

Agricultural Conservation Easement Sponsorship



Kate Delavan, Farmland Preservation Coordinator
March 17, 2022 Conservation Commission Meeting

Easement Portfolio and Pipeline

RCO Project #	Project Name	Easement Holder	County	Acres	Status
20-1546	Thornton Ranch	SCC	Yakima	108	Funding secured, due diligence in process
20-1547	Hoch Farm	SCC	Benton	26	Funding secured, due diligence in process
16-1923	Lazy Cross Ranch	SCC	Klickitat	3,074	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	Easement Acquired
19-1527	Stevenson Ranch	SCC	Yakima	98	Easement Acquired
	Lust Farm	NYCD	Yakima	285	Easement Acquired, SCC has 3 rd party rights

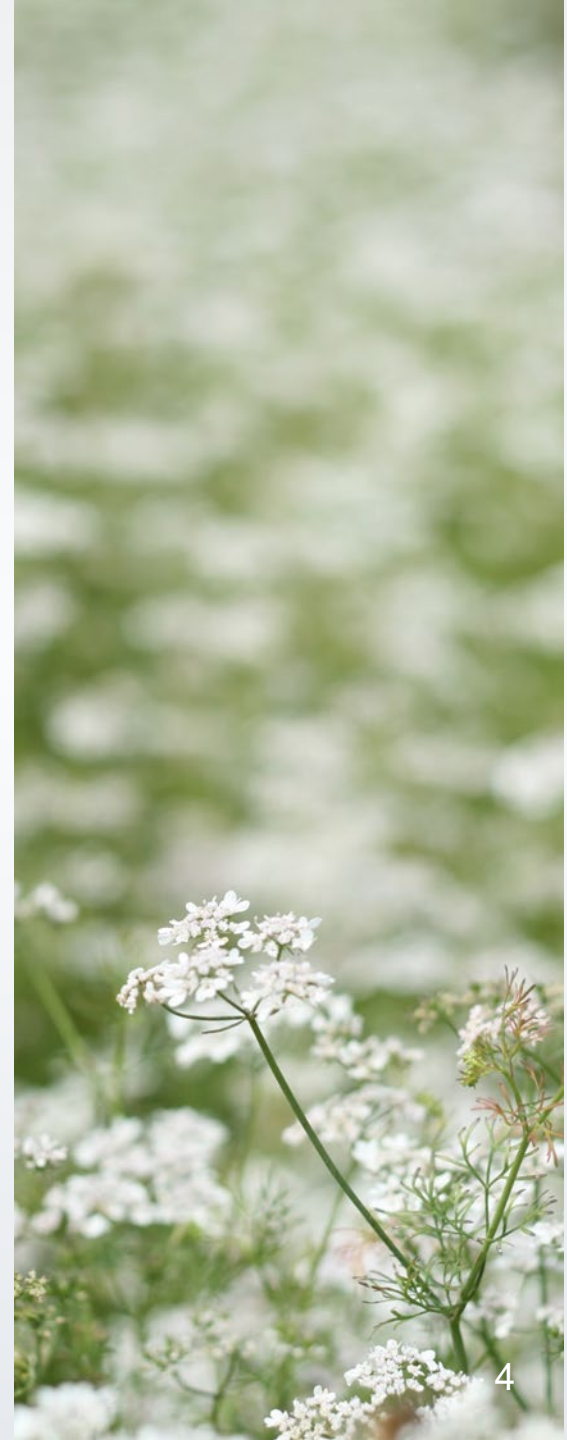
Background

- Per Policy #19-02, SCC can act as a sponsor for WWRP Farmland applications developed by conservation districts.
 - SCC assumes legal and financial responsibility for easement acquisition and stewardship.
 - SCC works in partnership with local CD.
 - WWRP Farmland grant application is open for 2022.
- The Conservation Easement Sub-Committee selected three agricultural conservation easement projects to advance.
- Staff seek Commissioner authorization to proceed with grants.



