comments	Carol Smith and Chair Longrie
16	3:20	ADJOURN – Chair Longrie			

The following documents are informational memos to be presented during the Strategic Planning Session on May 19, 2021, to allow for more time during the May 20, 2021 SCC Business Meeting.



Washington State Conservation Commission

May 19, 2021

TO: Conservation Commission Members
Carol Smith, SCC Executive Director

FROM: Ron Shultz, WSCC Policy Director

SUBJECT: Legislative Update from 2021 Legislative Session

Action Item

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Informational Item

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Summary:

The 2021 Legislature completed their session on April 25. They completed a significant amount of work, including the passage of the 2021-23 operating and capital budgets, a significant carbon reduction bill, and legislation relating to environmental justice. The information in this memo is a review of what passed this session and an opportunity for the Commission to discuss the session and thoughts on next steps over the interim in preparation for the 2022 Legislative Session.

Requested Action (if action item):

No action requested. Discussion item only.

Staff Contact:

Ron Shultz, WSCC Policy Director rshultz@scc.wa.gov (360) 790-5994

Background and Discussion:

The 2021 Legislative Session was a long, 105-day session with the primary focus being passage of budget bills for the operating, capital, and transportation budgets for the 2021-23 biennium. This session was particularly unusual in the manner in which it was conducted. Due to the COVID pandemic, meetings and committee hearings were conducted remotely. Although things seemed to function smoothly, one result of the new methods of remote communication was it slowed the legislative process. As a result, many bills didn't pass simply because the legislature ran out of time. Another challenge in this new process is it was difficult to get information on what was happening. In a normal year, we could be at the Legislative Building working the hallways and collecting information through passing meetings. This wasn't the case this year and it made it difficult to learn what was really going on behind the scenes.

Despite these challenges, the Legislature was able to accomplish a great deal of work. They passed the 2021-23 operating and capital budgets. The transportation budget remains to be passed and a special session may be needed. In policy, the legislature passed significant bills relating to a capital gains tax, the Climate Commitment Act creating a “cap and invest” program, policing reform, and environmental equity and justice legislation.

2021-23 Operating and Capital Budgets

The primary task of the 2021 Session is the passage of the 2021-23 operating and capital budgets. Thankfully they were able to accomplish this task without resorting to a special session.

In April 2020, things didn't look so good for the state's budget. Due to the COVID pandemic and the closure of business activity the estimates of a revenue shortfall for the state were as high as \$8 billion dollars for the three year period from FY 20 through FY 23. Fortunately, Washington's gig economy is more resilient than most states as much of our economic activity in the area of software and tech work can be done remotely. So over time, revenue projections continued to improve.

Finally, in March 2021 the State Revenue Forecast Council projected revenues for the 2021-23 biennium at 8.2% over projects. A significant increase over the dismal picture the year before.

That said, there was still enough of a shortfall for the last fiscal year of our current 2019-21 biennium that the legislature did take the proposed 15% reductions from state agencies. The Commission is familiar with this reduction from prior meetings and familiar with the SCC staff proposals for achieving these reductions without impacting conservation districts.

2021-23 Operating Budget

Commission members have previously seen the comparison tables prepared by SCC staff regarding the 2021-23 operating budget. The document is attached to this memo for further reference. This information is provided as a high level overview. Sarah Groth will be reviewing our budget in much greater detail at the Commission's business meeting.

Some topics worth noting:

- The budget increases the SCC operating base-budget (budget minus provisos) over the previous biennium. This increase included the “Orca and Salmon” funding received in the current biennium as a proviso.
- Funded was added for conservation district Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA).
- Wildfire recovery funding was added.

- Specific proviso funding supports SCC efforts in the Food Policy Forum and the Pollinator Task Force recommendation implementation.
- Soil Health efforts were moved to Toxics Account funding.
- VSP was fully funded from the Public Works Account.

2021-23 Capital Budget

The Commission's 2021-23 capital budget isn't all that we had hoped for. Funding for the CREP program is lower than requested and will create some challenges in implementing the program. Shellfish funding was also reduced, as was funding for the Irrigation Efficiencies program. A bright spot was support for the RCPP programs across the state.

Again, Sarah will go over the details of the budget at the Commission's regular business meeting. In the meantime, the capital budget comparison table is attached.

Other Budget Items of Interest

Attached is a document describing funding at other agencies for implementation of programs of interest to conservation districts and the Commission. As you can see from the list, there are several issues funded that will include the engagement of local conservation districts, such as wolf activity, as well as Commission engagement, such as the net ecological gain discussions.

Legislation Interest in the 2021 Session

If you've been following the legislation status reports in the weekly Friday Updates, you're aware there are several bills of interest passing this session. In brief, here's the list of bills which passed. Many have been signed by the Governor, others are still waiting for signature. Since most bills were passed at the end of session, the Governor has 20 days to sign or veto the bills. The last day for Governor signature is May 18.

Please see the attached list and brief description of the bills of interest.



Washington State
Conservation Commission

2021-2023 Proposed Operating Budgets

Proposed Operating Budgets by Fiscal Year

	<u>2019-21 Biennium</u>	<u>Governor Proposal</u>	<u>House Proposed</u>	<u>Senate Proposed</u>	<u>Compromise</u>
FY 2020 Operating – excluding provisos	7,275,000				
FY 2021 Operating – excluding provisos	7,384,000	7,187,000*	7,187,000**	7,242,000**	7,187,000**
FY 2022 Operating – excluding provisos		7,669,000	8,016,000	8,013,000	8,081,000
FY 2023 Operating – excluding provisos		7,647,000	7,995,000	8,033,000	8,083,000
Toxics Account		1,110,000	1,110,000	1,000,000	1,110,000

* = FY2021 Governor proposed 15% reduction.

** = FY2021 House, Senate, and compromise proposed supplemental reduction.

Proposed Operating Details

	<u>WSCC Request</u>	<u>Governor Proposal</u>	<u>House Proposed</u>	<u>Senate Proposed</u>	<u>Compromise</u>
Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA)	5,000,000	n/f	n/f	5,000,000	2,000,000
Food Policy Forum	600,000	458,000	458,000	340,000	340,000
Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP)	8,462,000	8,410,000	8,448,000	8,450,000	8,450,000
Wildfire Recovery	n/r	n/r	3,000,000	n/f	3,000,000
Okanogan Water Bank	n/r	n/r	125,000	n/f	125,000
Meat & Poultry Inspection (if 5045 passes)	n/r	n/r	n/r	4,262,000	n/f
Pollinator Health (if 5253 passes)	n/r	n/r	n/r	27,000	27,000
Agency Savings	n/r	(204,000)	n/f	(204,000)	n/f
Temporary Layoffs and Other Savings	n/r	(229,000)	n/f	n/f	n/f
General Wage Increase Reduction	n/r	(156,000)	n/f	n/f	n/f

NOTE: n/r = not requested n/f = not funded

Budget Provisos and Agency Detail

Compromise Operating Budget Agency Detail:

