Sustainable Farms and Fields:
Conceptual framework of guidelines

Washington State Conservation Commission

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Sustainable Farms & Fields: current status

- $2M in FY23 supplemental budget
- Applying for USDA Climate-Smart Agriculture and Forestry (CSFA) funding
- Excitement on the ground to launch program

SFF Programmatic Guidelines

- Framework for programmatic guidelines already established in statute (RCW 89.08.601 – 89.08.635).
- SCC staff has been consulting and brainstorming with WSDA, WSU, and NRCS to expand framework.
  - WSDA is providing guidance on soil carbon and soil health and has created integral tool for SFF project prioritization
  - WSU created initial Measurement and Estimation Verification (MEV) system and guidance on climate-smart practices
  - NRCS constant source of information on practice standards and climate-smart agriculture

SFF programmatic guidelines

- Section 1: Introduction and Overview of Program
- Section 2: General Policies
- Section 3: Fundable Projects
- Section 4: Eligible Climate-Smart Practices
- Section 5: Project Application Process
- Section 6: Selection and Prioritization of Projects
- Section 7: Reporting – MEV, etc.
- Section 8: Other Requirements and Considerations

Section 2: General Policies

Eligible Applicants:

- Conservation districts
- State Agencies
- Colleges, Universities, and Extension Offices
- Federally recognized Indian tribes
- Counties
- Cities, Towns, and other municipalities
- Special purpose districts

Section 2: General Policies

Administration of the Sustainable Farms and Fields program (RCW 89.08.615)

Up to fifteen percent (15%) of funds may be used by the SCC to develop, or to consult or contract with private or public entities, such as universities or conservation districts, to develop:

- (a) An educational public awareness campaign and outreach about the sustainable farm and field program; or
- (b) The grant program, including the production of analytical tools, measurement estimation and verification methods, cost-benefit measurements, and public reporting methods

No more than five percent of the funds may be used by the commission to cover the administrative costs of the program.

Section 3: Fundable Projects

- **Technical assistance**, including services to landowners, such as the development of site-specific conservation plans to increase climate-smart practices that increase carbon sequestration and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. These practices include but are not limited to those that increase soil organic levels, increase usage of precision agricultural practices, and reduce livestock emissions;
- **Implementation of climate-smart BMPs**, including the purchase of seed, seedlings, spores, animal feed, and amendments for use in those practices;
- **Equipment sharing:** Conservation districts, separately or jointly, may apply for grant funds to operate an equipment-sharing program. Conservation districts may also apply for grant funds on behalf of farm, ranch, or aquaculture operations coordinating as individual businesses or as formal cooperative ventures serving farm, ranch, or aquaculture operations to purchase shared equipment.
- **Cost-sharing** for the purchase of equipment
- **Up-front payments** for contracted carbon storage;
- **Annual payments** to enrolled participants for successfully delivered carbon storage or reduction;
- Other equipment purchases or financial assistance deemed appropriate by the commission to fulfill the intent of RCW 89.08.610 through 89.08.635.