Process

- Announcement sent to CDs
January 2022
- OFP received 5 applications
from four CDs
- Conservation Easement Sub-Committee met on Mar. 3 to
review applications for
alignment with grant program
and SCC easement priorities



SCC Ag Conservation Easement Priorities

1. The parcel proposed for preservation is expected to continue to be used for, and is large enough to sustain, commercial agricultural production.
2. The land is also in an area that possesses the necessary market, infrastructure, agricultural support services, and the surrounding parcel sizes and land uses to support long-term commercial agricultural production.
3. Without preservation, the land proposed for protection is likely to be converted to nonagricultural use in the foreseeable future.



Sub-Committee Recommendation

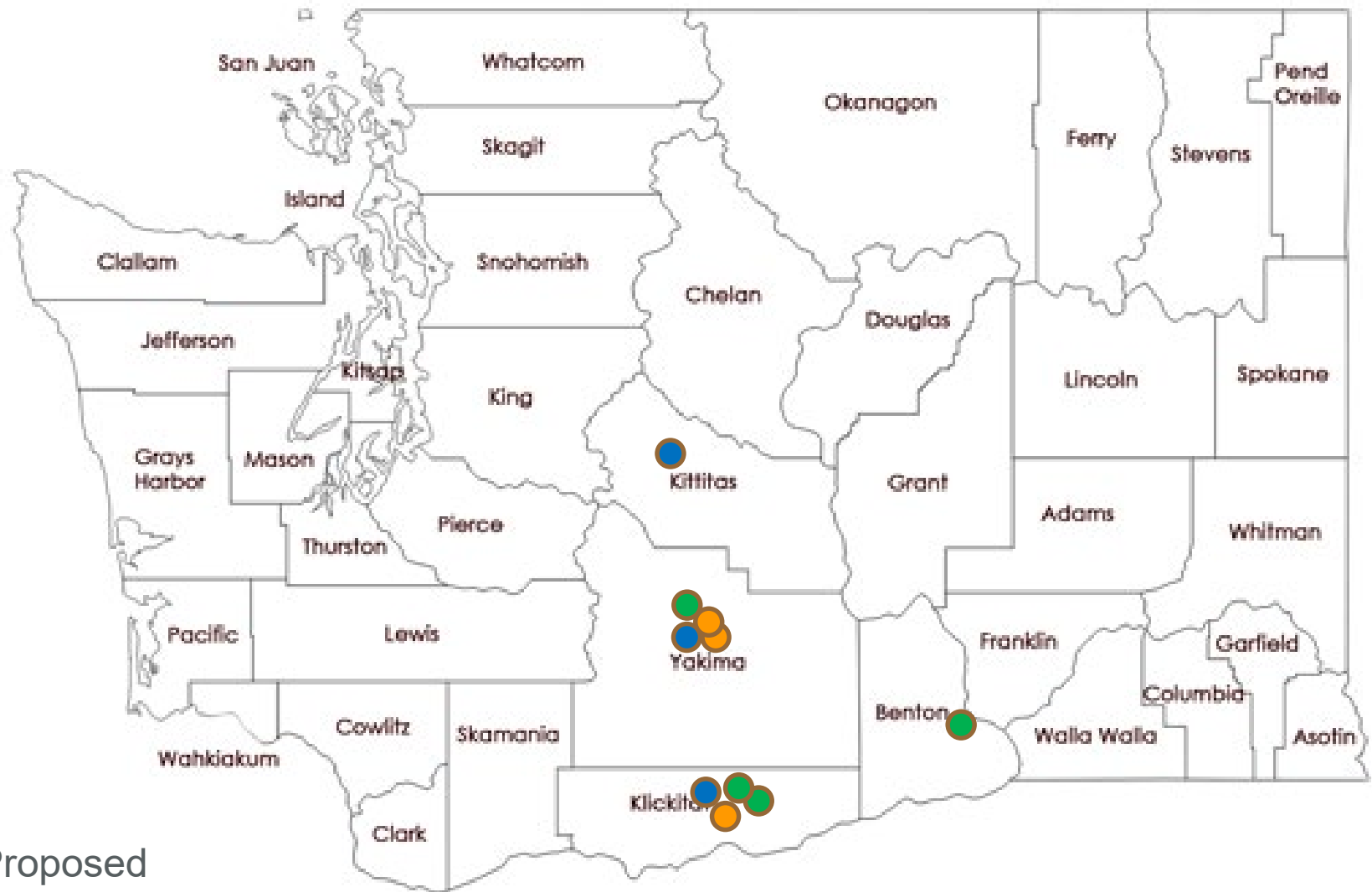
1. The Sub-Committee requests CKCD combines the two Davenport applications into one project.
2. The Sub-Committee refers the resulting top 3 applications (CKCD Davenport (combined), KCCD Swauk Prairie, and NYCD Emerick) to the WSCC for approval to submit grant applications to WWRP Farmland in spring 2022. The Sub-Committee finds these 3 projects to all be strong applications. The small point differential between the 2nd ranked project (KCCD Swauk Prairie) and the 3rd ranked project (NYCD Emerick) compelled the Sub-Committee to come to agreement on the need to advance all 3 projects.
3. The Sub-Committee recognizes submitting 3 projects exceeds the initial estimated capacity of OFP staff for this work. The Sub-Committee finds OFP provides critical support to CDs on farmland protection. The Sub-Committee requests the WSCC add additional staff capacity to support OFP.