1. Pollinator Health - Funding is provided for implementing the provisions of 2SSB 5253 (pollinator health). (General Fund-State)
2. Agricultural Water Bank - One-time funding is provided for an agreement with the Department of Ecology for a water bank to retain agricultural water rights in Okanogan County, and a report on the effectiveness of the water bank. (General Fund-State)
3. Food Policy Forum Implementation - The 2020 Legislature established the Food Policy Forum with the passage of Chapter 246, Laws of 2020 (SSB 6091). The legislation directed the State Conservation Commission and Department of Agriculture to staff the forum which is created to improve the state's food system. Additional ongoing funding is provided to hire a facilitator and staff the forum. (General Fund-State)
4. Conservation District Support - Ongoing funding is provided to increase the capacity of conservation districts to assist landowners achieve environmental stewardship and agricultural sustainability. (General Fund-State)
5. Sustainable Farms & Fields Program - One-time private/local spending authority is provided for the Sustainable Farms and Fields program created in RCW 89.08.615. (General Fund-Local)
6. Shift Soil Health Initiative - Funding to administer the Soil Health Initiative is shifted from the state general fund to the Model Toxics Control Operating Account on an ongoing basis to preserve state general fund dollars. (General Fund-State; Model Toxics Control Operating Account-State)
7. Wildfire Recovery Grants - One-time funding is provided for conservation district technical assistance, project cultural resources review, engineering, and cost-share grants to landowners for recovery from wildfire damage. (General Fund-State)

Compromise Operating Budget Agency Provisos:

- (1) \$100,000 of the general fund—private/local appropriation is provided solely for the sustainable farms and fields program created in RCW 89.08.615.
- (2) \$1,500,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2022 and \$1,500,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2023 are provided solely for conservation district technical assistance, project cultural resources review, project engineering, agency administration, and cost-share grants to landowners for recovery from wildfire damage, including, but not limited to, rebuilding fences, seeding unstable slopes, controlling weeds, and planting shrubs and trees for wildlife habitat.
- (3) \$85,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2022 and \$40,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2023 are

provided solely for the commission to:

(a) Enter into an agreement with the department of ecology for a water bank in Okanogan county, which must focus solely on retaining agricultural water rights for use by other agricultural producers in the watershed of origin; and

(b) Report to the appropriate committees of the legislature by December 31, 2022, on the effectiveness of the Okanogan water bank at retaining agricultural water rights, and the potential for developing additional water banks in Washington using this model.

(4) \$8,450,000 of the public works assistance account—state 1 appropriation is provided solely for implementation of the voluntary stewardship program. This amount may not be used to fund agency indirect and administrative expenses.

(5) \$170,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2022 and \$170,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2023 are provided solely for the commission to continue to convene and facilitate a food policy forum.

(6) \$1,000,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2022 and \$1,000,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2023 are provided solely for the commission to share evenly with conservation districts to increase assistance to landowners to achieve environmental stewardship and agricultural sustainability.

(7) \$23,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2022 and \$4,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2023 are provided solely for the implementation of Second Substitute Senate Bill No. 5253 (pollinator health). If the bill is not enacted by June 30, 2021, the amounts provided in this subsection shall lapse.



Washington State
Conservation Commission

Proposed 2021-23 Capital Budget Proposals

	<u>Current 2019-2021 Appropriation</u>	<u>WSCC Request</u>	<u>Governor Proposal</u>	<u>House Proposal</u>	<u>Senate Proposal</u>	<u>Reapprop Actual</u>	<u>Compromise</u>
Natural Resource Investments (NRI)	4,000,000*	11,905,000	7,000,000	3,500,000	4,000,000		4,000,000
Reappropriation 2019-21				2,367,000	2,367,000	2,111,756	2,367,000
CREP (Cost Share & TA)	3,700,000*	7,725,000	6,000,000	4,250,000	3,700,000		4,000,000
CREP Cost Share 2017-19 Reappropriation				1,553,000	1,553,000		1,553,000
CREP Cost Share 2019-21 Reappropriation				1,800,000	1,800,000	384,000	1,800,000
CREP Contract 2019-21 Reappropriation				629,000	529,000	516,973	629,000
CREP PIP Loan		100,000*	500,000	160,000	160,000		160,000
Reappropriation 2019-21				100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000
Reappropriation 2017-19				350,000	350,000	318,828	350,000
Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)							
	6,249,000*	9,762,000	7,000,000	7,000,000	4,000,000		7,000,000
Reappropriation 2019-21				5,123,000	5,123,000	4,953,334	5,123,000
Reappropriation 2017-19				3,033,000	3,033,000	0	3,033,000
Shellfish	4,000,000**	4,000,000	4,000,000	3,500,000	4,000,000		3,500,000
Reappropriation 2019-21				1,970,000	1,970,000	1,540,205	1,970,000
Irrigation Efficiencies	4,000,000*	4,000,000	4,000,000	1,000,000	4,000,000		2,000,000
Reappropriation 2019-21				3,880,000	3,880,000	3,880,000	3,880,000
Ranch and Farmland Preservation Projects – Reappropriation				4,662,000	4,662,000	4,671,473	4,662,000

* Does not include reappropriation.

** Does not include reappropriation. Current 2019-2021 Shellfish appropriation is \$3,000,000 unrestricted and \$1,000,000 restricted for the North Cove Project.

Budget Provisos and Agency Detail

Compromise Capital Budget Provisos:

CREP:

- (1) \$2,000,000 of the appropriation is provided solely for technical assistance to private landowners.
- (2) \$250,000 of the appropriation is provided solely for a targeted riparian buffer incentive project (Mount Vernon).

NRI & Shellfish:

Up to five percent of the appropriation provided may be used by the conservation commission to acquire services of licensed engineers for project development, predesign and design services, and construction oversight for natural resource investment/shellfish projects.

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House Capital Budget Provisos:

CREP:

- (1) \$2,000,000 of the appropriation is provided solely for technical assistance to private landowners.
- (2) \$250,000 of the appropriation is provided solely for a targeted riparian buffer incentive project (Mount Vernon).

NRI & Shellfish:

Up to five percent of the appropriation provided may be used by the conservation commission to acquire services of licensed engineers for project development, predesign and design services, and construction oversight for natural resource investment/shellfish projects.

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Senate Capital Budget Provisos:

CREP:

- (1) \$2,000,000 of the appropriation is provided solely for technical assistance to private landowners.
- (2) Up to 3% of the appropriation may be used for the commission to administer the grant or loan program.

NRI & Shellfish:

- (1) Up to three percent of the appropriation provided may be used for the agency to administer the grant or loan program.

(2) Up to five percent of the appropriation provided may be used by the conservation commission to acquire services of licensed engineers for project development, predesign and design services, and construction oversight for natural resource investment/shellfish projects.

Governor's Proposed Capital Provisos:

NRI & Shellfish:

(1) Up to three percent of the appropriation provided may be used for the agency to administer the grant or loan program.

(2) Up to five percent of the appropriation provided may be used by the conservation commission to acquire services of licensed engineers for project development, predesign and design services, and construction oversight for natural resource investment/shellfish projects.

CREP:

(1) \$2,000,000 of the appropriation is provided solely for technical assistance to private landowners.

(2) Up to three percent of the appropriation may be used for the commission to administer the grant or loan program.

NOTE: The governor's budget included an appropriation of \$6,000,000 for the 2021-23 Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program for a 50-50 split between the technical assistance and project cost share to private landowners. The SCC requested that the allocation in the proviso language for technical assistance be increased from \$2,000,000 to \$3,000,000 to meet the intent of the funding.