Section 4: Eligible Climate-Smart Practices

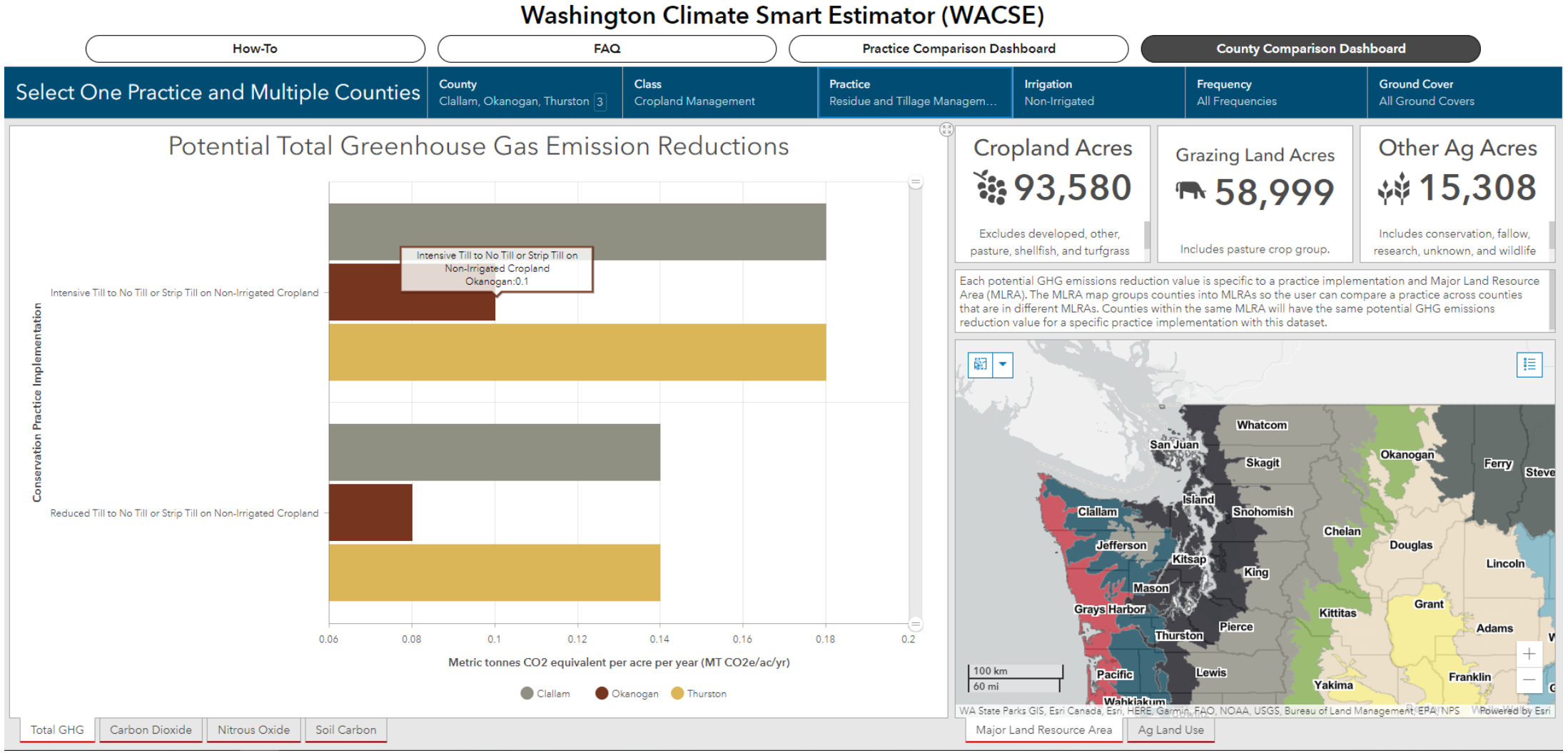
Based on NRCS Climate-Smart BMPs and includes:

- Cover crops
- Low-till/no-till
- Nutrient management
- Enhanced efficiency fertilizers
- Manure management
- Feed management to reduce enteric emissions
- Buffers, wetland, grassland management
- Agroforestry on working lands
- Planting for high carbon sequestration
- Climate-smart pasture practices (prescribed grazing)
- Amendments to improve soil health

Section 5: Prioritization of Proposed Projects

- SFF grants will be prioritized based on ability of projects to:
  - 1) increase sequester carbon in terrestrial topsoil and aquatic soil;
  - 2) reduce CO2-equivalent emissions in soils, nitrous oxide and methane emissions through changes to livestock or soil management; and
  - 3) increase use of precision agricultural practices.
- Grant distribution must be fairly distributed statewide across a broad group of crop types, soil management practices, and farm
- Projects that create riparian buffers or other fish habitat enhancements or that create pollinator forage/habitat will be ranked higher; conversely, projects that damages fish and wildlife habitat will be downgraded.
- DEI lens will be applied to ensure that SFF program is supportive of first-time, low-income, and underserved farmers.

Section 5: Prioritization of Proposed Projects



Requested Action for Commissioners:

- Authorize Director Pettit to approve the dissemination of the first draft of the SFF guidelines to the districts and stakeholders for a 45-day review process to solicit feedback that will help shape the final draft. Final draft will be presented for approval at the May 19 SCC meeting.

Next Steps

- The draft guidelines will be released to the districts and other stakeholders for their feedback for a 45-day period.
- SCC staff will collect, organize, and share feedback with WSDA, WSU, and NRCS.
- Updated draft will be developed and shared with Commissioners.
- May meeting: Commissioners review, discuss, and approve final SFF draft programmatic guidelines.
- July: SFF program is initiated.


Thank you!

Questions?

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