OFP Staff Capacity

- OFP staff planned to cap the number of projects at 2
- OFP staff agree all 3 projects are worthy of advancing
- OFP staff are supportive of additional staff capacity.
 - If additional capacity is not available, staff are prepared to assess and reprioritize workload
- Conservation Easement Sub-Committee submitted letter supporting additional OFP staffing (see packet, page 26)



SCC Easement Portfolio



- = Proposed
- = In Progress
- = Easement Acquired

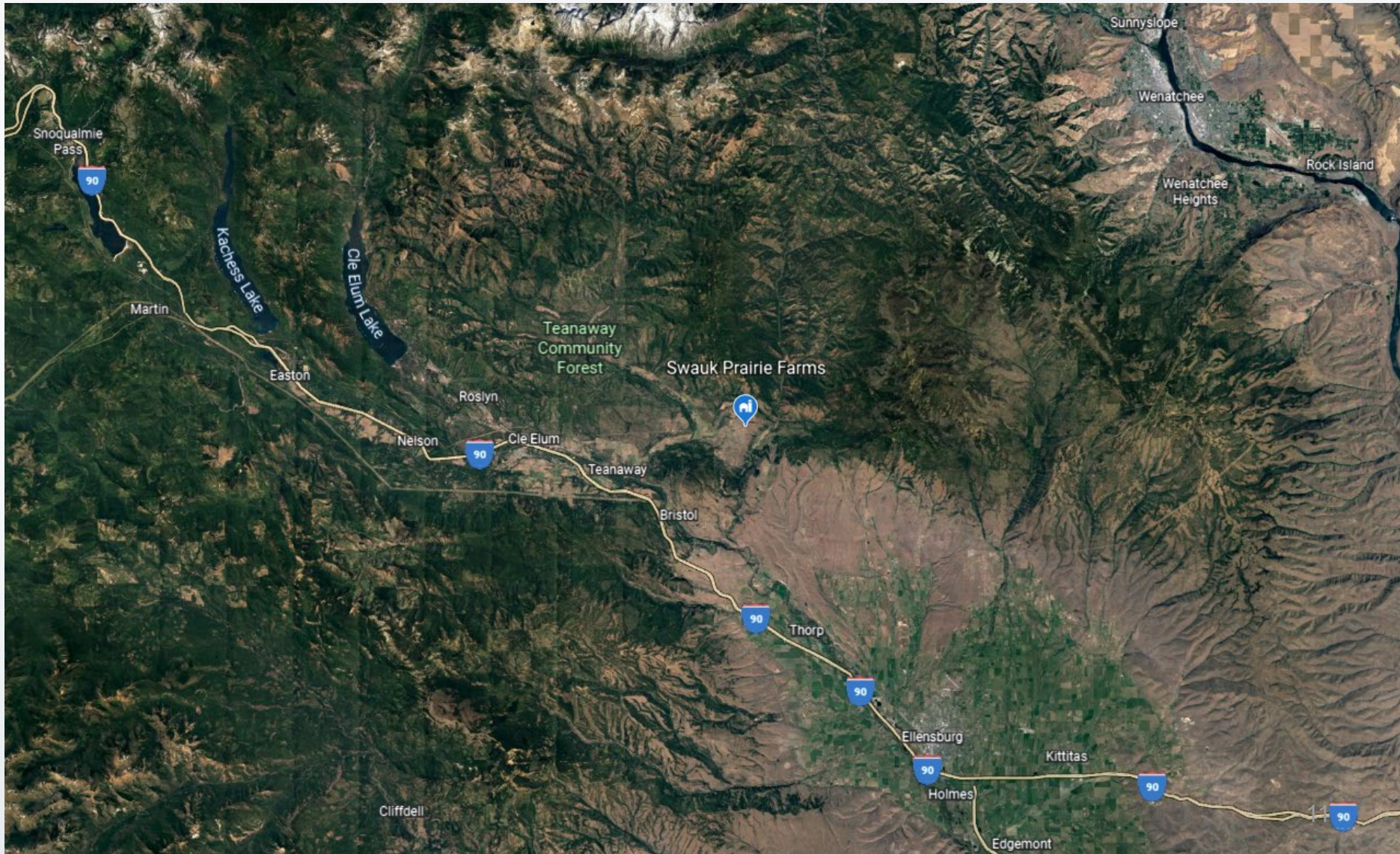
CKCD Davenport



CKCD Davenport

- Multigenerational family owned cow/calf operation established in 1858
- 5,867 acres in Klickitat County
- Several separate parcels
 - Late fall and early spring pastures
 - Hay production
 - Infrastructure
- Necessary infrastructure to run the operation:
 - Homestead, corrals, gathering pens, loading chute, livestock water facilities
- Easement will help facilitate transfer to next generation