Irrigation Efficiencies:

(1) Up to three percent of the appropriation may be used for the commission to administer the grant or loan program.

Bills Passing This Session of Interest to the WSCC

SHB 1080 Capital budget bill.

Summary: Implements capital funding for the 2021-23 biennium. See the WSCC Capital Budget Comparison Table for details.

HB 1143 Walla Walla banked water to trust water. Gov signed April 21.

Summary: Provides that a water right banked with the Walla Walla Pilot Local Water Management Program must, upon request of the water right holder, be accepted by the Department of Ecology as a temporary trust water right donation for a period of up to two years.

The Walla Walla Conservation District was involved in the water management program and will be one of the key implementers of this provision.

2SHB 1168 DNR long-term forest health and reduction of wildfire dangers.

Summary:

- Creates the Wildfire Response, Forest Restoration, and Community Resilience Account (Account) to fund certain wildfire preparedness, prevention, and protection activities.
- Requires the DNR to:
 - implement a variety of wildfire preparedness, prevention, and forest health initiatives including increasing coordination with various entities,
 - developing a forest health work force,
 - providing an aviation support program,
 - creating a small forest landowner forest health program, and
 - exploring and developing markets for woody biomass residuals from forest health treatments.
- Directs the DNR to hire a third-party contractor to assist in updating the forest health inventory and advise the DNR's growth and yield monitoring before the 2025-2034 sustainable harvest calculation is determined.
- Requires the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee to review and report on the development of the sustainable harvest calculation.

E2SHB 1216 Concerning urban and community forestry. House concurred in Senate amendments.

Summary:

- Changes the name of the Community and Urban Forestry Program administered by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to the Urban and Community Forestry Program.

- Directs the DNR to conduct analyses of the needs and opportunities related to urban forestry in Washington.
- Directs the DNR to provide technical assistance and capacity building resources and opportunities in order to promote urban and community forestry.

E2SHB 1382 Streamlining the environmental permitting process for salmon recovery projects. Apr 16 Gov signed. Effective 7/25/21

Summary:

- Creates the Habitat Recovery Pilot Program (pilot program) for habitat restoration projects that meet certain criteria.
- To qualify, an environmental restoration project must directly benefit freshwater, estuarine, or marine fish, or the habitat they rely on.
- The project must be included on a list of projects reviewed, approved, or funded by one of a list of restoration programs listed in the bill. Although the list does not specifically include SCC funded projects, many of the fund sources are those conservation districts received funding from.
- A permit under the pilot program is required for any project that meets the criteria for inclusion and would otherwise be required to obtain an HPA. Exempts qualifying projects from certain permitting processes.
- Establishes a multi-agency, and Tribal consultation and review process for pilot program projects.

ESSB 5092 Operating budget bill.

Summary: Implements operating funding for the 2021-23 biennium. See the WSCC Operating Budget Comparison Table for details.

E2SSB 5126 Washington Climate Commitment Act.

Summary:

1. Cap and Invest Program. Ecology must implement a GHG emissions cap and invest program (program) to reduce GHG emissions consistent with the statewide emissions limits. The program must track, verify, and enforce compliance through the use of compliance instruments.
2. Exemptions. Regardless of reporting requirements, the emissions exempt from coverage include motor vehicle and special fuel used for agricultural purposes by a farm user.
3. Environmental Justice Review. Ecology must conduct an environmental justice review every two years, beginning in 2023, to ensure the cap and invest program achieves reductions in criteria pollutants as well as GHG emissions in overburdened communities highly impacted by air pollution.
4. Environmental Justice Assessment. When allocating funds or administering grants funded by any of the program accounts, agencies must conduct an environmental justice assessment and establish a minimum of not less than 35 percent, and a goal of 40 percent, of total investments to provide direct and meaningful benefits to vulnerable populations within overburdened communities.

5. Environmental Justice Council. The Environmental Justice Council, established under E2SSB 5141, must provide recommendations to the Legislature, agencies, and the Governor on the development and implementation of the cap and invest program, and programs funded from the auction revenues.
6. Tribal Consultation. Before allocating funding or administer grant programs funded from the Climate Investment Account, agencies must offer consultation with federally recognized tribes on all funding decisions that may impact, infringe upon or impair the governmental efforts of federally recognized tribes to adopt or enforce their own standards governing, or protect the tribe's resources or other rights and interests in their tribal lands and lands within which a tribe or tribes possess rights reserved by treaty.
7. Governance Structure. The Governor must establish a governance structure to implement the state's climate commitment to provide accountability for achieving the state's emission limits, establish a coordinated and strategic statewide approach to climate resilience, build an equitable and inclusive clean energy economy, and ensure the government provides clear policy and requirements, financial tools, and other mechanisms to support achieving those limits.
8. Small Forestland Owner Work Group. The Department of Natural Resources must contract with a Washington nonprofit that can demonstrate a membership of at least 1000 small forestland owners and promotes the sustainable stewardship of family forestland to establish and implement a small forestland owner work group.
9. Carbon Emissions Reduction Account. The CER Account is created in the state treasury and is subject to appropriation. The deposits to the CER Account are as follows:
 - \$127,341,000 for FY 2023;
 - \$356,697,000 for FY 2024;
 - \$366,558,000 for FY 2025; and
 - \$359,117,000 each year for fiscal years 2026 through 2037.

Climate Investment Account. The CI Account is created in the state treasury, and all receipts from the auction of allowances must be deposited there, unless otherwise specified. The state treasurer must distribute the funds in the CI Account as follows:

- 75 percent to the Climate Commitment Account; and
- 25 percent to the Natural Climate Solutions Account.

The Climate Commitment Account. The Climate Commitment Account is created in the state treasury and is subject to appropriation. Projects, activities, and programs eligible for funding from the account must be physically located in Washington State and include the following:

- achieve energy efficiency or emission reduction in the agricultural sector, including grants, loans or financial incentives for eligible funds uses under the Sustainable Farms and Fields Grant Program

Natural Climate Solutions Account. The Natural Climate Solutions Account is created in the state treasury subject to appropriation. Moneys in the account are intended to increase the resilience of the state's waters, forests, and other vital ecosystems to the

impacts of climate change, conserve working forestlands at the risk of conversion, and increase their carbon pollution reduction capacity through sequestration, storage, and overall ecosystem integrity. Moneys in the account must be spent in a manner consistent with existing and future assessments of climate risks and resilience from the scientific community and expressed concerns of and impacts to overburdened communities.

Moneys may be allocated for the following purposes:

- Clean water investments that improve resilience from climate impacts, and funding must be used to:
 1. restore and protects estuaries, fisheries, and marine shoreline habitats, and prepare for sea level rise including making fish passage correction investments;
 2. increase carbon storage in the ocean or aquatic and coastal ecosystems;
 3. remediate and adapt to impacts of ocean acidification;
 4. reduce flood risk and restore natural floodplain;
 5. increase sustainable supply of water and improve aquatic habitat;
 6. improve stormwater infrastructure;
 7. preserve or increase carbon sequestration in forests, forested wetland, agricultural soils, tidally influence agricultural or grazing lands, or freshwater, saltwater, or brackish aquatic lands; or
 8. preserve or establish, or both, carbon sequestration by protecting or planting trees in marine shorelines and freshwater riparian areas sufficient to promote climate resilience, protect cold water fisheries, and achieve water quality standards;

Healthy forest investments to improve resilience from climate impacts, and funding must be used for projects and activities that will:

1. increase forest and community resilience to wildfire; improve forest health; or prevent emissions through preserving natural lands from the threat of conversion to development, through actions that include assistance programs such as the forest riparian easement program and the family forest fish passage program.
2. It is the intent of the Legislature that no less than \$10 million per biennium from Natural Climate Solutions Account be expended for the Forestry Riparian Easement Program or for riparian easement projects funded under the Agricultural Conservation Easements Program, or similar riparian enhancement programs.

E2SSB 5141 Implementing the recommendations of the environmental justice task force.

Summary:

- Environmental Justice in State Agency Activities. The departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Ecology, Health, Natural Resources, and Transportation and the Puget

Sound Partnership (covered agencies) must apply and comply with specified environmental justice requirements with respect to agency activities.

- Other state agencies are encouraged to apply the principles of environmental justice in applying state laws and agency rules and policies, and are authorized to opt in to the environmental justice requirements applicable to covered agencies.
- Environmental Justice in Strategic Plans. Each covered agency must include an environmental justice implementation plan within the agency's strategic plan, by January 1, 2023.
- Community Engagement. Covered agencies must create and adopt a community engagement plan by July 1, 2022, that describes planned engagement with overburdened communities and vulnerable populations, and that identifies and prioritizes overburdened communities for purposes of implementing the agency's environmental justice responsibilities.
- Environmental Justice Relating to Budgets and Funding. Each covered agency must incorporate environmental justice principles into decision processes for budget development, expenditures, and granting or withholding benefits.

ESB 5220 Concerning taxation of salmon recovery grants. Apr 26 Gov signed.

Effective date 7/25/21

Summary:

- A retail sales tax exemption is provided for a qualifying grant made by federal, state, tribal, and local governments for salmon habitat restoration. The existing B&O tax exemption is expanded to include grants received by a nonprofit organization from tribal governments.
- A salmon recovery grant includes financial assistance provided to primarily benefit the public as a whole by renewing, restoring, or protecting salmon ecosystems or habitats by human intervention.

SSB 5230 Concerning agreements for allocation of ground water resulting from BOR projects. May 3 Gov signed. Effective date 7/25/21

Summary:

- Provides that agreements with the United States for the allocation of Columbia Basin Project ground waters will be used to allocate ground water within an established ground water area or subarea.
- Provides that these agreements fulfill the requirements of the Ground water Code for determinations of the availability of public ground water.

2SSB 5253 Implementing the recommendations of the pollinator health task force.

Summary:

- Reestablishes the Pollinator Health Task Force to assist with implementation of the prior task force's recommendations and the pollinator health strategy.

- Requires the Department of Agriculture to submit an implementation plan for the implementation of the pollinator health strategy to the Legislature by December 31, 2021.
- Implements various recommendations from the 2020 Pollinator Health Task Force report to the Legislature.
- The Commission must establish a small grants program, subject to the availability of amounts appropriated, to provide funding to conservation districts to educate residents and community groups in urban, suburban, and rural nonfarm areas about the value of pollinator habitat for both managed and native pollinators.

SSB 5273 Concerning the replacement of shoreline armoring.

Summary:

- When replacing residential marine shoreline stabilization or armoring, a person must use the least impacting technically feasible bank protection alternative for the protection of fish life. A hard armor technique should only be proposed after considering site characteristics including the threat to major improvements, wave energy, and other factors in an alternative's analysis.
- For the replacement of residential marine shoreline stabilization or armoring, "feasible" means available and capable of being done after taking into consideration cost, existing technology, and logistics in light of overall project purposes.



Washington State Conservation Commission

May 19, 2021

TO: Conservation Commission Members
Carol Smith, SCC Executive Director

FROM: Kate Delavan, Farmland Preservation Coordinator
on behalf of SCC Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Working Group

SUBJECT: DEI Work Plan

Action Item	<input type="checkbox"/>
Informational Item	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Summary:

The Conservation Commission is a public entity with a statutory duty to ensure conservation practices, projects, and programs are available in all areas of the state for the benefit of all people. The Conservation Commission bears responsibility for making the best possible effort to provide equitable and inclusive services that meet the needs of Washingtonians, our natural resources, and our working lands. To that end, Conservation Commission staff are developing a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) work plan to guide efforts to advance DEI within the agency.

Staff Contact:

Carol Smith, Executive Director, csmith@scc.wa.gov

Background and Discussion:

SCC staff met informally to discuss DEI over the summer of 2020, made time available during our weekly staff meetings for DEI discussions, and formed a DEI Working Group (Working Group) in November 2020. The purpose of the Working Group is to explore how the Conservation Commission can equitably and inclusively fulfill our mission and statutory duties; advance DEI through our policies, programs, and procedures; and support personal and professional DEI learning opportunities for staff. The Working Group currently meets monthly. Staff volunteered to participate and the Working Group includes cross-functional representation.

The following understanding was informed by lessons learned from our partners and guides the Working Group:

- None of us are experts on DEI.
- Additional resources will be necessary to identify and articulate our approach and actions.

- DEI work is a journey with learning along the way, it is not a destination.
- The journey is a marathon; it is not a sprint.
- Mistakes will be made and that's ok.

As with any long-term effort, it can be helpful to assess current status in order to set a reference point, inform planning efforts, and track changes and progress over time. In winter/spring of 2021, the Working Group gathered feedback from staff to assess perspectives, needs, and desires related to DEI. Through this process the Working Group learned:

- Staff would like to facilitate and participate in conversations and opportunities for learning that are respectful, welcoming, and transparent.
- Staff want to:
 - Focus on what unites us
 - Allow for a diversity of perspectives
 - Meet people where they are
 - Use data
 - Use simple language
 - Show how DEI relates to conservation and agriculture
 - Listen and respond to the needs of conservation districts
 - Provide voluntary resources to support conservation districts
- Staff do not want to:
 - Point fingers
 - Place blame
- Staff have varying exposure to formal and informal training. Staff requested additional DEI trainings and resources.

The next step for the Working Group is to develop a DEI work plan. Work plan activities will likely include:

- Creation of a Working Group charter that will include member terms to allow additional staff to participate on a voluntary basis
- Identification of training resources and the method for sharing across the agency
- Creation of DEI definitions with a conservation and agricultural lens
- Identification of funding needs to support:
 - Agency resources (e.g. tailored training, DEI audit/assessment, translation services)
 - District resources (e.g. small grant program to support DEI resources, translations services)
- Identification of how to align and coordinate with the newly formed Office of Equity

Recommended Action:

None – information only.

Despite these challenges, the Legislature was able to accomplish a great deal of work. They passed the 2021-23 operating and capital budgets. The transportation budget remains to be passed and a special session may be needed. In policy, the legislature passed significant bills relating to a capital gains tax, the Climate Commitment Act creating a “cap and invest” program, policing reform, and environmental equity and justice legislation.

2021-23 Operating and Capital Budgets

The primary task of the 2021 Session is the passage of the 2021-23 operating and capital budgets. Thankfully they were able to accomplish this task without resorting to a special session.