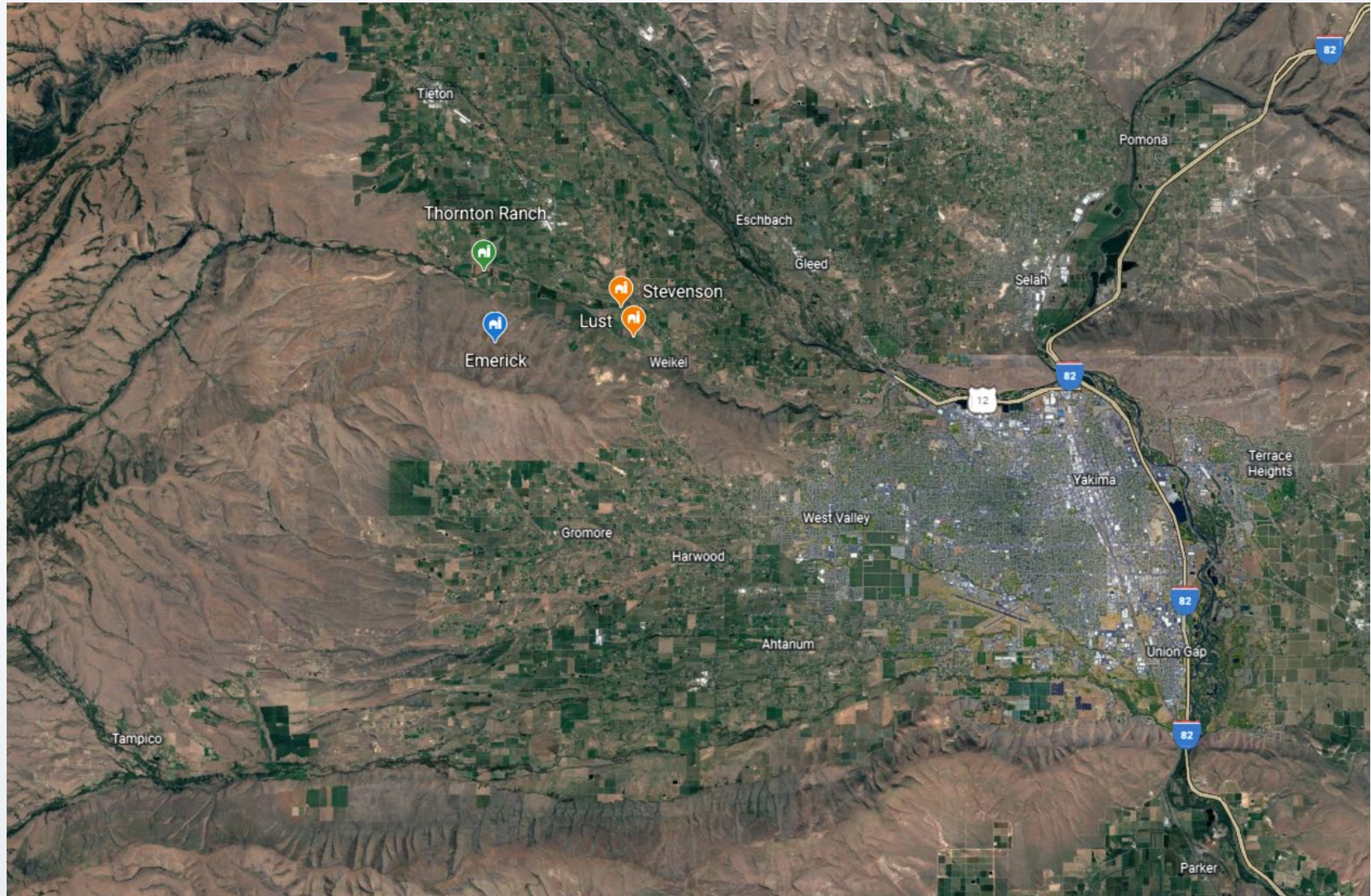
KCCCD Swauk Prairie



KCCD Swauk Prairie

- Multigenerational farm established in 1887
 - WA Centennial Farm in 1989
- 549 acre farm on Swauk Prairie terminal moraine, bisected by Hwy 970 in Kittitas County
- Dryland operation
 - Historic: Soft white winter wheat, hay, potatoes
 - Current: grass fed bison and leased ground for cattle
- Last historic farm in area. Easement will ensure it will stay intact and in agriculture.

NYCD Emerick



NYCD Emerick

- Multigenerational cow/calf operation
- 2,576 acres of rangeland in Yakima County
- Easement will facilitate land transfer to the next generation.
- Provides habitat to many terrestrial species and plant communities
 - Abuts over 2,000 acres of land held by Cowiche Canyon Conservancy

Recommended Action

The Conservation Easement Sub-Committee recommends the Commission formally authorize, by motion, the SCC's Executive Director to sign required documents to submit grants for agricultural conservation easements on three properties: CKCD Davenport, KCCD Swauk Prairie, and NYCD Emerick.

Draft Motion Language:

The Commission has determined acquisition of agricultural conservation easements on the three properties is consistent with the mission, duties, and purposes of the SCC.

The Commission hereby authorizes the State Conservation Commission Executive Director to sign required documents to submit grants for agricultural conservation easements on three properties: CKCD Davenport, KCCD Swauk Prairie, and NYCD Emerick.



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Washington State
**Conservation
Commission**