In April 2020, things didn't look so good for the state's budget. Due to the COVID pandemic and the closure of business activity the estimates of a revenue shortfall for the state were as high as \$8 billion dollars for the three year period from FY 20 through FY 23. Fortunately, Washington's gig economy is more resilient than most states as much of our economic activity in the area of software and tech work can be done remotely. So over time, revenue projections continued to improve.

Finally, in March 2021 the State Revenue Forecast Council projected revenues for the 2021-23 biennium at 8.2% over projects. A significant increase over the dismal picture the year before.

That said, there was still enough of a shortfall for the last fiscal year of our current 2019-21 biennium that the legislature did take the proposed 15% reductions from state agencies. The Commission is familiar with this reduction from prior meetings and familiar with the SCC staff proposals for achieving these reductions without impacting conservation districts.

2021-23 Operating Budget

Commission members have previously seen the comparison tables prepared by SCC staff regarding the 2021-23 operating budget. The document is attached to this memo for further reference. This information is provided as a high level overview. Sarah Groth will be reviewing our budget in much greater detail at the Commission's business meeting.

Some topics worth noting:

- The budget increases the SCC operating base-budget (budget minus provisos) over the previous biennium. This increase included the “Orca and Salmon” funding received in the current biennium as a proviso.
- Funded was added for conservation district Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA).
- Wildfire recovery funding was added.



Washington State Conservation Commission

May 19, 2021

TO: Conservation Commission Members
Carol Smith, SCC Executive Director

FROM: Kate Delavan, Office of Farmland Preservation

SUBJECT: Agricultural Conservation Easements Update

Action Item

☐

Informational Item

☒

Summary:

The Conservation Commission closed on the Schuster Ranch agricultural conservation easement in Klickitat County in April 2021. The agricultural conservation easement permanently protects approximately 2,000 acres used for beef cattle and dryland crops. The conservation easement ensures this property will remain open and available for agriculture now and into the future while keeping the land in private ownership.

With the completion of the Schuster transaction, the Conservation Commission now holds a real property interest in three conservation properties. There are four additional easement projects in the pipeline. Staff are working to align resources and develop new procedures to support the growing easement portfolio.

Staff Contact:

Kate Delavan, Office of Farmland Preservation, kdelavan@scc.wa.gov, 360-280-6486

Background and Discussion:

The Conservation Commission “Commission” is responsible for the implementation of the Office of Farmland Preservation (OFP) and those activities identified in the OFP statute (RCW 89.10). The Commission has identified agricultural conservation easements as an important tool to assist in farmland protection and to advance conservation with willing landowners. As a state agency, the Commission is explicitly authorized by RCW 64.04.130 to acquire and hold an interest in land for conservation purposes.

The Commission is an eligible applicant to the Recreation and Conservation Office’s (RCO) Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP) Farmland Preservation category (RCW

79A.15.130). Eligible lands for this program must be devoted primarily to the production of livestock or agricultural commodities for commercial purposes. If the Commission applies for and receives funds to acquire an easement through WWRP, it assumes the legal liability as primary holder of the real property right ([Policy 19-02](#)).

Commission's Responsibilities as Easement Holder

An agricultural conservation easement is a legally recorded deed restriction lasting in perpetuity or for a set term. As the easement holder, the Commission is included in the recorded document and assumes primary legal and financial responsibility for stewarding and enforcing the conservation easement on the protected property for the life of the easement. Legal liabilities for the Commission include following procedures for notification (inspection, site visits), dispute resolution (preventive discussions, etc.), remedies (in the event of non-compliance), mediation (if parties disagree), amendment, enforcement (responding to violations), and extinguishment (in the event the easement is terminated).

Schuster Ranch Easement Completed

At the July 2020 Commission meeting, the Commission granted authorization to enter a purchase and sale agreement and to close on the Schuster Ranch agricultural conservation easement. The easement transaction was completed in April 2021. The project was funded by a WWRP Farmland grant awarded by RCO in 2016. The agricultural conservation easement permanently protects approximately 2,000 acres used for beef cattle and dryland crops. The conservation easement ensures this property will remain open and available for agriculture now and into the future while keeping the land in private ownership.

The Commission holds the easement and assumes primary responsibility for upholding the terms of the easement in perpetuity. RCO is a 3rd party beneficiary. As such, RCO may exercise all of the rights and remedies provided to the Commission and is entitled to all of the indemnifications provided to Grantee in the easement. RCO and the Commission each have independent authority to enforce the terms of the easement; provided, however, that RCO expects the Commission shall have primary responsibility for monitoring and enforcement of the easement.

The project was developed by the Central Klickitat Conservation District. The Central Klickitat Conservation District was subcontracted to provide support on due diligence and landowner correspondence.

Easement Portfolio and Pipeline

RCO Project #	Project Name	Easement Holder	County	Acres	Status
20-1546	Thornton Ranch	SCC	Yakima	108	Funding secured, grant agreement pending
20-1547	Hoch Farm	SCC	Benton	26	Funding secured, grant agreement pending
16-1923	Lazy Cross Ranch	SCC	Klickitat	4,194	Funding secured, due diligence in process
16-1922	Blain Ranch	SCC	Klickitat	1,925	Funding secured, due diligence in process
16-1924	Schuster Ranch	SCC	Klickitat	1,849	Completed
19-1527	Stevenson Ranch	SCC	Yakima	98	Completed
	Lust Farm	NYCD	Yakima	285	Completed, SCC has 3 rd party rights

Next Steps:

Project work continues on the four remaining easements in the pipeline. Staff are working to align resources and develop new procedures to support the growing easement portfolio. This includes identifying and planning for ongoing costs for stewardship, developing and implementing easement project record keeping procedures, updating monitoring templates, and developing monitoring agreements with the local conservation districts.

Recommended Action:

None – information only.



Washington State Conservation Commission

May 19, 2021

TO: Conservation Commission Members
Carol Smith, SCC Executive Director

FROM: Shana Joy, District Operations & Regional Manager Coordinator

SUBJECT: District Operations and Regional Manager Report

Action Item	<input type="checkbox"/>
Informational Item	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Report Summary:

Regional Managers offer this report of recent activities and support provided to conservation districts.

Ongoing Service Areas to Conservation Districts

- Partnering and Relationships Assistance
- Conservation Accountability & Performance Program (CAPP) Assistance
- New Supervisor and Staff Orientations and Professional Development
- Task Order Development
- Tracking Grant Spending and Vouchering
- Open Government Training
- Cultural Resources
- Project Development & CPDS
- Natural Resource Investments & Shellfish Programs
- Implementation Monitoring
- Long Range and Annual Planning Assistance
- Cross-pollination of Information, Templates, and Examples
- Records Retention and PRA
- CD Audits & Annual Financial Reporting
- Chehalis Basin
- Commission Meeting Planning
- District Digest Publication
- Human Resources (law/rule updates, hiring, performance evaluations, compensation, healthcare, issues)
- OPMA & Executive Sessions

Conservation District Service, Recent Topics

- COVID 19 Operations
- Elections and Appointments
- Finance Tracking & Management
- Direct Deposits & Internal Controls

- District Name Change
- **Hazard Mitigation Grant**
- National Estuary Program Grant
- District Governance
- **Public Records Requests**
- CAPP Evaluations
- Supervisor Cost Share
- Property Management & Remodeling
- Virtual Board Meetings & OPMA
- **Cultural Resources**
- **OPEB Reporting**
- SCC & District Policy Development
- Prevailing Wage
- **Fire Recovery**
- Equipment Rental
- **New Staff Orientation and Training**
- **NRI Committee & Webinar**
- **Heritage Gardens Program**
- **NACD TA Grants**

Issues Resolution in Progress

- Personnel management: issues, turn-over, capacity gaps, transitions
- Audits
- Inter-district relationships and partnering
- Grant vouchering requirements

Hazard Mitigation Grant Implementation

Mike Baden is leading implementation of a Hazard Mitigation Grant that the SCC is receiving from the Department of Emergency Management. The scope of work focuses on delivering three types of training across the state to conservation districts and partners, as seats are available. The three types of training are:

- Home Ignition Zone Training (“Assessing Structure Ignition Potential from Wildfires”) delivered by National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) trainers,
- Outreach Strategies for Community Wildfire Preparedness and Recovery co-organized and delivered by Val Vissia, Lincoln County CD, and Laura Johnson on our staff, and
- Post-Fire Risk Mitigation and Assessment training organized and delivered by the Okanogan Conservation District.

Dates for each type of training are established for spring 2021 (to be delivered virtually at this time) and additional trainings will be scheduled in the fall of 2021 and potentially in the spring of 2022. Mike is coordinating closely with conservation district logistical hosts for each training and with the NFPA as well.

COVID 19 Response

The Regional Manager team continues to provide timely resources, information, FAQ’s, and sometimes just moral support to conservation districts as we all navigate the ongoing COVID 19 pandemic. The many resources, FAQ’s and other information on the SCC’s COVID Resources webpage was recently thoroughly reviewed and updated to streamline access for conservation districts to the most relevant and timely information. A Conservation Community Call was conducted on April 30th around the topic of negotiated

indirect cost rate agreements (NICRA) with federal agencies. Great discussion, experience sharing, and questions were brought up on this call with 22 attendees from conservation districts.

Partnerships & Partnering Assistance

Most recently, the RM team has assisted with partnering or participated in partner and relationship building efforts with: individual conservation districts, WADE, Center for Technical Development, WACD, DNR, NRCS, Ecology, NASCA, WDFW, NACD, Washington Association of Land Trusts, State Auditor's Office, RCO, Department of Veterans Affairs, WA Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network, Washington Conservation Society, and Arid Lands Initiative.

Shana Joy and Alicia McClendon are providing support and leadership in WADE Conference 2021 planning and the SCC's GoTo Webinar platform will be utilized again this year. The Leadership and Management series of presentations and speakers will be moderated by Shana Joy.

Allisa Carlson provided support to the Benton and Franklin Conservation Districts to host a Heritage Gardens Program webinar with an attendance of over 100 people!

WDFW was successful in securing a budget proviso for funding for shrub steppe wildlife habitat restoration efforts in areas burned this past year in the Pearl Hill and Whitney Fires. Shana Joy and Mike Baden anticipate continuing to serve on a steering committee to help guide implementation of the funding through the local conservation districts.

Regional managers worked with NRCS staff to support the Local Working Group structure this spring through hosting a statewide survey for NRCS and facilitating three LWG meetings held remotely so far.

Chehalis Basin

Josh Giuntoli represents the Commission as an ex-officio member of the Chehalis Basin Board. Since the last report, the Office of Chehalis Basin received a budget of \$70m for aquatic and flood work. Pending the Governor's signature on the budget, the budget directs that \$33.05m is provided for board-approved projects to protect and restore aquatic species habitat, \$33.05m for board-approved projects to reduce flood damage, and \$3.9m for operations of Office of Chehalis Basin and Chehalis Basin Board. The Board needs to approve 2021-23 spending plan by June 3 in order to avoid risking delays in ability to begin spending new appropriations by July 1. There will need to be consensus of at least six of seven voting members to approve high-level budget categories and major project allocations. We've been presented several options for how the \$70M budget can be allocated - choices that need to be determined by the Board.

Josh had the privilege of touring Thurston CD's Early Action Reach work along the Skookumchuck River. This is a comprehensive river and land restoration project and they've done a great job. You can view a short video highlighting the work on the Skookumchuck with the landowners: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ljxF85chPLE>

CDs continue to engage in work associated with the Early Action Reaches within the Aquatic Species Restoration Program (ASRP) and continue to provide valuable on-the-ground work in the Basin. CD staff from Lewis, Thurston, and Grays Harbor CDs are members of the two advisory groups and provide technical expertise. Josh continues to convene a monthly meeting of Chehalis Basin CDs and partners (lead entity, Office of Chehalis Basin, WDFW, and others) to provide direct updates with each on work and activity in the Basin.

May 19, 2021

TO: Conservation Commission Members
Carol Smith, SCC Executive Director

FROM: Shana Joy, District Operations & Regional Manager Coordinator

SUBJECT: 2021 Conservation Accountability and Performance Program Initial Report

Action Item	<input type="checkbox"/>
Informational Item	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Summary:

The Conservation Commissioners, at the January 2021 meeting, approved the CAPP system with eight Standards including Accountability Standard 1 with requirements for use in 2021. The 15 Accountability Requirements (Standard 1) are based in law (RCW) and administrative code (WAC) for conservation districts. Completing 100% of these items is a threshold for receiving state funding through the Conservation Commission. The attached initial annual status report is submitted to the Conservation Commission for their information at this time. A final CAPP status report will be provided in July 2021.

Staff Contact:

Shana Joy | sjoy@scc.wa.gov | 360-480-2078

Background and Discussion:

Conservation Accountability and Performance Program Initial Conservation District Statuses:

Forty-four conservation districts are currently meeting the Accountability Standard 1 elements that can be evaluated at this time. For reference the Accountability Standard 1 elements are included below. These are status remarks around the accountability elements that Regional Managers are tracking:

Item 2. Seven conservation districts are currently working on updating their long range plans: Clark, Foster Creek, Grays Harbor, Jefferson County, Kittitas County, Mason, and South Douglas. It is anticipated that these will be completed during calendar year 2021, before the current plans expire.

Item 3. The current deadline for submitting annual work plans is May 30th. Regional Managers are actively assisting districts with annual planning and tracking submittals of plans.

Item 4. Pine Creek Conservation District is not currently demonstrating progress towards addressing the goals identified in their long range plan, as it was updated in 2019.

Item 6. Cascadia and Palouse Conservation Districts are actively working to re-do their elections. Cascadia CD's new election date has been set for June 9th. See also the elections report from the SCC Elections Officer, Bill Eller.

Item 8. The Pine Creek Conservation District audit is nearing completion with an audit finding as the outcome. As of the writing of this memo, the district had still not hired a new bookkeeper to take over daily financial duties for the district.

Item 11. The annual financial reporting to the State Auditor's Office is due May 30th by statute. Regional Managers are actively tracking the status of district reporting with the SAO.

Item 14. The Pine Creek Conservation District is not meeting the terms of the Master Contract between the SCC and the District by vouchering for SCC grants on a monthly basis. Timely submittal has not yet been demonstrated to occur overall consistently over time.

Next Steps (if informational item):

A final CAPP report will be presented to the Commissioners at the July 15th meeting.

STANDARD 1

Compliance with Laws (required standard)

Conservation Districts must fulfill their legal requirements as Political Subdivisions of the State of Washington and comply with all laws and the Washington Administrative Code. This evaluation is based on the best available information at the time it is conducted. **Date Evaluation Conducted:**

	Compliance with Laws and Requirements	Citation (link to RCW or WAC)	Yes	No
1.	Annual report of accomplishments was submitted on time, in the prescribed format to the Commission.	RCW 89.08.070 (11)		
2.	District Long Range Plan submitted on time & meeting RCW and Commission requirements.	RCW 89.08.220 (7)		
3.	District Annual Work Plan submitted on time & meeting RCW and Commission requirements.	RCW 89.08.220 (7)		
4.	The District has made a demonstrated effort to address their top resource needs identified in their Long Range Plan.	RCW 89.08.220 (7)		
5.	Upon request, District contracts and agreements have been submitted to the Commission	RCW 89.08.210		
6.	Supervisor elections & appointments are conducted according to RCW and WAC requirements. At least one District representative (ideally Elections Supervisor) has completed mandatory Elections Training provided by the Commission.	RCW 89.08.190 & 89.08.200 WAC 135-110		
7.	Annual financial reporting to State Auditor's Office completed correctly and on time.	RCW 89.08.210		
8.	All State Auditor identified issues (during SAO audits) have been resolved to the extent possible.	RCW 89.08.070 (12)		
9.	Open Public Meetings Act is followed including executive sessions.	RCW 42.30		
10.	State Public Records Act is followed.	RCW 42.56		
11.	All Board Supervisors and Public Records Officers are current on the required Open Public Meetings and Public Records Act Training.	RCW 42.30.210 & RCW 42.56.150		
12.	Keeping public informed of Conservation District activities.	RCW 89.08.220 (13)		
13.	State Ethics laws for public officials are being followed.	RCW 42.20 & 42.23		
14.	District in compliance with terms of Commission/District Master Agreement.	RCW 89.08.070 (5)		
15.	Demonstrated diligence in complying with state and federal statutes such as: contracting, employment/labor laws, etc., through adoption of up-to-date policies, training, and use of available resources such as MRSC and Enduris.	Various		

Standard 1 Ideas for Improvement:



WSSC Center for Technical Development (CTD) May 2021 Commission Meeting

CTD Work Accomplishments (July 2020 forward)

For previous accomplishments and task completion, please review previous commission packet updates.

Explore more @ www.wactd.org

Certification

CTD Planner Certifications: The CTD Planner Certification Program accepted its first round of applications May 1, 2020 and successfully certified seven individuals. The next round of applications will be accepted on a rolling basis and the next round of reviews will occur in early spring 2021. Based on feedback from applicants and the review team, the CTD has streamlined the application process by moving the entire application submission process to SmartSheet. This will allow a cleaner submission process for applicants and a more efficient review process for the review team. The **CTD held a webinar on March 9, 2021 to introduce the new application process and answer questions** as well as offer pre-application “interviews” to get folks started right and ensure they have everything they need to apply. With applications slow to come in, the CTD leadership team is now exploring ways to increase participation.

Plan Templates: The CTD has enrolled assistance with **creation of a Statewide Farm Planning template and helpful links to planning resources/tools**. The template provides consistency in statewide planning as well as template availability to those Districts without such resources on hand.

Planner Resources: With ongoing changes and new hybrid (virtual and in-person) work environments, the CTD has continued **posting a large number of virtual support tools and training opportunities on our webpage** and via GovDelivery. We continue to update that almost daily by providing links to new opportunities and content for more effective remote working.

Connecting Community: The CTD is building and hosting a new series of Networking Forums for different planning disciplines and expertise. A Cover Crop Networking Forum was held successfully in April, with Farm and Dairy Forums scheduled for June and July, respectively. A Riparian Forum will kick off at this year’s WADE conference. These Forums will be held quarterly and provide a much-needed space for planners and technical staff to share successes and challenges, ask questions, and connect district staff year-round. Additionally, a Leadership and Management series is in development in collaboration with CTD, WSSC, WADE, and WACD. The monthly learning and sharing network, which will kick off in August 2021, is targeted towards existing and developing District managers/leaders of all levels.

NRCS Planner Designations: The CTD continues to work with NRCS to help District staff through the NRCS Planner Designation process. This goal is part of the new Washington Conservation Planning Partnership plan, and the CTD is on-point to help District staff meet NRCS’s goal to certify as many

planners as is applicable. NRCS recently released changes to their Conservation Planner designation nomenclature and updated some course requirements. CTD has updated their Training Plan Template to reflect these changes. These changes, along with the updated CTD template, were presented at the March 9 webinar (see above). That webinar, like all CTD- hosted webinars, is available for viewing on the CTD website.

Training

NRCS Collaboration: The CTD continues to work with NRCS on coordination of training events to ensure better organization and placement of CD staff in NRCS trainings. **The CTD proposed a 5-year cooperative agreement with NRCS and WSCC to share the cost of a fulltime Training Coordinator position.** While NRCS approved the agreement, as of May 1, 2021, funding has not yet been allocated by NRCS. The execution of this position would exponentially expand the CTD's reach and impact to help District staff through training, certification, and support processes. The CTD is being pro-active in finding temporary funding for this vital position, in applying for an NACD grant this June. If successful, this grant would provide short-term support for the Training Coordinator for one year while long-term funds are pursued.

National Conservation Planning Partnership (NCP): The **CTD has been working with the National Conservation Planning Partnership (NCP) and attends regular (bi-monthly) web-meetings** with the group to discuss national training and certification opportunity for Districts. This has been a great forum for the CTD to both give and receive feedback and ideas for advancing these opportunities nationally and in Washington State. The CTD was also invited by NRCS to work with them in March on their State Conservation Action Plan.

Training Needs Inventory (TNI): The CTD send out an annual TNI in close coordination with NRCS (last done in the summer of 2020), informing NRCS of District training needs in the coming year. The TNI is tailored to identify those NRCS training events CD staff need and engage CD staff in the CTD and NRCS certification processes. This information also helps inform and guide CTD-sponsored trainings and Task Order requests. **The CTD will again coordinate with NRCS on the timing and release of a 2021 TNI,** as more information is released on available trainings.

NRCS Training Events: Due to the on-going restrictions associated with COVID-19, scheduled training is frequently being modified. The CTD is keeping in regular contact with NRCS and posting new information on the CTD website. Additionally, with the long-term uncertainty associated with holding in-person training, the CTD continues to advocate with NRCS to consider/create more web-based training events. We have received word that **several key NRCS trainings will be offered virtually this year and CTD will update and coordinate District staff attendance in those trainings as soon as registration information is available.**

The CTD is has been working with NRCS to bring a number of important courses to District staff including:

- **Environmental Permitting on Working Lands** training module was held virtually in April 13, 14, 20, 21, and was tailored for both District and NRCS staff implementing BMPs in working environments. The CTD worked with WSCC and NRCS staff to successfully secure a task order to help fund development of this course, which hasn't been offered in over a decade. The event

was recorded and can now be accessed on-demand for staff at any time. All course materials are posted on the CTD website.

- **Cultural Resources, Part 2**, will be held in a hybrid format May 17-20, with field days happening regionally in early June. The Cultural Resources, Part 2 course is required for all Level III (Certified) planners and is an important offering to help District staff complete certification requirements. The classroom portion will be held virtually, with a session each morning over the course of a week; the field portions will be held in small groups, with appropriate safety protocol.
- **Conservation Planning, Part 2**, which is a critical training for all planners, is under a process to create and offer this foundational course in a hybrid format that can be accessed by staff at any time. This will hopefully onboard new planners quicker, and educate interns, supervisors and others as needed.

The CTD continues to strengthen their training partnership with NRCS and hopes that these web-based modular trainings will also serve as a pilot for ongoing collaboration with fully online and hybrid web-classroom training opportunities.

Other Training Events: The **CTD is coordinating with WADE again this year to provide both technical track content and virtual platform hosting/moderation for the 2021 WADE Conference.** The CTD and WADE leadership teams are meeting regularly leading up to the conference which will be held virtually June 14-16, 2021.

Because the WADE conference is being held virtually this year, there is a lesser need for the scholarship funds that typically pay for the conference registration. Instead, the WADE Board approved appropriation a portion of the \$20,000 WADE scholarship fund provided by the WSCC to the CTD to provide unique training events. The funds are going towards **providing three free, unique training events to District employees** including: Managing Multiple Priorities, Projects, and Deadlines (April 28, Fred Pryor); Facilitation Training (May 25-26, Ray Ledgerwood), and Virtual Presentation Skills (Cathy Angell, May 27). The latter is a special event for WADE presenters that will be recorded for an encore presentation to all Districts after WADE. WADE will still provide 20 \$250 scholarships administered by the CTD to support staff time to present/attend the virtual WADE conference.

The CTD **continues to curate and host monthly training and sharing webinars** focused on timely topics. The webinars have been well-received and well-attended (30-40 attendees per webinar on average) and are advertised on the CTD website, newsletter, and through special email announcements. The CTD co-hosts additional outside virtual training opportunities through NRCS and others, as appropriate. Additionally, we continue to send out guidance on working remote, conducting virtual site visits, and links to virtual training opportunities to help staff stay focused and relevant in this new working environment. The CTD is always soliciting input and ideas for trainings through the newsletter and website.

With the increase in virtual presentations including webinars, training events, and meetings, the **CTD has curated and created content to support virtual presenters.** This includes a tips handout, presenter orientation events/videos, and access to presentation training events. It is our goal to improve the quality of presentations to increase audience enjoyment and learning. The CTD sent out an announcement to all Districts in March informing them of the virtual resources available and offering additional support for planning, creating, and hosting virtual events.

Training Scholarships: Due to good budgeting, the **CTD will be providing 15 \$250 training scholarships to support District staff time in relevant training events completed by the end of June.** A scholarship request form was sent out in April.

New Employee Resources: The new employee resource page on the CTD website is continuously being updated with new webinars and information, including a new employee check list for both individuals and Districts to use. The goal is to have **all new employee resources in one place** so they can get going with training, training plans, certification, and orientation. The new page includes a portal to the CTD database.

Communication and Outreach

Website: The CTD website (www.wactd.org) continues to serve as a source of information to CD staff and is updated regularly. The CTD has worked to keep the website updated, improving aesthetics, clarity, and navigation of the site while continually updating content and ensuring relevance of the site. New changes are also announced in the CTD newsletter.

Outreach: Through data mining and observation, the CTD continues to work on a cohesive marketing plan to increase recognition and impact for CD staff as well as better engage both internal and external partners. We would like to **increase awareness of the CTD as a central provision of training and expertise** and increase the collaboration with partners on events and resources. A communications survey was released in January via the CTD newsletter, and via direct email to those not on our newsletter list. The results of that survey continue to inform improvements for CTD content and guide the marketing plan in development.

Newsletter: The CTD monthly GovDelivery newsletter continues to gain new subscribers (currently we have **more than 440 subscribers**) and is also located on the CTD website for those not on GovDelivery. In addition to the monthly newsletter, the CTD is using the GovDelivery platform as a way to get immediate, time-sensitive news and information out to staff.

Technical Expertise and Science Program

Expertise: Experts are identified as needed for engagement in programs, policy and training around the state (examples include: Ecology Voluntary Clean Water Guidance for Agriculture Advisory Group, DOE Drinking Water Standard review, Dairy Nutrient Advisory Committee, WDFW riparian habitat guidance, and more). The CTD database continues to prove effective in identifying and nominating expertise as appropriate.

Science: While the work is not currently a funded budget item, the CTD is still supporting work around the State on special Discovery Farms program projects to advance the application of consistent science and monitoring efforts. There has been statewide buy-in to the DF program from partners and **CDs continue to be involved in the national DF program through regular communications and annual meetings.** Through this process, statewide QAPP and SOP's have been developed with guidelines specific to projects, but which can be used in the future as templates for any CD.

Quality Assurance

While this is not currently a funded area of work, the CTD still holds value of development of a statewide Quality Assurance program for individuals and Districts. The CTD will offer quality assurance assessments and planning product review upon request.

CTD Coordination

Database: The database (run under Caspio) continues to provide assistance in locating staff expertise for engagement in workgroups, show metrics on expertise and certifications, and grow to a central database for all organizations to utilize. **A self-service portal for employees is available on the CTD website** which allows CD staff to update their personnel profiles, track completed trainings, and more. The CTD regularly sends reminders to folks to update their information and expertise in the Database.

Budget: **Whatcom CD is administering the budget and reporting monthly to the CTD.** Billing guidelines and procedures ensure that work expectations match billing vouchers and that budgets are quickly updated on a monthly basis. The CTD is using SmartSheet to assist with budget and task tracking.

The CTD recently spent considerable time **updating its Charter and creating an annual and long-range plan of work including metrics of success and short-term tasks and deliverables.** The entire plan was input into Smartsheet for regular review, reflection, and revision. The sheet also tracks Gantt chart timelines, budget, staff time, and deliverables for a cohesive and interactive management across all CTD members. **The FY22-23 budget request and plan of work have been submitted** to WSCC for budget approval/allocation.

Leadership: The CTD held its **Annual Update and Feedback Session, inviting all District staff from across the state for an overview of our FY21 activities, and to provide feedback for our FY22 annual plan of work.** That meeting was held virtually on March 31, 2020.

The CTD Leadership Team also held its annual meeting with WSCC Staff in May to provide a summary report of accomplishments over the last year, and to solicit feedback and input on priorities for the coming year. The upcoming biennium budget request was shared, and a base operating and scaling options presented.

The CTD Leadership Team and partners (NRCS, WADE, WSCC) continue to meet monthly to ensure tasks are on track.

The CTD continues to prioritize **recruiting new members to both its leadership and working teams.** The CTD has requested the assistance of the Commission staff in helping get the word out the district managers who may recognize potential new members in their own staff.

CTD Contact Information

For more information on the CTD activities, please contact:

CTD contact: Nichole Embertson, Chair

info@wactd.org

For more information, please visit: www.wactd.org